

Prenatal Education within the Cultural Beliefs of the Matrilineal Society: An Ethnopedagogy Perspective

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi dimensi pedagogis pendidikan prenatal yang terkandung dalam sistem superstisi masyarakat Minangkabau. Pendidikan prenatal dipandang sebagai fondasi penting dalam pembentukan karakter dan kesejahteraan janin sejak masa kehamilan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain etnografi. Data primer diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi partisipatif terhadap 33 tokoh adat, 13 orang tua, dan 13 ibu hamil di Kabupaten Solok. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan simpulan, sedangkan keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berbagai pantangan, seperti larangan menggunakan piring rompong, melilitkan kain di leher, dan duduk di ambang pintu, berfungsi sebagai praktik pedagogis informal yang mengarahkan perilaku ibu demi menjaga keselamatan fisik, stabilitas emosional, dan penanaman nilai sosial selama kehamilan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya mengintegrasikan kearifan lokal Minangkabau dengan pendidikan pengasuhan modern untuk membangun model pendidikan keluarga yang holistik dan berlandaskan budaya.

Kata Kunci: *Pendidikan Prenatal, Etnopedagogi, Superstisi, Parenting Education, Kearifan Lokal*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the pedagogical dimensions of prenatal education embedded in the superstitious beliefs of the Minangkabau community. Prenatal education is viewed as a fundamental foundation for shaping fetal character and well-being from the earliest stages of pregnancy. A descriptive qualitative approach with an ethnographic design was employed. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and participant observations involving 33 traditional leaders, 13 parents, and 13 pregnant women in Solok Regency. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, while source triangulation ensured data credibility. The findings reveal that traditional prohibitions, such as avoiding chipped plates, refraining from placing cloth around the neck, and not sitting on doorsteps, function as informal pedagogical practices that regulate maternal behavior to promote physical safety, emotional stability, and social values during pregnancy. These findings highlight the relevance of integrating Minangkabau local wisdom with contemporary parenting education to develop culturally grounded and holistic family education models.

Keyword: *Prenatal Education, Ethnopedagogy, Superstition, Parenting Education, Local Wisdom.*

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INTRODUCTION

Currently, despite the growing awareness of the importance of prenatal education, the prevalence of maternal stress and the risk of early childhood neurosensory developmental disorders continue to exhibit a concerning trend, particularly amidst contemporary psychosocial pressures and economic burdens. This phenomenon is particularly critical given the pedagogical paradigm of prenatal education, which conceptualizes the womb not merely as a static biological space, but as the primary learning ecosystem wherein the fetus possesses the sensory capacity to actively respond to external stimulation from conception until birth (Alizadeh-Dibazari et al., 2023; Hao et al., 2023; Verny & Kelly, 1981; Yikar & Nazik, 2019). Aligning with this theoretical foundation, recent studies from the past five years affirm that the emotional and physical integrity of the pregnant mother serves as a crucial determinant variable in establishing the quality of early development (Afnita et al., 2021; Erni & Ulya, 2021). Furthermore, research by Ramadhan et al., (2025), Naini & Ulya (2025), and Liusti et al., (2026) demonstrates that the implementation of prenatal stimulation and education plays a vital role in constructing a robust psychological foundation before the child encounters the complexities of the extrauterine environment. However, a substantial gap persists between this theoretical understanding and its practical implementation. The existing literature predominantly focuses on general educational approaches or measures short-term outcomes, failing to explore the specific mechanisms through which personalized prenatal education modules influence maternal stress biomarkers and fetal neurosensory responses longitudinally. To date, no study has comprehensively investigated the effectiveness of prenatal education interventions that integrate psychosocial support and measurable sensory stimulation in mitigating the impact of chronic maternal stress on fetal cognitive-emotional development within specific populations. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the effect of implementing a structured prenatal education program on reducing maternal stress levels, and to evaluate its impact on enhancing fetal neurosensory responses through a longitudinal approach.

