

## Prenatal Intersubjectivity in Indonesian Culture: Maternal–Fetal Soul Communication as an Embodied Practice among 30 Pregnant Women at Santo Borromeus Hospital, Bandung – Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This study presents an in-depth analysis of prenatal intersubjectivity—namely the inner connection, intuitive communication, and emotional resonance between mothers and their fetuses—within the context of contemporary Indonesian sociocultural life. Using a cultural-phenomenological approach involving 30 pregnant women at Santo Borromeus Hospital in Bandung, the research explores how bodily sensations, emotions, intuition, cultural narratives, and spiritual or familial rituals shape mothers' ways of perceiving and responding to the presence of the fetus. The study focuses particularly on how bodily sensations, especially fetal movements and physiological changes during pregnancy, are interpreted as meaningful forms of communication rather than merely biological reactions. The findings demonstrate that what is often described as “soul communication” is not a supernatural phenomenon, but an embodied process of sensemaking in which mothers link sensory and emotional experiences to the cultural frameworks they inhabit. Religious values, beliefs about the presence of life-essence or spirit, the role of extended family, and local narratives about pregnancy all play crucial roles in shaping maternal interpretations of bodily and fetal signals. This interpretive process generates experiences of prenatal intersubjectivity that enrich maternal emotional well-being, strengthen psychological readiness for childbirth, and enhance the quality of prenatal attachment. As a scientific contribution, this article proposes two new theoretical models: the Prenatal Embodied Intersubjectivity Model (PEIM-Expanded), which explains the dynamics of body–emotion–meaning interconnection in prenatal communication; and the Cultural Intuitive Communication Pathway (CICP), which illustrates how maternal intuition is facilitated and mediated by cultural values and spiritual practices. Together, these models provide a more comprehensive understanding of maternal–fetal communication as a complex and transformative cultural experience.

**Keywords:** Prenatal Intersubjectivity; Maternal–Fetal Intuitive Communication; Embodied Sensemaking; Cultural Phenomenology; Maternal Emotional Health; Prenatal Attachment; Indonesian Pregnancy Culture; Family Narratives and Rituals; Prenatal Embodied Intersubjectivity Model (PEIM-Expanded); Cultural Intuitive Communication Pathway (CICP).

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

In the Indonesian cultural context, the experience of pregnancy is understood as a process that extends far beyond biological change alone. Pregnancy is viewed not merely as a reproductive event, but as a spiritual journey rich with inner dimensions. Many mothers describe the presence of the fetus as a “companion” who communicates through subtle sensations, gentle movements, or intuitions that are difficult to articulate rationally (Suryaningsih et al., 2018). Emotional aspects also play a major role: shifts in mood, sudden feelings of calm, or unexplained anxiety are often interpreted as expressions of a deep bond between mother and fetus (Damri et al., 2024). At the same time, bodily experiences during pregnancy are shaped by traditions, symbols, and cultural meanings embedded within communities (Tunggadewi et al., 2024). Thus, pregnancy in Indonesia is a multidimensional phenomenon that encompasses spirituality, emotion, the body, culture, and social dynamics that merge within a mother’s daily lived experience.

In everyday life, the way mothers interpret bodily movements and signals is strongly influenced by the cultural language used within the family and society. Expressions such as “inner conversation,” “feeling connected,” “subtle whispers,” or “codes from the baby” function not merely as metaphors but as interpretive frameworks that help mothers make sense of their relationship with the fetus (Kusumadewi & Kartini, 2022). These terms construct a symbolic communicative space that allows mothers to understand physical sensations as emotional or spiritual messages. In practice, mothers often link fetal movements to their own mental states—for example, increased fetal activity when they are anxious or a sense of calm when they are tired. Such interpretations illustrate how the body and intuition function as mediums of inner communication. Although these experiences cannot be measured objectively, they consistently appear across cultural narratives and serve as important emotional resources for pregnant women.

Nevertheless, academic discourse often separates aspects of pregnancy into different disciplinary domains: physiology is categorized as medical, intuition as a subjective and less testable realm, and culture as the focus of anthropological inquiry. This fragmentation makes it difficult to understand the holistic experience of pregnant women, even though in daily life these dimensions converge within the maternal body (Triratnawati, 2019). The maternal body becomes the site where biology, emotion, and culture meet and generate meaning. This study seeks to bridge these gaps by integrating a phenomenological–cultural approach that centers the mother’s body and inner experience as primary sources of knowledge. In doing so, the study offers a new perspective for understanding mother–fetus communication as an embodied, intuitive, and cultural process.

### Research Questions

The first research question focuses on how pregnant women understand soul-to-soul communication with the fetus—an experience often described as an inner relationship manifested through bodily sensations, emotional intuition, or mood changes perceived as fetal responses (Atashi et al., 2018). This understanding does not arise suddenly; rather, it is formed through continuous internal reflection and engagement with the mother’s daily bodily rhythms. Many mothers interpret fetal movements, gentle pressure, or specific breathing patterns as “greetings” or meaningful signs (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2015). This interpretive process allows mothers to develop personal ways of listening, responding, and building an inner dialogue with the fetus (Condon & Corkindale, 1997). Thus, this research question encourages exploration of how sensory experiences, feelings, and subjective meaning-making work together to shape prenatal communication.

