



**BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE (SEFT)  
IN PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, AND POSTPARTUM PERIOD : A  
LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Authors:**

**Nadhiati Awlia Nasution<sup>1</sup>, Anita Rachmawati<sup>2</sup>, Juntika Nurihsan<sup>3</sup>, Ari Indra Susanti<sup>4</sup>,  
Siska Bradinda Putri Sudirman<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Master of Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Medicine Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Education University of Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Public Health, Faculty of Medicine Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Midwifery Department, Faculty of Medicine Andalas University, Padang, Indonesia

Corresponding Email : [nadhiatyawlia@gmail.com](mailto:nadhiatyawlia@gmail.com)

**About the Author**

1. 1<sup>st</sup> Author : Nadhiati Awlia Nasution, S.Keb.,Bd  
Affiliation : Magister Kebidanan, Fakultas Kedokteran, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia  
Mailing address : Kampung Jawo, Jorong II Pasar Rao, Rao, Pasaman  
Email of author : [nadhiatyawlia@gmail.com](mailto:nadhiatyawlia@gmail.com)  
Orcid ID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0161-5640>  
Google Scholar URL : [https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=JlpvI\\_MAAAAJ](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=JlpvI_MAAAAJ)  
Phone number : 081266294724
2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Author : Dr. Anita Rachmawati, dr., SpOG.Subsp. FER  
Affiliation : Departemen Obstetri dan Ginekologi, Fakultas Kedokteran, Universitas Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia  
Mailing address : Jl. Mars Tengah No. 30, Bandung  
Email of author : [arspog2000@gmail.com](mailto:arspog2000@gmail.com)  
Orcid ID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3365-7167>  
Google Scholar URL : <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=id&user=oaALGjsAAAAJ>  
Phone number : 08122395883
3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Author : Prof. Dr. Juntika Nurihsan., M.Pd  
Affiliation : Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia  
Mailing address : Jln. Aster no. 9 Blok Cemara Pondok Hijau Indah, Bandung  
Email of author : [juntikanurihsan@upi.edu](mailto:juntikanurihsan@upi.edu)  
Orcid ID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9955-0349>  
Google Scholar URL : <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=IQ2FppcAAAAJ>  
Phone number : 0811236107
4. 4<sup>th</sup> Author : Dr. Ari Indra Susanti, SST., M.Keb  
Affiliation : Departemen Ilmu Kesehatan Masyarakat, Fakultas Kedokteran, Universitas

- Padjadjaran, Bandung, Indonesia
- Mailing address : Jl. Jatinangor, Sumedang Raya km 21, Kabupaten Sumedang
- Email of author : [ari.indra@unpad.ac.id](mailto:ari.indra@unpad.ac.id)
- Orcid ID : <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6638-5992>
- Google Scholar URL : <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=jOCQIp4AAAAJ>
- Phone number : 081320037240
5. 5<sup>th</sup> Author : Siska Bradinda Putri Sudirman, S.Keb.,Bd.,M.Keb
- Affiliation : Departemen Kebidanan, Fakultas Kedokteran, Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia
- Mailing address : Indarung, Lubuk Kilangan, Padang, Sumatera Barat
- Email of author : [Siskabradindaputri@gmail.com](mailto:Siskabradindaputri@gmail.com)
- Orcid ID : <http://orcid.org/0009-0008-2895-3408>
- Google Scholar URL : <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=id&authuser=1&user=VUxegfcAAAAJ>
- Phone number : 082284454425

### **ABSTRACT**

*Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period represent natural experiences for women, with physical and psychological changes occurring during these phases. During pregnancy, there are hormonal fluctuations that can affect the mother's mood and emotions. Therefore, psychological support is needed for pregnant women because it can prevent complications during labor and postpartum. To prevent these conditions, complementary therapies are needed, such as Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) as a holistic midwifery care for the physical and emotional health of the mother. The focus of this study was to evaluate the benefits of SEFT therapy in the care of pregnant women during pregnancy, during labor, and postpartum period. The research methodology utilized a systematic literature review sourced from various databases including ProQuest, PubMed, Oxford, SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journal, and Google Scholar. The PRISMA protocol guided data extraction and categorization. Results Ten relevant articles identified that SEFT therapy contributes to improving maternal well-being and cardiovascular health during pregnancy. In addition, the therapy has been shown to reduce anxiety among pregnant, pre-cesarean section, and laboring mothers, and has demonstrated efficacy in reducing post-cesarean section pain and improving postpartum maternal sleep.*