This paradigm coherently integrates biological, psychological, and cultural dimensions within a unified process of human potential development. Educational scholars agree that appropriate early stimulation during pregnancy significantly enhances a child's intellectual capacity and emotional intelligence (Verny & Kelly, 1981). Parents bear substantial responsibility for creating a conducive learning ecosystem within the household during pregnancy. The success of this education ultimately determines the trajectory of civilizational development through the formation of exceptional individuals from the earliest stages of life (Aditiawarman et al., 2025; Aini et al., 2026; Liusti et al., 2024; Rasyid et al., 2023).

From a neurobiological perspective, the fetus develops a central nervous system highly sensitive to vibrational and biochemical input beginning in the second trimester of pregnancy. Structured auditory stimulation, such as classical music or parental verbal communication, optimally stimulates fetal brain synapse growth (Yikar & Nazik, 2019). This learning process occurs because basic human memory mechanisms begin functioning before delivery. Hepper (2002) posits that newborns demonstrate cognitive preference for sound patterns frequently heard during gestation. This phenomenon provides empirical evidence that prenatal educational intervention exerts measurable impact on the formation of individual cognitive orientation from an early stage (Alwi et al., 2025; Andriyani et al., 2024; Boeriswati et al., 2021; Erni et al., 2025).

These neurobiological findings align seamlessly with Indonesian cultural practices, where prenatal education is profoundly embedded in various educative local wisdom rituals. For instance, traditional ceremonies such as mitoni in Javanese tradition represent concrete, collective societal efforts to instill noble values and positive stimuli into the fetus through rich cultural symbolism. As Geertz (1960) posits, the symbols utilized in these traditional ceremonies function as profound mediums of moral and emotional communication between parents and the unborn child on a spiritual level. This indigenous practice demonstrates that Nusantara societies intuitively recognized the urgency of shaping the prenatal environment long before modern science medically validated the fetus's sensory capacities. Recent empirical studies corroborate this historical wisdom, highlighting how culturally grounded prenatal practices actively contribute to maternal emotional stability and fetal psychological readiness (Alwi et al., 2025; Asmawati et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2025; Saputra &

Ulya, 2025; Sari et al., 2024). Ultimately, this cultural framework positions ethical values and maternal inner balance as the primary foundation for shaping human personality from within the womb, effectively serving as an indigenous psychosocial intervention that mitigates maternal stress and optimizes the fetal learning ecosystem (Erni et al., 2025).

The psychological condition of the pregnant mother plays a crucial role in regulating hormone secretion that directly influences fetal wellbeing. Chronic maternal stress can elevate cortisol levels that potentially inhibit fetal brain structure development (Huizink, 2004). Conversely, a harmonious and emotionally supportive domestic environment stimulates endorphin production that promotes healthy fetal growth. The attachment relationship between mother and child during this prenatal period becomes a prototype for the child's future social interaction patterns. Therefore, prenatal education must encompass family mental health management to holistically ensure the quality of life for future generations.

Building on the importance of maternal psychological well-being, Minangkabau society provides a unique cultural framework that positions the fetus as a focal point of social and cultural continuity within its matrilineal kinship structure. Within this context, the existence of the unborn child is perceived not merely as a biological phenomenon, but as a vital manifestation of maternal lineage (suku) preservation. Mujur (2025) affirm that the fetus in Indonesia, particularly within the Minangkabau context, is recognized as an entity possessing inherent cultural rights from within the womb. Consequently, expectant mothers bear a profound socio-cultural responsibility to uphold clan dignity, a duty that inherently requires the maintenance of their own psychological stability and behavioral propriety. This collective awareness underpins prenatal education practices aimed at the intergenerational preservation of communal values (Ulya, 2022a). A prominent example is the utilization of the Palasik mythological narrative, which functions as an implicit pedagogical instrument for regulating the lifestyle and psychosocial environment of pregnant women. While rooted in traditional mysticism, the Palasik narrative pragmatically compels expectant mothers to remain highly vigilant regarding their physical hygiene, dietary habits, and social interactions. Recent research indicates that such cultural narratives serve as a primary heuristic for Minangkabau women in traditionally interpreting and responding to pregnancy danger signs (Al-Qanatir, 2024). Ultimately, by leveraging a culturally ingrained apprehension toward negative supernatural influences, the community effectively disciplines the daily routines of expectant mothers. This mechanism implicitly instills values of vigilance, meticulousness, and emotional regulation, thereby functioning as an indigenous form of early character education that concurrently safeguards maternal psychological well-being.