The second research question aims to examine how culture, family values, and ritual practices facilitate this experience of inner communication. In Indonesian society, pregnancy is often understood as a socio-spiritual event involving not only the mother but also the extended family and community. Rituals such as collective prayers, selamatan ceremonies, religious gatherings, or the practice of playing specific music are believed to strengthen emotional bonding between mother and fetus, including through visual moments such as ultrasound imaging (Van der Zalm & Byrne, 2006). Family values provide narrative frameworks that guide mothers in interpreting bodily signals—for example, advice to “listen to your feelings,” maintain positive thoughts, or pay attention to “signs” from fetal movements. Culture offers symbolic language that enables mothers to articulate their inner experiences with greater ease. Therefore, this research question invites an examination of how social structures and traditions shape the interpretive framework of maternal–fetal soul communication.

The final research question concerns the types of inner messages perceived by mothers and how prenatal intersubjectivity influences maternal emotions, behaviors, and relational patterns. Such inner messages may take the form of sudden calmness, a strong urge to rest, warmth in specific body areas, or fetal movements interpreted as expressions of agreement or discomfort (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2015). These experiences influence maternal emotion regulation, making mothers more attuned to mood changes, more empathic toward the fetus, or more

cautious when making daily decisions. Prenatal intersubjectivity also shapes early relational patterns that become the foundation for postnatal bonding (Condon & Corkindale, 1997). Thus, this research question directs the study toward understanding how emotional dynamics and bodily experiences during pregnancy shape the quality of the mother–fetus relationship both profoundly and sustainably.

### *1.3 Scientific Contributions*

The first scientific contribution of this study is the development of the Prenatal Embodied Intersubjectivity Model (PEIM-Expanded), a theoretical model that broadens the understanding of the inner relationship between mother and fetus. This model asserts that prenatal communication cannot be understood solely as a biological response or as a subjective emotional intuition, but rather as the outcome of a complex interaction among the body, mind, culture, and the mother’s spiritual experiences. PEIM-Expanded illustrates how bodily sensations, fetal movements, hormonal changes, and maternal emotional states are processed through cultural meaning-making frameworks, resulting in a rich intersubjective experience. The model provides an analytical structure for explaining how mothers interpret signals from the fetus as meaningful inner messages. As such, this novelty offers a new paradigm that positions the body and culture at the center of prenatal relational understanding.

The second contribution arises from the provision of robust empirical data collected from 30 pregnant women attending routine antenatal care at Santo Borromeus Hospital in Bandung. This dataset is valuable because the phenomenon of “soul communication” has long been discussed within narrative traditions, family practices, and oral cultural stories without systematic empirical support. This research offers scientific documentation through in-depth interviews, clinical observations, and reflective journaling that reveal consistent patterns across mothers’ experiences. By presenting direct interpretations from participants, this study positions maternal subjective experience as valid data for scientific analysis. The presence of this empirical evidence strengthens the academic foundation for understanding prenatal phenomena as psychological and cultural realities that can be methodologically examined.

The third scientific contribution emerges from the use of a multidisciplinary approach that integrates phenomenology, cultural anthropology, prenatal psychology, and intersubjectivity theory. This approach enables the study to examine the pregnancy experience holistically—not merely as a biological event but as a lived phenomenon woven through meaning, emotion, symbols, and social interaction. Phenomenology is employed to explore mothers’ lived experiences; cultural anthropology explains the roles of values, rituals, and symbolic language; prenatal psychology maps how inner experiences influence maternal–fetal attachment; and intersubjectivity theory clarifies the dynamics of the inner relationship between two developing consciousnesses. This multidisciplinary approach is a significant novelty because it provides a comprehensive analytical framework that transcends the limits of any single discipline, a strategy that remains relatively rare in prenatal studies within the Indonesian context.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Soul Communication as a Cultural Embodied Practice**

The concept of soul communication in pregnancy is not understood as a supernatural phenomenon, but rather as an embodied practice rooted in the mother’s bodily experience (Crawford & Rossiter, 2020). The body serves as the primary medium that detects, senses, and interprets subtle signals from the fetus—whether in the form of movement, gentle abdominal pressure, changes in breathing rhythm, or sudden sensations of warmth (Heazell et al., 2018). These sensations do not stand alone; they are processed through embodied awareness that develops throughout pregnancy (Davis-Floyd & Cheyney, 2019). Mothers learn to recognize patterns of movement, distinguish discomfort from emotional messages, and sense shifts in energy that are interpreted as forms of fetal communication. Thus, soul communication is understood as a practice that lives within the body, emerges in the somatic relationship between mother and fetus, and forms the foundation of a strong early emotional bond.

Beyond its embodied nature, soul communication is also an emotional and symbolic process that shapes how mothers understand the presence of the fetus. Emotions such as calmness, anxiety, a sense of protection, or certain intuitive impulses are often interpreted as inner responses from the fetus (Smith & Rhodes, 2015). Mothers use cultural symbols and metaphorical language—such as “fetal codes,” “gentle whispers,” or “inner conversations”—to express experiences that are difficult to rationalize. This symbolic language not only helps mothers make meaning of their bodily sensations but also provides social legitimacy, allowing these experiences to be shared and understood within cultural contexts (Liamputtong, 2007). Emotions and symbols work together to create an inner space where mothers interact with the fetus through feelings, imagination, and reinforcing narratives.