*Keywords: anxiety, holistic midwifery care, pain, seft therapy, sleep quality*

### **ABSTRAK**

*Kehamilan, persalinan, dan masa nifas merupakan pengalaman yang alamiah bagi ibu, dimana terjadi perubahan fisik dan psikologis selama fase tersebut. Pada kehamilan terjadi fluktuasi hormon yang menyebabkan perubahan suasana hati dan emosi ibu. Oleh karena itu dibutuhkan dukungan psikologis bagi ibu hamil karena dapat mencegah terjadinya komplikasi selama persalinan dan pasca persalinan. Untuk mencegah kondisi tersebut maka dibutuhkan terapi komplementer, seperti Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) sebagai asuhan kebidanan yang holistik untuk kesehatan fisik dan emosional ibu. Tujuan dari penelitian ini untuk mengevaluasi manfaat terapi SEFT dalam asuhan kebidanan selama kehamilan, persalinan dan nifas. Metodologi penelitian menggunakan tinjauan literatur sistematis yang bersumber dari berbagai database termasuk ProQuest, PubMed, Oxford, SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journal, dan Google Scholar. Protokol PRISMA memandu ekstraksi dan kategorisasi data. Hasil penelitian terdapat sepuluh artikel yang relevan teridentifikasi bahwa terapi SEFT berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan kesejahteraan dan kesehatan jantung ibu selama kehamilan. Selain itu, terapi ini telah terbukti dapat mengurangi kecemasan di kalangan ibu hamil, pra-bedah sesar, dan ibu yang akan melahirkan, serta telah*

*menunjukkan kemanjuran untuk mengurangi nyeri pasca-bedah sesar dan memperbaiki kualitas tidur ibu pascapersalinan.*

*Kata kunci: kecemasan, asuhan kebidanan hlistik, nyeri, terapi seft, kualitas tidur*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Pregnancy, childbirth, and the postpartum period represent critical phases in a woman's life. This transitional period often brings about physical discomfort due to physiological changes in the body, which can trigger psychological issues such as anxiety. The mental well-being of pregnant women is a significant health challenge for society (Ningrum, 2017). Anxiety emerges as a prevalent mental health concern during pregnancy, if left unaddressed may persist during labor and the postpartum period. Heightened anxiety levels can lead to increased cortisol production, thereby elevating the risk of various complications during labor and postpartum, including cesarean section, miscarriage, fetal growth retardation, preterm labour, low birthweight, as well as susceptibility to allergies and compromised immune function in newborns, and postpartum depression (Oktaviani & Nugraheny, 2019; Sutarso et al., 2022).

While pregnancy and childbirth are biological events, the psychological experience of childbirth, affecting women's mental, and social well-being in both the short and long term. Leaving an indelible memories that can be positive or negative and traumatizing. Midwives have a crucial role in providing holistic care to ensure a positive psychological childbirth experience by offering physical, emotional, and social support, thereby boosting women's confidence in their birthing abilities (Olza et al., 2018). During puerperium, physiological changes occur, including reproduction system, breast, digestive and urinary systems, musculoskeletal system, endocrine system, vital signs, cardiovascular system, blood circulation, hematological system, respiratory system, integumentary system, fluid and electrolyte balance, as well as weight loss and psychological adaptation processes (Martin et al., 2022). These physical changes cause discomfort, such as fatigue, post-labor pain, stress, anxiety, family tensions, and sleep disturbances, can exacerbate maternal psychological changes, leading to mood swings and feelings of sadness. To overcome this discomfort, postpartum women support from family members and health service providers to improve postpartum well-being( Ozturk et al., 2017).