The Minangkabau local wisdom system establishes specific behavioral prohibitions, known as *pamali*, for expectant parents to safeguard the fetus's moral and physical integrity. For instance, pregnant women and their spouses are strictly forbidden from engaging in verbal aggression (such as cursing or harsh shouting) or committing acts of violence against animals. According to Minangkabau cosmological beliefs, the mechanism behind this prohibition is deeply psychosomatic: the mother's emotional turbulence or violent actions are believed to leave a direct, tangible imprint on the malleable fetus. It is traditionally held that such negative energies can manifest physically as birth anomalies or behaviorally as a volatile temperament in the child. Rabiattunnisa (2024) explain that these cultural factors are closely linked to maternal compliance in undertaking antenatal care grounded in local wisdom, as adhering to *pamali* provides a clear, culturally resonant framework for healthy behavior. Functionally, these prohibitions serve as a mechanism of behavioral conditioning, cultivating parental patience, emotional regulation, and self-control, thereby preparing them to serve as virtuous role models. Ultimately, this practice demonstrates that prenatal education in Minangkabau profoundly emphasizes the affective dimension, operationalizing the philosophical principle of harmony between human conduct and the cosmic order to optimize the prenatal environment.

Traditional ceremonies, such as the Mandi Ka Luak (ritual bathing in a basin), play a pivotal role in cultural value transmission and the reinforcement of psychosocial support for expectant mothers. This ritual is a highly structured communal event involving the active participation of the extended family, including clan elders (*ninik mamak*), traditional midwives (*mak Andam*), the pregnant mother, and her spouse. The procedure unfolds in specific, deliberate stages: initially, a basin of water is

prepared and infused with aromatic flowers and medicinal herbs to create a sanctified solution. Subsequently, the traditional midwife gently pours or sprinkles this water over the mother's abdomen and hands while reciting specific prayers and mantras intended to ensure safety and a smooth delivery. Within the context of prenatal education, the symbolic meaning of this "holy water" is profoundly psychosomatic; it represents the spiritual cleansing of negative energies and the "cooling" of the mother's emotional state, thereby directly mitigating maternal anxiety and physiological stress. [Utami \(2023\)](#) affirm that the Mandi Ka Luak tradition functions not only as a medium to ritually lift behavioral prohibitions (pamali) but also to strengthen emotional bonds and collective solidarity among community members. Through this immersive communal event, the fetus is symbolically introduced to its broader social ecosystem before entering the physical world, ensuring the availability of a highly conducive, collective environment for the child's early psychological and emotional growth.

The concept of prenatal education in Minangkabau undergoes harmonious syncretism between ancestral tradition and Islamic teachings in accordance with the principle Adat Basandi Syarak, Basandi Kitabullah. Pregnant mothers frequently integrate recitation of Quranic verses and specific prayers into daily routines as a form of spiritual stimulation for the fetus. [Nopianda \(2022\)](#) propose that the implementation of child education from an Islamic perspective in Indonesia encompasses auditory stimulation methods aimed at cultivating religious intelligence from within the womb. This practice demonstrates that Minangkabau society has adopted a holistic approach coherently combining physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. The synergy between local wisdom and religious values forms a robust foundation for generating an exceptional generation with Islamic character and cultural grounding.

Research on prenatal education to date has tended to be dominated by biomedical paradigms, developmental psychology, and formal curricula that position scientific knowledge as the sole validation standard, thereby systematically disregarding local knowledge systems embedded in the oral traditions of indigenous communities. Within the context of the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community, practices frequently labeled as superstition or myth actually contain a hidden curriculum that regulates parenting patterns, symbolic nutrition, and fetal character formation through sequences of prohibitions, rituals, and intergenerational narratives. Furthermore, studies in folklore and education rarely address the pedagogical dimension of prenatal beliefs. Existing approaches generally remain descriptive collectivist or reductively critical without exploring the knowledge transmission mechanisms inherent in discourse structures, performative contexts, and communicative practices of the community. This epistemological gap indicates the need for a paradigm shift from marginalizing superstition as irrational residue toward recognizing it as a coherent, functional, and culturally accountable ethnopedagogical system responsible for preparing generational readiness from the gestational phase.