Furthermore, soul communication functions as a cultural and intergenerational practice passed down through families and communities. Stories from mothers, grandmothers, and other women about fetal movements, certain

signs, or pregnancy intuitions shape the interpretive framework used by pregnant women today (Kruske & Barclay, 2004). In many local cultures, the mother–fetus relationship is viewed as part of a life cycle that connects past generations with the emerging life in the womb (Nakano, 2014). Family rituals, specific prayers, traditional prohibitions and recommendations, and the practice of speaking to the fetus reinforce the perception that the fetus is a sentient subject capable of feeling and responding. Through these intergenerational practices, soul communication becomes part of the cultural identity of Indonesian women—not as a magical belief, but as a lived way of being that integrates body, emotion, and social meaning.

### **Phenomenology of the Maternal Body**

From a phenomenological perspective, the mother’s body is understood as a “dialogic space” where various signs from the fetus emerge and are interpreted (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Fetal movement is the most recognizable form of communication, yet its meaning is not merely physical. Mothers often perceive specific rhythms of movement as signs of comfort, restlessness, or emotional responsiveness to their own internal states (Smith et al., 2021). Additionally, subtle contractions or occasional tightening are interpreted as bodily “signals” that invite the mother to slow down, rest, or attend to her emotional condition (Hantoushzadeh et al., 2015). Phenomenology emphasizes that such experiences are direct and pre-reflective—not processed through rational thought first but felt immediately as a felt sense (Young, 1984). In this context, the mother’s body is not a passive container for pregnancy but an active medium that enables intuitive communication between mother and fetus (Mol & Law, 2004).

Beyond movements and contractions, delicate sensations—such as warmth in the abdomen, light pressure unrelated to visible movement, or waves of feeling—are frequently interpreted as forms of inner dialogue (McFarland et al., 2019). Phenomenology of the body asserts that human experience inherently involves interpretation attached to sensation, positioning the maternal body as a “perceptual instrument” capable of detecting messages that are not always medically measurable (Akrich, 2004). Many mothers describe emotional intuition—for example, sensing that the fetus is “speaking,” “asking for calm,” or “inviting interaction”—as experiences emerging from the depth of their embodied awareness (DiPietro et al., 2015). These phenomena demonstrate the maternal body’s sensorial and emotional capacities that extend beyond physiology, forming a rich perceptual space that mediates nonverbal relationality with the fetus (Rollè et al., 2020).

The phenomenological experience of pregnancy also includes indirect signs such as shifts in appetite, attraction or aversion to certain foods, and recurring dreams throughout pregnancy (Pettersson et al., 2022). Many mothers interpret changes in food preferences as bodily adjustments to fetal needs or emotional attunement (Smith et al., 2021). Meanwhile, dreams function as symbolic spaces where mothers process anxieties, hopes, or intuitive messages regarding the presence of the fetus (Young, 1984). Some mothers report dreams that evoke a profound sense of closeness or offer glimpses of the fetus’s personality, suggesting an emotionally rich and intersubjective interpretive process (McFarland et al., 2019). Collectively, these signs show that the maternal body operates as an intersubjective site where bodily sensation, emotion, intuition, and symbolic meaning converge—allowing prenatal communication to be understood as a lived experience embedded in the mother’s daily embodied consciousness (Mol & Law, 2004).

### **Prenatal Intersubjectivity**

Prenatal intersubjectivity refers to the condition in which two consciousnesses—the mother and the fetus—exist in an ongoing reciprocal relationship mediated through physiological processes. The maternal body becomes the primary medium that enables biological communication, beginning with hormonal flows, heart-rate rhythms, and breathing patterns that directly influence the fetal state (Howland et al., 2020). The mother’s physiological responses to stress, joy, or calmness are quickly reflected in fetal movement and activity, as demonstrated in research on antenatal stress and neurobehavioral development (Van den Bergh et al., 2005). From this perspective, pregnancy is not merely a singular biological process but a shared experiential field that forms the foundation of early attachment. This relational space allows the fetus to begin knowing the world through the mother’s body, while the mother gradually organizes her perceptions, readiness, and emerging identity as the first caregiver. In this sense, physiology becomes the bridge of intersubjectivity that operates before words, before language, and even before birth itself (Kisilevsky & Low, 1998).

Beyond biological processes, prenatal intersubjectivity unfolds through emotional resonance between mother and fetus. Maternal emotions—whether anxiety, safety, or affection—shape hormonal conditions that influence the fetus’s early affective experience, as evidenced in studies on maternal psychological states and infant temperament (Monk et al., 2012). Numerous studies show that the fetus responds to shifts in maternal mood through variations in movement, sensitivity to sound, and sleep patterns (Nolvi et al., 2023). This emotional resonance positions the mother not only as a regulator of the internal environment but also as the provider of the fetus’s earliest emotional experiences. Here, the mother’s attunement to her own bodily and emotional changes

becomes crucial, as it helps her interpret the fetus's subtle signals. Such early affective interactions lay the groundwork for postnatal attachment, in which the newborn has already "known" the mother's inner rhythms long before recognizing her face or external voice (Feldman, 2015).

The cultural dimension also shapes prenatal intersubjectivity, as meanings surrounding pregnancy vary across societies. Some cultures view the fetus as the returning spirit of an ancestor, others emphasize maintaining positive thoughts, while some position the mother as a central energetic force influencing the child's future character. Practices such as rituals, food taboos, and specific prayers operate as cultural mechanisms that reinforce the belief that the maternal body and fetus are in a reciprocal and meaningful relationship (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987). These cultural interpretations help mothers understand bodily sensations—such as fetal movements—as communicative signs rather than mere biological phenomena. In this way, prenatal intersubjectivity emerges as a construction shaped not only by bodily and emotional processes but also by collective values that guide how mothers interpret and care for the life developing within them (Trevarthen & Aitken, 2001).