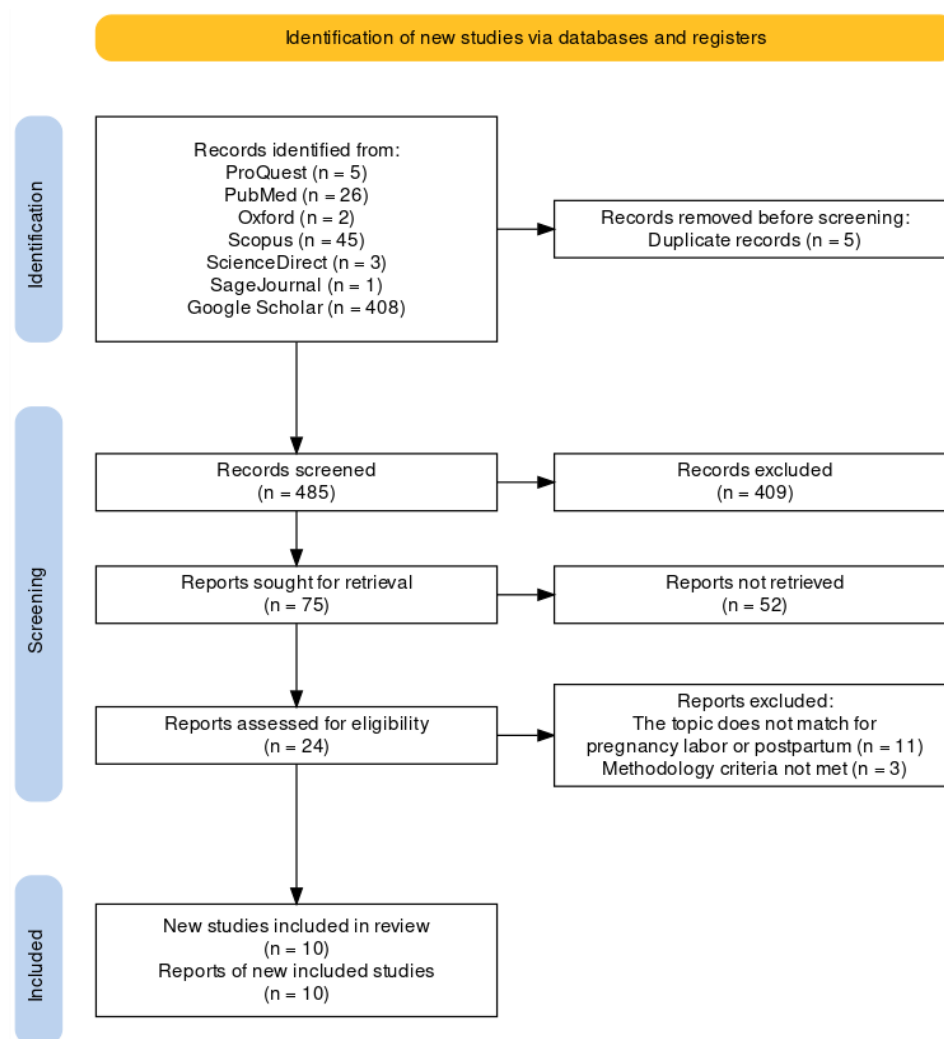
As frontline health service providers, midwives must provide holistic and comprehensive midwifery care, especially in dealing psychosocial aspects to facilitate mothers' adaptation to changes in the role of motherhood. One effective approach to providing psychosocial support is a complementary therapy, with Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) as an alternative for dealing with physical and psychological complaints (Widiyono et al., 2022).

SEFT is a holistic therapy that incorporates spiritual elements with the energy system by tapping specific points in the body to improve emotional, cognitive, and behavioral well-being. This technique involves three main steps, namely: set-up, tune-in, and tapping, which are equipped with spiritual elements, such as prayer during the intervention (Zainuddin, 2015). Spiritual components in the therapy amplify its effectiveness with, fostering sincerity, positive acceptance of illness, resilience, hope for recovery, and opportunities for personal growth (Sari et al., 2021). The writing article aims to evaluate the benefits of SEFT therapy in midwifery care during pregnancy, labor and postpartum period.

## METHOD

The research employed a literature review methodology, utilizing secondary data obtained from previous studies following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) guidelines. Articles were gathered through searches conducted on various databases including ProQuest, PubMed, Oxford, SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, SAGE Journal, and Google Scholar using the keywords "SEFT Therapy," "SEFT in Pregnancy," "SEFT in Childbirth," "SEFT in Postpartum," "Hand Tapping," and "SEFT Benefit."