The novelty of this research lies in the first time integration of ethnopedagogical and macrolinguistic perspectives applied to deconstruct folklore based prenatal education among the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community. Rather than separating traditional beliefs from the learning domain, this study positions ancestral utterances, mantras, prohibitive pantun, and ritual discourse patterns as macrolinguistic mediums that systematically transmit ecological values, maternal ethics, and prenatal cognition beyond the sentence level. Through cultural discourse analysis and a macrolinguistic approach, this research reveals how narrative repetition, bodily metaphors, and pragmatic markers in prenatal beliefs function as an oral curriculum that shapes collective awareness and psychosocial readiness for both mother and fetus. Consequently, this study not only addresses a literature gap regarding prenatal folklore in Nusantara but also offers a new theoretical and methodological framework relevant to multicultural education, indigenous knowledge revitalization, and the development of contextual learning models aligned with local wisdom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with an ethnographic approach to explore the pedagogical dimensions within the belief system of the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community. This design was selected to reveal the symbolic meanings and social functions of prenatal superstitions transmitted orally within the domestic environment. The researcher focuses the study on how

prohibitive utterances function as instruments for behavioral control and character education for pregnant women. The research location was established in the Kubuang Tigo Baleh region, Solok Regency, West Sumatra, because the community in this area continues to preserve strong oral traditions related to the human life cycle. Through this approach, the researcher can authentically capture cultural phenomena within the natural context of the research subjects' daily lives.

Research subjects were determined through purposive sampling techniques encompassing traditional leaders (niniak mamak), parents holding traditional authority, and pregnant women as key respondents. The researcher collected primary data through participatory observation and in depth interviews to explore the structure of utterances, intonation, and the context of superstition delivery. The primary instrument in this study was the researcher themselves, supported by interview guidelines and recording devices to accurately document each oral narrative. Additionally, the researcher conducted documentation studies of various cultural references and relevant literature to strengthen field data. The data collection process was directed toward identifying patterns of verbal interaction containing prenatal educational content within the local community's life sphere.

Data validation was conducted through source triangulation and technique triangulation to ensure the credibility and scientific validity of the findings. The researcher performed cross verification by comparing information from different informants and matching interview results with observational realities in the field. Subsequently, the data were analyzed procedurally using an interactive model comprising the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. During the analysis phase, the researcher classified each superstition based on its pedagogical function categories and conducted in depth interpretation of its logical implications for both physical and psychological health. The analysis results were then synthesized into a scientific narrative that coherently connects local wisdom with modern prenatal education concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Superstitions surrounding the human life cycle encompassing pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood constitute beliefs and behaviors related to these life stages, including pregnant women, the birth period, toddlerhood, and early childhood. The research findings indicate that the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community pays considerable attention to pregnant women. This is evident from several examples of superstitions presented below.

Urang hamil indak bulieh makan jo piriang rompeang beko rompeang anaknyo.

(Pregnant individuals must not eat using a chipped plate, lest their child be born with a cleft lip).

This superstition is conveyed by parents to their pregnant daughter. The superstition aims to prevent the daughter from eating with a chipped plate, thereby avoiding potential injury to her hands. This concern arises because plates are typically made of glass or ceramic materials that can cause injury if the chipped edge comes into contact with skin. Parents deliver this superstition by lowering their intonation or vocal tone, creating a sense of immediacy and inevitability regarding the stated consequence. Furthermore, this superstition exerts a psychological impact on the pregnant daughter by invoking fear that her unborn child may be born with a physical deformity, specifically a cleft lip. Additional examples of superstitions within the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community related to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood can be examined through the analysis below.

Urang hamil indak bulieh mamakai jilbab lilik beko talilik tali puseknyo.