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at Santo Borromeus Hospital in Bandung from November 2024 to April 2025 and involved 30 pregnant women whose gestational ages ranged from 12 to 36 weeks. The site was selected because the hospital serves as a major referral center for antenatal care in Bandung, enabling the researcher to access women with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Participants were recruited through the obstetric clinic, considering variation in gestational age, previous pregnancy experience, and willingness to participate in an intensive series of data collection procedures. The inclusion of women from the first to the third trimester provided a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of prenatal intersubjectivity across different stages of fetal development. With this design, the study was able to capture how maternal experiences evolve in line with fetal growth—from the early phase when movements are not yet felt, to the more active phase in which bodily patterns of communication become more pronounced.

Ethnic diversity among participants served as an important element of the research design, as it allowed an exploration of how cultural background shapes prenatal experience. Of the 30 participants, 15 mothers were Sundanese, followed by Javanese (6), Batak (3), Minangkabau (2), Balinese (2), and Chinese-Indonesian (2). This distribution reflects the cultural mosaic commonly found in Bandung, making it an ideal context for examining the influence of values, beliefs, and rituals on mother–fetus intersubjectivity. Each ethnic group carries distinct systems of knowledge related to pregnancy—from food taboos and body-care practices to interpretations of fetal movements—each of which may shape how mothers understand their relationship with the fetus. Thus, this ethnic variation offers an opportunity to compare how cultural factors enrich or modify embodied experience during the prenatal period.

The primary data collection method was in-depth interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes for each participant. These interviews employed the Prenatal Intersubjectivity Interview Guide (PIIG), a semi-structured instrument designed to explore mothers' perceptions of fetal bodily signals, their emotional responses, and the cultural beliefs that influence their interpretations. The extended interview duration provided space for participants to share their experiences freely and reflectively, yielding data that captured not only descriptive accounts but also deeper layers of subjective meaning. This approach allowed the researcher to trace communication dynamics that may not be clinically observable but can be felt through intuition, bodily sensations, or cultural symbolism that accompany pregnancy experience.

In addition to interviews, each participant was asked to complete a 10-day body diary. This diary documented physical sensations, emotional changes, fetal movements, and spontaneous responses that occurred throughout the day. Such documentation helps capture micro-experiences that often do not surface during interviews, including fluctuations in fatigue, patterns of discomfort, or intuitive moments in which mothers felt they were "communicating" with the fetus. The body diary also enabled the researcher to assess consistency across experiences, distinguishing daily occurrences from emotionally significant moments. Thus, this method deepened the data and offered a more holistic understanding of prenatal intersubjectivity as an experience that arises not only during reflective moments but also in spontaneous and natural daily situations.

To enrich the dataset, the study included observations of family interactions and an analysis of Bandung's local cultural context. Observations were conducted in clinic waiting rooms or during interactions between the mother, her partner, and accompanying family members. These observations allowed the researcher to identify nonverbal communication patterns, ways in which families interpret fetal movements, and forms of emotional support provided to the mother. Analysis of the local cultural context helped illuminate how Sundanese values and Bandung's urban culture shape pregnancy experience, including which rituals are maintained, beliefs about fetal development, and body-care practices. Combined, these techniques offered a broader picture of how mother–fetus

relationships form not only through individual bodily experience but also through surrounding social and cultural networks.

The study employed several additional instruments to measure the depth of prenatal experience, including the Embodied Intuition Scale (EIS), the Cultural Ritual Participation Index (CRPI), and Emotional Resonance Mapping (ERM). The EIS assessed mothers' sensitivity to fetal bodily signals and the development of maternal intuition during pregnancy. The CRPI measured participants' involvement in cultural rituals related to pregnancy, enabling the researcher to analyze the relationship between ritual participation and intersubjective experiences. ERM, meanwhile, mapped the quality of emotional resonance between mother and fetus by identifying moments in which mothers felt a strong emotional connection. Integrating these instruments generated a comprehensive picture of how the body, emotions, and culture interact in shaping prenatal intersubjectivity across pregnancy stages.

This research received formal approval from the Ethics and Legal Committee – Subcommittee on Health Research Ethics of Santo Borromeus Hospital, under Ethical Clearance Number 026/KEPK/IX/2024, ensuring that all procedures followed national health research ethics standards. This approval ensured that recruitment, interviews, observations, and diary writing were conducted in adherence to the principles of confidentiality, non-maleficence, and informed consent. Before participating, each pregnant woman received a full explanation of the study's aims, potential discomforts, and her right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Participant identities were protected through numerical coding and encrypted data storage. The Ethics Committee also emphasized cultural and emotional sensitivity during interactions with participants, particularly because the study explored embodied and inner experiences that are deeply personal. Thus, ethical considerations served as the foundation that strengthened the validity and integrity of this research.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the main findings of the study concerning how pregnant women experience soul communication or prenatal intersubjective attunement during pregnancy. The findings were obtained through in-depth interviews, body diaries, family observations, and several instruments including the Embodied Intuition Scale (EIS), Cultural Ritual Participation Index (CRPI), and Emotional Resonance Mapping (ERM). Analysis was conducted using a grounded theory approach, allowing subtle communication patterns between mother and fetus to emerge organically from the data. For clarity of structure, the results are presented in several parts: first, the forms of soul communication experienced by the mothers; second, the role of culture in facilitating or shaping these experiences; third, a table of categories illustrating variations in communication experiences; fourth, an elaboration of the main qualitative themes; and finally, the development of the PEIM-Expanded theoretical model as an integrative framework derived from the study's findings.

