

Thesis Title	Socio- cultural Dimensions of Anemia Among Pregnant Women in Rural Areas of Java, Indonesia
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ABSTRACT

Anemia is a major problem in Indonesia where more than 60% of pregnant women are affected. Social science can contribute to addressing this problem by investigating the relationship between socio-cultural, gender factors and anemia. This research, based on cultural and gender approach examines how Javanese socio-cultural factors predispose pregnant women to anemia and argues that women's status in the family and community affects the health status of pregnant women.

Qualitative research was conducted among 19 pregnant women (10 anemic and 9 non-anemic) in two villages in Purworejo, Central Java, Indonesia from August to December 1996. Multiple methods were used including focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, participant observation, tape recording and field notes.

Results show that Javanese women believe anemia to be a normal condition and a natural outcome of pregnancy which is caused by the influence of the unborn child (*gawan bayi*). They believe this condition will disappear after the delivery process. Javanese people practice anemia preventive behaviors in a variety of ways, including consuming animal blood, herbal medicine (called *jamu*) and iron tablets. However, iron tablet acceptance among pregnant women appears to be low because they are not aware of its benefits.

Food beliefs and practices among females throughout the life-cycle (including childhood, adolescence, pregnancy and the postpartum period) are also barriers to women receiving sufficient and appropriate nutrients. During pregnancy, women continue to be influenced by these beliefs and practices and restrict consumption of

several types of food in order to avoid an increase in infant weight and certain illnesses. The women's workload (both domestic and economic), number of pregnancies, socio-economic status of family, reproductive health problems, and child-rearing burden contribute to a worsening of the anemic condition of pregnant women in comparison to non-anemic pregnant women.

The study also revealed that pregnant women of low socio-economic status (S.E.S.) are more likely become anemic than women of high S.E.S. The anemic pregnant women were found to have heavier domestic and economic work loads as well as less power and responsibility over their reproductive health than non-anemic pregnant women.