(Pregnant individuals must not wear a loosely wrapped hijab, lest the umbilical cord become entangled).

This superstition is articulated when parents observe their pregnant daughter wearing a hijab that is deliberately wrapped around her neck. The intention is to discourage the practice of wrapping the hijab tightly around the neck, as this may cause breathing difficulties for the wearer. Parents convey this superstition using a soft intonation accompanied by a circular hand gesture to illustrate the concept of entanglement. This approach induces anxiety in the daughter, prompting her to immediately adjust her hijab style to avoid perceived complications during childbirth. Additionally, this belief is thought to impact the safety of the unborn child. Further examples of Kubuang Tigo

Baleh superstitions pertaining to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are presented in the analysis below.

Indak bulieh wakatu hamil mangubak tabu sungsang, beko anak sungsang pulo.

(One must not peel sugarcane upside down during pregnancy, lest the baby assume a breech position).

The aforementioned superstition reinforces the predominance of beliefs associated with the human life cycle stages of pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood. This particular superstition is directed toward a pregnant individual. Conventionally, pregnant women in Kubuang Tigo Baleh often crave sweet foods. Sugarcane represents one such sweet plant that can be consumed directly. Moreover, sugarcane is widely cultivated and readily available in residential surroundings, leading many community members to peel it themselves rather than purchasing preprocessed juice.

This superstition advises against peeling sugarcane in reverse or upside down. Typically, sugarcane is peeled from the base toward the tip; however, peeling from the tip toward the base is termed *sungsang*. This superstition is delivered with a relatively elevated tone when parents observe their daughter peeling sugarcane in this manner, emphasizing the perceived consequence that the fetus may also assume an inverted position. This induces anxiety in the pregnant woman due to concerns about complications during delivery. Fundamentally, this superstition aims to prevent wasteful behavior, as peeling sugarcane from tip to base may result in discarding the sweetest portion located at the base. Additional examples of Kubuang Tigo Baleh superstitions related to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are examined below.

Indak bulieh wakatu hamil duduak di simin, lakek kakak e beko.

(One must not sit on cement during pregnancy, lest the placenta adhere abnormally).

The aforementioned superstition represents one frequently encountered belief. It is directed toward women in advanced stages of pregnancy. The term cement is deliberately selected by the speaker due to its adhesive properties. This causes the pregnant woman to fear sitting on cement floors. Within this superstition, a specific consequence is articulated: sitting on cement may cause the placenta to adhere abnormally to the fetus, thereby endangering the infant's life. This superstition is conveyed with a relatively elevated tone when parents observe their daughter sitting on a cement floor.

Fundamentally, this superstition aims to prevent physical difficulty when rising from a seated position. Women in late pregnancy experience abdominal enlargement that complicates standing independently, often requiring assistance from others. This potential inconvenience for others motivates the creation of this superstition. Additionally, pregnant women sitting on cement floors may adopt a posture with legs spread apart due to abdominal size, a position considered ethically inappropriate and visually uncomfortable for observers. Further examples of Kubuang Tigo Baleh superstitions concerning pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are presented below.

Kalau wak hamil ndak bulieh duduak di pintu, beko lambek anak kalua.

(When pregnant, one must not sit in doorways, lest the child's delivery be delayed).

The aforementioned superstition is frequently articulated by parents toward their pregnant daughter. A doorway serves as a passageway within a household. This superstition conveys that pregnant women should avoid sitting near doorways. The Kubuang Tigo Baleh community believes this practice may negatively impact the smooth progression of childbirth. Parents deliver this superstition with a relatively elevated tone when observing their pregnant daughter sitting near a doorway. Pregnant women typically exhibit enlarged physical stature that may obstruct passage through doorways. This is also regarded as ethically inappropriate and visually unseemly, contributing to the frequent articulation of this superstition. Additional examples of Kubuang Tigo Baleh superstitions related to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are examined below.

Indak bulieh urang manganduang malilikan kain, beko anak talilik tali pusek.

(Pregnant individuals must not wrap cloth tightly around the neck, lest the umbilical cord become entangled).