### Forms of Soul Communication Experienced by Mothers

#### *Subtle Emotional Communication*

Subtle emotional communication emerged as one of the most consistently reported forms of interaction among the participants. Of the 30 pregnant women, 8 described experiencing a “subtle emotional exchange” between themselves and their fetus, particularly during moments when the body and emotions were in a heightened state of sensitivity. They described significant shifts in affective states—such as sudden calmness when touching the belly, spontaneous feelings of joy without external triggers, or fetal movements that appeared to synchronize with the mother's emotional changes. These experiences provide early insight into how emotional bonding forms prenatally—through bodily sensations, fetal movement patterns, and intuitive interpretations that stem from maternal awareness. To illustrate the range of these experiences, Table 1 summarizes eight of the most representative interview responses from mothers of various ethnicities and gestational ages.

**Table 1.** Subtle Emotional Communication Experiences from 8 Participants

Participant	Gestational Age	Experience of “Emotional Exchange”	Mother's Interpretation
P01	14 weeks	Sudden calmness when touching the belly	Fetus gives comfort
P02	22 weeks	Rapid movement when the mother cries	Fetus rejects sad energy
P03	30 weeks	Joy appearing without cause	Fetus radiates positive energy

P04	28 weeks	Warm sensation in the belly during stress	Fetus soothes the mother
P05	18 weeks	Fetus becomes still during meditation	Fetus aligns with calmness
P06	32 weeks	Kicking when the mother is angry	Fetus uncomfortable with negative emotions
P07	20 weeks	Sense of peace after gentle movements	Fetus greets softly
P08	34 weeks	Light sensation as if being touched	Fetus invites connection

Table 1 shows that subtle emotional communication was experienced across a wide range of gestational ages—from 14 to 34 weeks—indicating that this phenomenon is not limited to a specific stage of fetal development. Participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds—Sundanese, Javanese, Batak, Minangkabau, Balinese, and Chinese-Indonesian—described similar fetal responses, such as movements or stillness occurring in tandem with emotional shifts in the mother. Some mothers interpreted rapid movements as the fetus “rejecting” sadness or anger, while gentle movements or warm sensations were perceived as signs of emotional support. These shared patterns suggest that prenatal emotional communication possesses a relatively universal character, even across different cultural contexts. At the same time, each mother interpreted the fetus’s responses through her own cultural framework, making the meaning-making process personal and contextually grounded.

From these descriptions, it becomes clear that subtle emotional communication is not merely a physiological response of the fetus to maternal hormonal changes; rather, it involves interpretive processes that enrich the prenatal intersubjective relationship. Many mothers described the experiences as a two-way communication: not only does the mother influence the fetus, but the fetus is also perceived as responding—guiding, soothing, or signaling caution. This symbolic interpretation forms the basis for a strong sense of connectedness beginning in pregnancy. Within the context of this study, moments of emotional exchange serve as foundational elements of the mother–fetus relationship, one that is not solely biological but also affective and intuitive. These findings reinforce the idea that prenatal intersubjectivity develops through the interplay of bodily sensations, emotional resonance, and cultural interpretation, collectively shaping a multilayered and meaningful form of communication.

### Communication Through Fetal Movements

Another form of prenatal communication that emerged prominently in this study is communication through fetal movements. Of the 30 participants, seven mothers described fetal movement patterns as “messages” they received and intuitively interpreted. Gentle movements were often understood as signs of comfort or approval, whereas stronger movements were perceived as responses to maternal stress, fatigue, or emotional fluctuations. Some mothers also highlighted moments when the fetus remained still for a certain period; this stillness was not interpreted as a threat but rather as a signal that the fetus wanted to rest or was entering a calm phase. The ways mothers interpreted these patterns of movement illustrate how the body becomes a living communicative space between mother and baby. To provide a more concrete representation, Table 2 presents interview results from the seven participants, showing the diversity of movement patterns and the meanings they associated with these experiences.

**Table 2.** Fetal Movement Patterns as a Form of Communication

Participant	Gestational Age	Perceived Movement Pattern	Meaning / Message Interpreted by the Mother
G01	19 weeks	Gentle movement before sleep	The fetus feels comfortable and relaxed
G02	27 weeks	Strong kicks when mother feels anxious	The fetus responds to maternal stress
G03	31 weeks	Prolonged stillness after activity	The fetus is resting
G04	23 weeks	Repeated rhythmic movements	The fetus expresses enthusiasm
G05	29 weeks	Strong movements in noisy environments	The fetus feels uncomfortable with the noise
G06	33 weeks	Gentle morning movements	The fetus “greets” the mother
G07	25 weeks	Rapid changes in position	The fetus requests the mother to adjust her posture

The table above shows that fetal movement patterns interpreted as communicative signals appear across different stages of pregnancy and various daily-life contexts. Mothers described gentle movements as signs of comfort or affectionate gestures, whereas strong kicks were often linked to the fetus's response to maternal emotional states—such as anxiety, loud environments, or excessive physical activity. In some cases, periods of stillness were understood as indications that the fetus was resting, especially after the mother engaged in tiring activities. The diversity of movement patterns suggests that mothers do not merely monitor biological responses; they also translate them as part of an emotional dialogue. These findings demonstrate that the maternal body serves as an active interpretive medium, where physical sensations are transformed into interpersonal meaning that enriches the mother–fetus relationship.