The inclusion criteria are that the selected articles must be original works published within the last five years (2019 to March 2024) and available in English or Indonesian. The initial online search yielded a total of 485 articles. Subsequently, all articles were analyzed based on keywords and research objectives, so there are 10 articles to serve as the basis for this study's analysis. The process of article selection is illustrated in Figure 1 (PRISMA chart).



**Figure 1. PRISMA Chart**

Literature review from the article is explained in Table 1 below :

**Table 1**

### Literature Review

No	Authors, year	Journal	Title	Design, country	Sample	Intervention	Result
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1.	Asri Hidayat, Ova Emilia, Fatwa Sari Tetra Dewi, Sumarni (Hidayat et al., 2021)	Bali Medical Journal (Bali MedJ) Volume 10, Number 1: 361-365. Doi: 10.15562/bmj.v10i1.2178	Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) Improved Autonomic Nervous Activity In Primipara	Quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design	62 respondents primiparous women	SEFT was administered during 9 months pregnant and again 1 week before the expected delivery time.	There are differences in the average ratio of the two groups. In the intervention group, there was a decrease in the average LF/HF ratio, while in the control group, there was an increase. It can be inferred that SEFT effectively reduces the average LF/HF ratio in primiparous women which may indicate improve balance among sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous responses.
2.	Sarimundi, Widiyanti (Sarimundi, Carolin, Lubis, et al., 2021)	Jurnal Kebidanan, Vol 7, No 1 : 139-144. Doi : 10.33024/jkm.v7i1.3146	SEFT (Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique) Therapy to Deal with Anxiety in Labor	Quasi-experimental pre and post-test design	25 respondents in third trimester	SEFT therapy according to SOP by tapping on 18 energy meridians.	After giving SEFT there is a decline observed in the mean anxiety score pre- and post-intervention. Consequently, it can be inferred that the provision of SEFT therapy significantly influence maternal anxiety levels in facing labor.
3.	Anggraini Dwi Putranti (Putranti, 2021a)	Jurnal Psikologi, Vol. 17, No 2 : 53-62	SEFT (Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique) to Reduce Anxiety of Third-Trimester Pregnant Women	Quasi experimental, pretest-posttest with control group	24 respondents in third trimester	SEFT therapy was given to the experimental group (12 people) while 12 people served as the control group.	After giving SEFT therapy, a notable contrast is evident between the two groups. Specifically, the control group exhibited a mean score of 18.5, whereas the intervention group demonstrated a mean score of 6.5. Thus, it can be deduced that administering SEFT has a discernible impact on alleviating

							anxiety among third-trimester pregnant women in the intervention group.
4.	Yuniarti, Ari Suwondo, Runjati (Yuniarti Runjati, 2019)	Jurnal Ilmu Keperawatan dan Kebidanan, Vol. 8, No. 2	The Effect of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (Seft) Therapy on Cortisol and Immunoglobulin E Levels: (Anxiety Study in Pregnant Women in Independent Practice Midwives in Semarang City)	Quasy experimental, pretest-posttest with control group	30 respondents of third-trimester primigravida pregnant women with gestational age 28-35 weeks	A condensed version of SEFT therapy lasting for 14 days, conducted by third-trimester primigravida pregnant women, who self-administer it nightly.	SEFT therapy has a notable impact on decreasing cortisol hormone levels and Immunoglobulin E levels in third-trimester primigravida women. The mean decrease in cortisol hormone levels was 74.08 nmol/L, while the mean decrease in Immunoglobulin E levels was 7.39 IU/mL. SEFT therapy has a good role in reducing the hormone cortisol, in other words SEFT therapy can reduce stress and anxiety in third trimester primigravida pregnant women.
5.	Sri Rejeki, Yuni Retno Santi, Eni Hidayati, Rozikhan Rozikhan (Rejeki et al., 2022)	Jurnal Ilmu Keperawatan dan Kebidanan, Vol.13 No.2 : 543-548	The Effectiveness of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) Therapy on Anxiety Levels in Preoperative Sectio Caesarea Patients	Quasi-experimental, pre and post-test design	28 respondents pre Caesarea Sectio	SEFT therapy according to SOP with 3 steps namely Set Up, Tune In, and Tapping on 18 points along the 12 energy pathways of the body.	There is a reduction observed in the mean anxiety score both pre and post intervention, specially from 4.86 to 3.96. This suggests that SEFT therapy has an impact on alleviating anxiety among preoperative SC patients.
6.	Emilia (Emilia, 2024)	Archives of The Medicine and Case Reports, Vol.5, No.1 : 597-600. Doi : 10.37275/A mcr.v5i1.478	The Effect of Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique (SEFT) Therapy on Reducing Labor Anxiety in Primigravida	Quasi experimental, pretest-posttest with control group	26 primigravidas were segregated into two categories: the treatment group, consistin	Intervention group received SEFT therapy for a total of three sessions, with one session held per week.	The findings of the study reveal a notable decline in labor anxiety within the intervention group retrieved from administration of SEFT therapy. This is supported by the mean labor anxiety score