The aforementioned superstition is commonly employed by parents with pregnant daughters. Pregnant individuals exhibit various habitual behaviors, one of which includes wrapping cloth around the neck. This superstition prohibits pregnant women from wearing cloth wrapped tightly around the neck, as this practice may cause breathing difficulties. In such situations, parents convey this superstition with a soft tone, prompting the daughter to immediately remove the wrapped cloth. This belief holds that wearing tightly wrapped cloth around the neck during pregnancy may complicate childbirth by causing umbilical cord entanglement. Further examples of Kubuang Tigo Baleh superstitions pertaining to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are presented below.

Indak bulieh urang manganduang manahan salero beko buyiah salero anak.

(Pregnant individuals must not suppress their appetite, lest the child's saliva become frothy).

The aforementioned superstition is conveyed by parents to their pregnant daughter. Pregnant women often experience heightened appetite and increased food cravings. This superstition advises against suppressing one's appetite, as pregnant individuals require adequate nutritional intake to support fetal development. If a pregnant woman restricts her food intake, negative consequences for the fetus may arise. This superstition is delivered with a low vocal tone. Its fundamental purpose is to encourage pregnant women to maintain adequate nutrition for fetal wellbeing, thereby preventing excessive salivation in the newborn. Additional examples of Kubuang Tigo Baleh superstitions related to pregnancy, birth, infancy, and childhood are examined below.

Wakatu sedang manganduang, indak bulieh bajuhan ujan, tatagua beko.

(When pregnant, one must not be exposed to rain, lest malevolent spirits enter the body).

The aforementioned superstition represents one category of belief within the human life cycle framework. It is directed toward pregnant women and conveyed by their parents. Rain represents an environmental factor that may increase susceptibility to illness, particularly fever. Pregnant individuals are advised to avoid exposure to rain due to potentially unstable immune function that may heighten vulnerability to illness. Parents articulate this superstition when observing their daughter preparing to leave home during rainfall. This superstition is delivered with a relatively elevated tone. Its purpose is to discourage pregnant women from traveling during rain due to perceived health risks for both mother and fetus, alongside the belief that exposure may invite malevolent spiritual influence. Upon hearing this admonition, the pregnant woman typically decides to remain indoors during rainfall.

Discussion

Prenatal Education, Risk Management, and Maternal Behavior Change

The research findings regarding superstitions within the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community represent a manifestation of local wisdom that functions as an informal prenatal education system. This cultural practice is not merely a collection of irrational myths but rather a pedagogical instrument designed to modify maternal behavior for fetal wellbeing. While the term "superstition" spans diverse epistemological domains, ranging from geological nomenclature for natural phenomena (Vavra et al., 2024) to cognitive behavioral heuristics in human decision-making (Liu et al., 2025), in the context of Minangkabau prenatal care, it operates as a sophisticated mechanism for risk management. Similar to how superstitious beliefs influence strategic decision-making and risk aversion in financial or corporate contexts (Fisman et al., 2023; Si et al., 2025), pregnant women in Kubuang Tigo Baleh utilize these prohibitions as cognitive heuristics to navigate the profound uncertainties and vulnerabilities of gestation (Ulya, 2019).

The psychological efficacy of these superstitions lies in their ability to manipulate the mother's locus of control. Pregnancy is inherently a state of high anxiety and perceived low control over fetal outcomes. Hoffmann et al. (2022) assert that superstitious beliefs significantly heighten the "feeling at risk" while simultaneously offering an illusion of control over unpredictable threats. In the Kubuang Tigo Baleh context, adhering to prohibitions (e.g., avoiding chipped plates or rain) provides pregnant women with an actionable framework to mitigate perceived dangers. This aligns with Caspi et al. (2023) concept of "half-belief," where individuals may not literally believe a plate will cause a cleft lip, yet the emotional resonance of the myth compels compliance. Furthermore, Monson et al. (2025)

differentiate between passive superstition and the illusion of control; here, the superstitions are active behavioral regulators that transform passive anxiety into proactive health-seeking behavior. [Carlson et al. \(2009\)](#) further support this by demonstrating how trait superstition fundamentally alters behavioral patterns to reduce cognitive dissonance in high-stakes situations ([Ulya et al., 2018](#)).