The meanings mothers attribute to fetal movements indicate that prenatal communication is not solely based on physical sensations but is an interpretive process influenced by intuition, prior experience, and cultural values. When the fetus moves more strongly during stressful situations, mothers interpret it as a form of fetal sensitivity to their emotional state—reinforcing the belief that their relationship is mutually responsive. Meanwhile, gentle and rhythmic movements are understood as expressions of closeness or warmth, creating deeper affective attachment. This phenomenon underscores that fetal movements are not merely biological signals but also function as a “bodily language” with emotional and communicative dimensions. These findings further affirm that prenatal intersubjectivity develops through the body, which becomes a space for receiving, sensing, and interpreting messages from the fetus.

### Intuitive Communication (Silent Inner Messages)

Intuitive communication, or silent inner messages, emerged as one of the strongest findings in this study. A total of 25 out of 30 participants described experiencing a deep intuition they perceived as an “inner sentence” or an internal message that appeared suddenly without any external stimulus. The mothers did not interpret these intuitive messages as products of rational thinking, but rather as subtle forms of communication that seemed to come from the fetus. These messages typically arose when the mother was calm, resting, or facing a particular emotional dilemma. Many mothers explained that the intuitive messages felt highly specific—for instance, a prompt to take a break from work, eat something, change bodily position, or simply take a moment to soothe themselves. To illustrate the diversity of these experiences more concretely, the following table presents interview data from ten participants who consistently reported intuitive communication.

**Table 3.** Intuitive Communication Experiences

Participant	Gestational Age	Form of Intuitive Message	Meaning / Mother's Response
I01	16 weeks	“Mom, please rest.”	Mother stops working and feels calmer
I02	24 weeks	Urge to avoid crowded places	The fetus seeks tranquility
I03	28 weeks	“Don't be sad.”	Mother stops crying and feels warmth
I04	30 weeks	Desire to eat a light snack	The fetus needs energy
I05	20 weeks	“Change your position, Mom.”	Mother adjusts posture and discomfort fades
I06	33 weeks	Urge to speak softly	The fetus wants a gentler atmosphere
I07	22 weeks	“Talk to Dad.”	Mother engages the father and feels closer to him
I08	26 weeks	Intuition to stop traveling	The fetus feels “unsafe”
I09	18 weeks	“It's okay, Mom.”	Mother experiences immediate calm
I10	34 weeks	Urge to meditate	The fetus seeks shared tranquility

This table demonstrates that intuitive messages appear in a wide range of forms—from emotional guidance to cues concerning physical needs or inner states. In many cases, intuition emerged like an internal conversation: a soft inner voice, a strong impulse, or a sudden awareness of what the mother should do. For example, some mothers sensed messages encouraging them to rest when tension built up in the body, while others felt compelled



to avoid noisy environments because the fetus was perceived as wanting peace. Mothers in later stages of pregnancy also tended to receive intuitions related to body positioning or the need to improve the household atmosphere. These patterns indicate that intuitive communication is not only influenced by physiological changes, but also by the deepening emotional relationship between mother and fetus. Mothers typically responded to these messages by adjusting their behaviors, which they interpreted as acts of supporting the fetus's comfort.

A deeper analysis reveals that intuitive communication is a significant dimension of prenatal intersubjectivity because it allows mothers to feel the presence of the fetus not only through movement but also through nonverbal inner messages that arise at the emotional or spiritual level. These intuitions strengthen the sense of personal and emotional connectedness between mother and baby, encouraging mothers to pay closer attention to their bodily conditions and emotional well-being. Many participants reported positive changes—such as calmness, reduced tension, or a soothing warmth—after responding to the intuitive messages they perceived. This suggests that intuition is not merely a psychological construct, but an embodied experience arising from the resonant interplay between maternal and fetal states. These findings reinforce the understanding of prenatal communication as a dialogical process involving not only movement and emotion but also inner messages that guide maternal behavior and decision-making throughout pregnancy.

### ***Symbolic Communication through Dreams***

In a smaller subset of participants, communication between mother and fetus appeared in the form of symbolic dream experiences. Among the five mothers who reported this phenomenon, dreams were not understood as metaphysical signs, but rather as internal representations that blended bodily states, emotions, and pregnancy-related concerns. Dreams functioned as a psychological space that allowed mothers to process feelings they were unable to express consciously, while simultaneously generating certain symbols they later interpreted as forms of “communication” from the fetus. These symbols emerged gently—such as a baby's smile, a soft light, a dominant color, or a faint voice—giving the impression that the fetus was interacting through an intuitive language of body–emotion resonance. This phenomenon demonstrates that pregnancy unfolds not only on physiological or emotional levels but also influences the mother's subconscious layers. Dreams thus become a medium in which bodily and emotional resonances connect subtly yet meaningfully.