					g of 13 individuals and the control group, also comprising 13 individuals	within the intervention group, which decreased from 29.83 to 21.77 in posttest. In contrast, the mean labor anxiety score within the control group remained constant, with values of 28.08 recorded during both the pretest and posttest phases. From these outcomes, it can be summarised that SEFT therapy holds the potential to lighten labor anxiety among primigravida women.	
7.	Siti Maesarah, Hamid Mukhlis, Fenti Widyastuti(Maesarah et al., 2019)	Wellness And Healthy Magazine, Vol. 1, No.1 : 7-14. Doi : 10.30604/well.2112019.	Effectiveness of Hand Tapping Therapy on Anxiety in Women Who Are Undergoing Labor	Quasi-experimental, One group pretest and posttest design	30 respondents of laboring mothers	SEFT therapy according to SOP is given to laboring mothers for 20 minutes	Before hand tapping, the mean anxiety score in laboring mothers was 66.87 and after hand tapping the mean anxiety score decreased to 59.63. So it can be concluded that the provision of hand tapping effectively reduces the anxiety of laboring women.
8.	Lestari Puji Astuti, Ikha Siswiyanti, Sonhaji (Astuti et al., 2022)	Jurnal Riset Kesehatan. Vol. 11, No.1 : 14-20. Doi : 10.31983/jrk.v11i1.8468	The Effect Of Spiritual Freedom Technique (SEFT) On Anxiety During The Active Phase I Labor	Pre-experimental research design	16 respondents in active phase I labor	SEFT therapy according to SOP is performed during labor	The mean anxiety score prior to SEFT therapy was 24.44, meanwhile mean anxiety score after SEFT therapy was 19.06. This indicates that SEFT has an impact on lowering maternal anxiety scores during labor.
9.	Dwi Widyarini, Grido HS, Titik Suhartini	Jurnal Ilmu Kesehatan Mandira Cendekia (JIK-MC),	The Effect of SEFT (Spiritual Emotional Freedom	Pre-experimental research and one group pre-	20 respondents post caesarea section	A combination of SEFT therapy and lavender aromatherapy	SEFT therapy and lavender aromatherapy can alleviate pain levels in patients

	(Widyarni & Suhartini, 2023)	Vol. 2, No. 10 : 468-479.	Technique) Therapy and Lavender Aromatherapy on Pain Reduction in Post Caesarea Section Patients at RS Sahabat	post-test design			who have undergone a caesarea section by providing a relaxing effect that fosters a sense of calm and relaxation in patients.
10	Nana Andriana, Tri Nur Kristina, Dwi Susilawati (Nana Andriana et al., 2023)	Nurse and Health: Jurnal Keperawatan, Vol 12, No. 1 : 7-14. Doi : 10.36720/nhjk.v12i1.392	Spiritual Emotional Freedom Technique To Improve Sleep Quality For Postpartum Mothers	Quasi experimental, pretest-postest with control group	56 postpartum mothers	The treatment took place biweekly for a duration of four weeks, with each SEFT session lasting 20 minutes. Meanwhile, the control group underwent standard therapy, which consisted of dhikr therapy.	In the intervention group, the mean score for sleep quality prior to treatment was 10.86 (indicating poor sleep quality), which significantly decline to 5.25 after treatment (still within the poor sleep quality range). Conversely, the control group exhibited a sleep quality score of 10.89 before treatment and 10.71 after the intervention. Notably, subjective sleep quality, sleep latency, sleep duration, and sleep disturbance were significantly lower in the intervention group compared to the control group. In summary, the SEFT intervention can notably enhance sleep quality among parturition women, albeit it remains within the bad category. Nevertheless, there is potential for considerable improvement in the sleep quality score, particularly across four out of the seven