From a medical anthropology perspective, the adaptive nature of these prenatal superstitions is particularly striking when contrasted with the detrimental effects of superstition in other health contexts. [Uwayezu et al. \(2022\)](#) highlight the frequent conflict between science and superstition in medical practices, where traditional beliefs often hinder clinical adherence. Similarly, harmful superstitious practices have been documented to perpetuate stigma and violence, such as the stigma surrounding dementia in Bangladeshi communities ([Hussain et al., 2024](#)) or the tragic phenomenon of juju-driven pedicide in Africa ([Owusu, 2025](#)). In stark contrast, the Minangkabau prenatal superstitions do not conflict with biomedical goals but rather serve as a culturally congruent vehicle for them. As noted by [Al-Tarawneh et al. \(2023\)](#), while superstitious thinking can negatively impact treatment adherence in chronic diseases, in this specific ethnopedagogical context, it paradoxically enhances adherence to protective health norms. [Mujur \(2025\)](#) affirm that the fetus within Indonesian culture is positioned as a subject responsive to parental behavioral patterns, making these superstitions an effective initial ethical curriculum.

Analysis of specific prohibitions reveals this synchronization between physical safety and psychological protection. The prohibition against using chipped plates (*piriang rompeang*) mitigates physical injury risks that could trigger sudden stress, which scientifically disrupts hormonal stability transmitted to the fetus ([Huizink, 2004](#)). Prohibitions against wearing tightly wrapped hijabs (*jilbab lilik*) ergonomically ensure unobstructed respiratory systems, crucial for fetal brain metabolism ([Van de Carr, 1986](#); [Verny & Kelly, 1981](#)). The practice of peeling sugarcane upside down (*mangubak tabu sungsang*) embodies a philosophy of efficiency and resource management, reducing maternal anxiety regarding breech positions ([Smith, 2021](#); [Utami, 2023](#)). Furthermore, prohibitions against sitting on cement floors (*duduak di simin*) and in doorways (*duduak di pintu*) function as instruments of social control to maintain public decorum and prevent physical discomfort ([Erni et al., 2025](#); [Nichter, 2022](#); [Rabiatunnisa, 2024](#); [Ulya, 2018](#)). The prohibition against suppressing appetite (*manahan salero*) ensures adequate nutritional intake, directly impacting future cognitive development ([Nopianda, 2022](#); [Shi-xu, 2020](#); [Ulya et al., 2022](#)), while avoiding rain (*baujan ujan*) protects the fluctuating maternal immune system from infectious risks ([Ulya, 2022b](#)).

Ethnopedagogical Perspectives, Gender, and Social Order

From an ethnopedagogical perspective, superstitions within the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community function as an informal curriculum transmitting protective values and maternal ethics. [Ulya \(2016\)](#) articulates that oral literature embedded within superstitions contains axiological dimensions that internalize ethical values. This aligns with the indigenous pedagogical knowledge framework ([McKinley, 2017](#); [Ulya, 2024](#)) and decolonizing methodologies ([Smith, 2021](#); [Ulya, 2025](#)), which affirm local knowledge systems as legitimate epistemologies. At the macrolinguistic level, these beliefs demonstrate discursive complexity encompassing pragmatic and paralinguistic aspects. Soft intonation, gestural cues, and pragmatic markers like *beko* function as persuasive strategies ([Ulya, 2017](#)), aligning with [Shi-xu's \(2020\)](#) cultural discourse analysis approach.

Furthermore, these superstitions reflect subtle mechanisms of gender regulation and social ordering. While [Jaim \(2024\)](#) argues that superstitions can lead to the subjugation of women in economic and small business spheres, and [Fagan & Rawlings \(2025\)](#) note how "superstitions" are weaponized in political and gender policy discourses, the Minangkabau prenatal context reinterprets this dynamic. Here, the regulation of pregnant women's behavior (e.g., not sitting in doorways) is not about patriarchal subjugation but about maintaining cosmic and social harmony (*sumbang duo baleh*) in a matrilineal society ([Ulya, 2025](#)). [Sargent & Larchanché \(2019\)](#) and [Nichter \(2022\)](#) support this, demonstrating that such cultural beliefs are adaptive logic systems that shape cultural identity and harmony with the environment.