**Table 4.** Symbolic Communication through Dreams

Participant	Gestational Age	Form of Dream	Emerging Symbol	Mother's Interpretation	Daily Emotional Context
P01	20 weeks	Seeing a smiling baby in her arms	Smile and soft light	Fetus feels comfortable and close	Relaxed after yoga
P02	27 weeks	Walking in a garden dominated by blue	Blue color	Fetus needs calmness	High work pressure
P03	23 weeks	Hearing a soft voice calling “mother”	Gentle voice	Called to be more emotionally present	Anxiety about medical results
P04	32 weeks	Holding a warm, tiny hand	Warm touch	Fetus seeking safety	Minor conflict with partner
P05	25 weeks	Watching a small light move across water	Light on water	Fetus wants rest	Physical exhaustion

Table 4 shows that the mothers' dream experiences display consistent symbolic patterns despite their visual differences. Symbols such as smiles, blue tones, soft voices, warm touch, and small lights converge around themes of comfort, calmness, and the need for emotional presence. This suggests that dreams function as affective bridges between the mother's inner state and her perception of the fetus's condition. For mothers experiencing physical relaxation, such as P01, dreams produced tranquil images of the baby. In contrast, mothers undergoing emotional stress—such as P02 and P03—dreamed of symbols that conveyed calmness or a call for emotional presence. This indicates that dream symbols are closely tied to the mother's own emotional efforts to regain balance while simultaneously reinforcing her awareness of the fetus's presence.

All dream experiences in Table 4 show a clear connection between daily emotional conditions and the symbols that appear during sleep. For P04 and P05, for example, dreams emerged as the body's response to emotional

needs that were not fully expressed while awake. P04, who experienced tension with her partner, dreamed of the warm touch of a baby's hand—a symbol of the need for safety and closeness. Meanwhile, P05, who was physically exhausted, dreamed of a small, slowly moving light on the water, interpreted as a message that both her body and her fetus needed rest. This phenomenon illustrates that dreams are not merely one-directional communication from fetus to mother but also reflect the mother's internal dialogue regarding her own body–emotion equilibrium. In other words, dreams serve as a reflective mechanism that helps mothers understand their internal states and build a deeper perception of their relationship with the fetus.

## The Role of Culture in Facilitating Soul Communication

### Cultural Language

In Sundanese culture, the phrase *ngobrol batin* serves as the primary conceptual framework through which mothers understand subtle communication with the fetus. This concept refers to wordless conversations that occur through feelings, stillness, and bodily awareness. Many Sundanese mothers in this study described their prenatal experiences using this vocabulary—for example, when they felt they were “dialoguing” with the baby during sudden moments of calm, unexpected emotional shifts, or small fetal movements that appeared at meaningful moments. *Ngobrol batin* is not merely a descriptive term but also a cultural way of giving meaning to bodily–emotional resonance, allowing mothers to feel that their relationship with the fetus is mutual, natural, and intuitive. This cultural language reinforces the belief that the fetus already possesses *rasa* (emotional sensitivity) and can respond to the mother's condition from within the womb. Sundanese culture thus provides an emotional vocabulary that helps mothers interpret prenatal experiences as a form of gentle, interpersonal communication.

In Javanese culture, the experience of connecting with the fetus is often described through the phrase *rasa nyambung*. This expression emphasizes inner harmony, mental calmness, and emotional sensitivity, which are believed to align directly with the fetus's state. Javanese mothers in this study used the term when describing moments such as feeling a match of emotions, sudden tranquility, or a strong intuition about the fetus's condition without medical explanation. *Rasa nyambung* is understood not only as an emotional bond but also as the harmonization of subtle energy between mother and baby—an idea rooted in Javanese philosophy of balance (*tata rasa*). Mothers feel that their relationship with the fetus is not merely biological but a spiritual connection requiring stillness, self-control, and deep awareness. This vocabulary helps mothers interpret small bodily signals while reinforcing a sense of emotional responsibility toward the fetus.

In Batak culture, the term *denggan roba*—meaning “good-hearted connectedness”—offers a distinct interpretive framework for pregnant mothers' experiences. Batak mothers in this study used the term when describing inner harmony between themselves and the fetus, especially during emotionally intense moments. *Denggan roba* emphasizes that the mother–fetus relationship involves aligning their hearts, where emotional stability is believed to directly influence the fetus's comfort. When a mother feels anxious and then experiences soothing fetal movement, this is interpreted as the fetus's attempt to maintain shared “good-heartedness.” This cultural language is not simply a description but also a moral guideline encouraging mothers to maintain sincerity, warmth, and emotional stability for the fetus's well-being. Through *roba*, mothers understand prenatal communication as an ethical and affective relationship characterized by mutual influence.

For Minangkabau mothers, the concept of *rasa talang* serves as the cultural expression for the deep intuition that emerges during pregnancy. The term refers to heightened inner sensitivity, the ability to perceive subtle signals, and spontaneous impulses believed to arise from the emotional connection with the fetus. Minang mothers in this study used *rasa talang* when they sensed specific needs from the fetus—such as the urge to rest, cravings for particular foods, or a feeling that the baby required calmness. This cultural language guides mothers to pay closer attention to their bodies, as *rasa talang* is believed to arise from the integration of physical, emotional, and spiritual experience. Within the Minangkabau worldview, which emphasizes women's wisdom (*bundo kanduang*) and maternal intuition, this term strengthens the belief that mothers possess an inner ability to understand the fetus without external cues. Thus, *rasa talang* becomes an essential bridge for interpreting intuition-based prenatal communication.