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Retrieved from the search results that have been carried out, 485 articles match the keywords. The articles were then analyzed in depth, resulting in 10 articles to be discussed in this literature review. The articles analyzed included publications published in the last five years (2019 to March 2024) and sourced from databases such as ProQuest, PubMed, Oxford, Scopus, ScienceDirect, SageJournal and, Google Scholar. This research focuses on SEFT complementary therapy that can overcome women's problems during the reproductive period, especially during pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum, which arise due to hormonal changes. To address these issues, a comprehensive literature review was conducted resulting in six articles discussing SEFT therapy during pregnancy, two articles discussing SEFT therapy during labor, and two articles discussing SEFT therapy during the postpartum period.

Table 1 serves a summary of the literature review highlighting the main characteristics such as research design, sample, interventions provided as well as the results obtained from the studies conducted. The findings of the analysis in Table 1 reveal the benefits of SEFT therapy during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum. SEFT therapy is a form of therapy that incorporate psychological and spiritual aspects by involving light tapping using fingers at certain points to overcome emotional and physical problems. This technique aims to maximize the potential and power within each individual, improve performance, clear emotional burdens to achieve inner peace and create harmonious relationships with others. This therapy is designed to complement existing psychotherapeutic methods (Zainuddin, 2015). There are some of the benefits of SEFT therapy during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum:

### 1. **Improve Maternal Well-being and Cardiovascular Health during Pregnancy**

Throughout pregnancy, cardiac output increased significantly by 30% to 50% compared to non-pregnant states, particularly evident from the 30th week onwards. This physiological transition causes bladder volume, total blood volume, and decreased systemic vascular resistance (Dartiwen & Nurhayati, 2019). The correlation between the autonomic nervous system and the cardiovascular system can be gauged through heart rate variability (HRV), which exhibits a tendency to decrease initially but then stabilize during pregnancy, with further increases observed as gestation progresses. These changes may lead to anxiety or depression as evidenced by reduced parasympathetic control and increased sympathetic influence on HRV. The LF/HF acts as a measure indicating the overall balance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. Elevated values signify sympathetic system predominance, correlating with heightened anxiety levels, whereas lower values indicate parasympathetic system dominance, reflecting a state of relaxation or absence of anxiety (Putri et al., 2022). Inadequate adaptation of the cardiovascular system during pregnancy has been associated with complications such as preeclampsia, premature birth, persistent hypertension, and increased risks of maternal and fetal illness (Braeken et al., 2017). The implementation of psychotherapy interventions like SEFT has demonstrated efficacy in decreasing the LF/HF ratio of HRV among primiparous women in their third-trimester. This reduction potentially enhances maternal cardiovascular adaptability and may contribute to decreased maternal morbidity and mortality. Nonetheless, larger-scale studies are warranted to validate these findings across diverse populations and religious backgrounds (Hidayat et al., 2021).

### 2. **Reduces Anxiety Levels in Pregnant Women**

Pregnant women are very vulnerable to psychological conditions such as anxiety. Anxiety of pregnant women is an emotional reaction of pregnant women to changes in themselves which include feelings