Despite global modernization, which [Pelizzo et al. \(2023\)](#) argue often alters or dilutes traditional cultural change, and the persistence of modern superstitions like Feng Shui in contemporary housing decisions [Hassan et al. \(2023\)](#), prenatal superstitions in Minangkabau remain resilient. [Ulya \(2025\)](#)

proposes a mitigation approach that does not reject tradition but critically reinterprets it. This syncretism ensures that local wisdom remains relevant, creating authentic parenting patterns rooted in cultural identity while integrating evidence-based health principles.

This study possesses several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, regarding internal validity, the interpretation of latent meanings behind superstitions relies heavily on the researcher's subjective deconstruction and the self-reported narratives of the informants. There is an inherent risk of researcher bias in translating oral, paralinguistic, and macrolinguistic data into written pedagogical frameworks. Second, in terms of external validity and generalizability, the findings are deeply contextualized within the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community in Solok Regency. The specific socio-cultural dynamics of this matrilineal society may not be universally generalizable to other Minangkabau sub-ethnic groups (such as those in Agam or Tanah Datar) or to patrilineal societies across Indonesia. Third, the study lacks a cross-cultural comparative dimension; thus, it cannot definitively establish whether the psycholinguistic mechanisms of "half-belief" and behavioral compliance observed here are unique to Minangkabau culture or prevalent in other indigenous prenatal traditions globally. Finally, this qualitative design captures the perceived pedagogical functions of superstitions but does not quantitatively measure the actual physiological or psychological outcomes on the mothers and fetuses.

To address the aforementioned limitations and expand the theoretical boundaries of prenatal ethnopedagogy, several concrete recommendations for future research are proposed. *First*, future studies should employ mixed-methods or quantitative longitudinal designs to measure the actual impact of adherence to these superstitions on maternal stress biomarkers and fetal neurosensory development. *Second*, comparative ethnopedagogical research is highly recommended to contrast the prenatal belief systems of the matrilineal Minangkabau with patrilineal or bilateral societies in Indonesia to identify universal versus culture-specific pedagogical mechanisms. *Third*, psychological studies should investigate the "half-belief" phenomenon (Caspi et al., 2023) among modern, urbanized, and highly educated Minangkabau pregnant women to understand how cognitive dissonance between scientific medical knowledge and traditional superstitions is negotiated in contemporary settings. *Fourth*, intervention studies should be conducted to develop and test culturally sensitive prenatal education modules that explicitly integrate these local wisdoms with modern obstetric care, thereby evaluating the efficacy of syncretic health interventions. Finally, macrolinguistic and discourse analysis should be expanded to explore how these prenatal superstitions are being transformed, preserved, or commodified in digital media and modern parenting communities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that various traditional beliefs within the Kubuang Tigo Baleh community constitute effective prenatal pedagogical instruments for holistically shaping the behavior and mental preparedness of pregnant women. These prohibitions functionally integrate aspects of physical safety, psychological protection for the fetus, and the instillation of social ethics through suggestive communication mechanisms. In direct response to the research objectives, this study explicitly confirms that these local practices are not irrational myths, but rather functional informal curricula that effectively regulate maternal behavior and ensure fetal well-being during gestation. This phenomenon demonstrates that traditional societies have long understood the urgency of prenatal intervention as a fundamental foundation in human development. Furthermore, integrating Minangkabau local wisdom with modern science creates a culturally responsive paradigm in parenting education, harmonizing empirical medical evidence with traditional values to enhance parental participation in prenatal caregiving. To build upon these findings, future research should conduct quantitative assessments to measure the empirical effectiveness of these traditional practices on maternal and fetal health outcomes, or pursue comparative studies with other ethnic groups to identify universal versus culture-specific prenatal pedagogies.

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