



## Mortality and psychological stress in pregnant and postnatal women during COVID-19 outbreak in West Sumatra, Indonesia

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## Mortality and psychological stress in pregnant and postnatal women during COVID-19 outbreak in West Sumatra, Indonesia

Since COVID-19 was confirmed in Indonesia on 3 March 2020, the number of positive cases has surged to 22,750, with 1391 deaths as of 26 May. The virus has affected both young and elderly individuals in almost 34 provinces; a region in the top 10 red zones is West Sumatra, especially Padang City. Case reports on 16 May 2020 showed that there were 62 infected regions with at least 250 cases.

This situation has increased the stress and anxiety levels of pregnant women and has prevented them from receiving medical checkups. Their anxiety about where to go for antenatal care can endanger their pregnancy. They are worried about antenatal care because hospitals and community health centers are providing limited services at this time. In fact, many private midwives and doctors are unavailable. From March to May, 16 pregnant women identified as being at high risk have died. The data on high-risk pregnant and postpartum women show 14 deaths in West Sumatra. This tragedy has occurred in the following areas in the city/regions of West Sumatra (city/region, number of cases, cause of death): Belimbing, 1, postpartum; Anak Air, 2, pregnancy and postpartum; Pemancungan, 1, postpartum; Bungus, 2, postpartum; Air Dingin, 1, postpartum; Pauh, 1, postpartum; DadokTunggulHitam, 1, postpartum; Pegambiran, 1, pregnancy; Rawang, 1, pregnancy; Bukit Tinggi, 1 pregnancy and 2 postpartum.

According to the data above, pregnant women who experienced psychological distress during the Covid-19 outbreak because they could not receive health services had an increased risk of death. This situation is concerning, especially for medical personnel and psychological experts. If left untreated, the psychological stress experienced by pregnant women during the COVID-19 outbreak could contribute to maternal mortality. In addition, the COVID-19 outbreak has increased the psychological distress experienced by postpartum women. While a short message services policy has improved prenatal and postnatal maternal health in Indonesia, additional policies are needed to provide online services for pregnant and postpartum women.

On 8 May 2020, the Indonesian Ministry of Health issued guidelines to health services, especially regarding pregnant women, specifying that medical examinations should be performed under agreements with doctors in health facilities and that routine checks (USG) would be temporarily postponed. Pregnant women were

encouraged to study the MCH handbook. A third-trimester pregnancy examination must still be conducted and several other provisions must follow the health protocol related to COVID-19. Despite these protocols, pregnant women in West Sumatra are nevertheless worried about coming to health services for fear of contracting COVID-19. This situation has contributed to psychological stress during pregnancy and postpartum depression.

Psychological disorders experienced by mothers during pregnancy can affect the fetus and have long-term consequences [1]. In addition, postpartum women may experience mood disorders, anxiety, and depression, which also impacts infants and their fathers. Maternal psychological disorders adversely affect the cognition and perinatal parental beliefs of the baby, which adversely impacts development [2]. Untreated postpartum psychological symptoms harm children's social development [3] and endanger the mother's safety [4]. Therefore, sufficient attention must be devoted to treating depression and psychological distress in pregnant and postpartum women, in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates. The Indonesian government, through the website [covid-19.go.id](http://covid-19.go.id), has disseminated guidelines for pregnant women during the outbreak. Health workers, in collaboration with other experts, must develop online psychological treatment services using WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom Cloud Meetings, and other applications. I hope that this paper will help create synergy between medical personnel and psychological experts in their joint fight against the physical and psychological effects of COVID-19.

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