of worry, tension, and anxiety that arise in response to physical, psychological, and social changes that occur during pregnancy (Yustiari et al., 2023). It is said to be anxiety because they feel anxious about what will happen to themselves and their babies during the delivery process. Anxiety and worry of pregnant women if not taken seriously, anxiety and worry during pregnancy can persist into labor and the postpartum period, potentially leading to complications such as the risk of preeclampsia, can stimulate uterine contractions, premature pregnancy, miscarriage, lack of prenatal care, reduced breastfeeding intensity, and even stress and depression in the postpartum period (Abazarnejad et al., 2019; Silalahi & Kurnia, 2023). SEFT therapy emerges as a non-pharmacological approach for managing anxiety during pregnancy, offering methods that are safe for both the mother and fetus without any allergic or drug-related side effects. This therapeutic technique focuses on enhancing spiritual well-being to promote relaxation and alleviate anxiety among pregnant women. In the realm of healthcare, spirituality plays a vital role, and SEFT operates on principles akin to acupuncture and acupressure. By targeting specific points along the body's 12 pathways of energy flow, referred to as energy meridians, SEFT aims to positively impact overall health (Sarimunadi, Carolin, & Lubis, 2021). Studies investigating the effects of SEFT therapy on anxiety have included various participant groups, such as primigravida, those in their third trimester of pregnancy, and preoperative pregnant women undergoing cesarean section (SC). Across these studies, the findings consistently demonstrate a decrease in mean anxiety scores following therapy sessions. Thus, it can be inferred that SEFT therapy effectively reduces level of anxiety in pregnant women (Emilia, 2024; Putranti, 2021; Rejeki et al., 2022; Sarimunadi, Carolin, & Lubis, 2021; Yuniarti Runjati, 2019)

### **3. Reducing Postpartum Pain Following Cesarean Section Surgery**

Cesarean section (CS) delivery involves a surgical procedure performed on the abdominal wall and uterus to facilitate childbirth (Jumatri et al., 2022). This mode of delivery is typically employed in cases where various factors preclude the possibility of a normal labor process, such as narrow pelvic dimensions, instances of preeclampsia, premature rupture of membranes, among others. Effective management of postpartum pain experienced by mothers undergoing CS is paramount, as untreated pain can lead to adverse effects on pulmonary, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, endocrine, and immunologic systems (Sun & Pan, 2019). SEFT is a combination of Spiritual Power and Energy Psychology, utilizing principle and techniques aimed at enhancing mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being by harnessing the body's energy system, these principles closely resemble those of acupuncture and acupressure. SEFT is effective, fast, easy, cheap, safe, empowering, universal, compatible, scientific, and halal. Widiyarini's research results show that the combination of SEFT therapy and lavender aromatherapy can reduce pain levels in postoperative sectio caesarea patients by providing a relaxing effect that fosters a sense of calm in patients (Widiyarini & Suhartini, 2023).

### **4. Improve sleep quality in postpartum mothers**

The postpartum period lasts for about six weeks, during which physical and psychological changes occur in the mother. Physical changes include uterine involution, changes in the cervix, uterus, perineum, abdominal wall, urinary tract, lactation, and lochea. During this period, the mother needs adequate rest, including a good night's sleep. However, many postpartum mothers have difficulty sleeping due to discomfort caused by perineal sutures, fatigue, and the frequency of breastfeeding (Safrudin et al., 2023). The outcome of a research conducted by Andriana, et al., used the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) to assess sleep quality following an eight-week SEFT intervention. Despite the notable decrease in scores, the classification of sleep quality remained as poor. Analysis of the PSQI components showed the scores of subjective sleep quality, sleep latency, sleep duration, and sleep disturbance in the intervention group were notably lower compared to those in the control group. From these results, it is concluded that SEFT therapy has the potential to enhance sleep quality across all four components. Additional research is warranted to elucidate the advantages of SEFT in ameliorating sleep quality among postpartum women (Nana Andriana et al., 2023).

## LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This article exclusively relies on data gathered from seven databases, incorporating literary sources in both Indonesian and English languages. However, there is still a lack of research exploring the benefits of SEFT therapy in midwifery care, especially during pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the literature review analysis, Spiritual Emotional Freedom Techniques (SEFT) therapy emerges as a significant components in obstetric care, particularly during pregnancy, labor, and the postpartum period. Regular implementation of SEFT therapy among pregnant women demonstrates notable reductions in anxiety levels, particularly in the third trimester and during labor, thereby alleviating stress associated with fetal health and the birthing process. Furthermore, SEFT therapy proves effective in mitigating post caesarean section surgical pain and enhancing sleep quality among postpartum mothers.

The findings of this literature review underscore the importance of integrating SEFT therapy into midwifery practice to mitigate anxiety and pain levels experienced by mothers while enhancing maternal and fetal well-being. However, it is noteworthy that existing studies predominantly employ pre-experimental and quasi-experimental designs, warranting further research with intervention methodologies and meticulous consideration of SEFT therapy administration intensity and frequency.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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### Conflict Of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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