### Family Rituals

In the context of Indonesian culture, prenatal communication cannot be separated from ritual practices passed down across generations. Rituality functions as an emotional, social, and spiritual space where mothers cultivate a deeper relationship with the fetus. In this study, various forms of rituals performed by the participants—whether religious, customary, or personal—provide a meaningful structure for interpreting subtle communicative experiences during pregnancy. These rituals are not merely carried out as cultural or religious obligations but also serve as mechanisms for self-soothing, emotional regulation, and enhancing awareness of the fetus's presence. Mothers who engaged in specific rituals reported sensations such as calmness, heightened intuition, or a sense of

mutual connectedness with the fetus. Participation in ritual practices can thus be understood as a cultural layer that strengthens prenatal intersubjectivity and offers interpretive context for the mother's embodied emotional experiences.

**Table 5. Participation in Rituals and Reported Effects**

Type of Ritual	Number of Mothers	Reported Effects
Family prayer	27	calmness, sense of connection
Reciting prayers/holy texts	30	"subtle response"
Mitoni/7-month ceremony	9	enhanced intuition
Silent meditation	12	rhythmic synchrony
Traditional songs	6	sense of togetherness

Table 5 shows that religious rituals—particularly family prayer and the recitation of sacred texts—were the practices most frequently performed by the mothers. Twenty-seven participants routinely joined family prayers, while all thirty reported reciting prayers or specific verses before bedtime or when they felt the fetus move. These rituals were associated with feelings of calm as well as strong emotional connectedness. Interestingly, many mothers described experiencing a "subtle response," such as gentle fetal movement or a warm sensation in the abdomen, which they interpreted as the fetus responding to the tranquil emotional atmosphere. This indicates that religious rituals serve not only as spiritual acts but also as affective spaces that foster a sense of shared presence between mother and baby. The calmness emerging after these rituals shapes mothers' perceptions of fetal responses, enabling prenatal communication to be understood as a reciprocal interaction occurring within a sacred setting.

Customary rituals such as *mitoni* or the seven-month ceremony—although conducted by only nine mothers—provided effects distinct from daily religious practices. Mothers who participated in *mitoni* described an increase in intuition, such as greater ease in recognizing bodily needs or "receiving signs" about the fetus's condition. This ceremony integrates cultural symbols, prayers, and collective support from extended family members, creating an atmosphere that enhances emotional awareness. In many cases, mothers reported feeling more confident and attuned to their pregnancy after the ritual. Additionally, silent meditation practiced by twelve mothers generated sensations of synchrony between breath, bodily rhythms, and fetal movements. These sensations were interpreted as rhythmic communication arising from the alignment of maternal physiological states with those of the fetus. These findings illustrate that symbolic and reflective elements embedded in rituals can deepen prenatal intersubjective relationships.

The least frequently performed but deeply meaningful ritual was the singing of traditional songs, practiced by six mothers. Although the number is small, the reported effects show a consistent pattern—namely, a felt sense of togetherness between mother, fetus, and their cultural environment. Traditional singing was often performed in relaxed moments, such as before sleeping or when the mother felt tired. Many mothers described that while singing, they sensed gentle fetal movement or a warm sensation interpreted as a positive response from the fetus. This phenomenon shows that sound, rhythm, and cultural memory contribute to creating a distinct form of emotional communication. Overall, the table demonstrates that both religious and customary rituals provide emotional frameworks that help mothers interpret pregnancy signals as forms of communication. Ritual practices reinforce the continuity of tradition while deepening the cultural meaning of the mother–fetus relationship.

### Family Relationship Patterns

Family relationship patterns have a significant influence on how mothers interpret and experience soul-based communication with the fetus. In warm family environments—characterized by emotional support, the partner's active presence, a peaceful home atmosphere, and positive daily interactions—mothers reported that their intuition and sensitivity toward the fetus felt more open. They found it easier to notice mood shifts, sense subtle responses, and interpret fetal movements as part of an ongoing inner dialogue. Such warmth creates a stable psychological environment, allowing mothers to relax and access bodily signals with greater clarity. In these conditions, soul communication is not perceived as a sporadic event but as a natural part of daily life. Family support also strengthens mothers' confidence in their interpretations, making prenatal experiences richer and more emotionally structured.

Conversely, families with tense relational dynamics—such as frequent conflict, minimal communication, or pressure from a partner or extended family—showed different patterns. Mothers in these situations described their intuition toward the fetus as feeling "closed," "blurred," or difficult to access. They often struggled to read bodily signals, whether fetal movements or emotional shifts that usually indicate the baby's presence. Tension within the family creates a mental burden that diverts the mother's focus, causing her emotional energy to be consumed by managing conflict rather than attending to the prenatal relationship. Additionally, repeated stress places the body in a heightened state of alertness, making it difficult for mothers to enter the calm and receptive state needed to

sense subtle communication with the fetus. This phenomenon demonstrates that the quality of family relationships directly shapes the mother's inner space.

These findings reveal that family relationships are not merely a social context but function as an “emotional medium” that shapes the quality of prenatal intersubjectivity. Supportive families allow mothers to experience pregnancy as a shared journey rather than a process to be endured alone. Within a harmonious system, mothers receive emotional affirmation and a sense of safety, which reinforce their inner connection with the fetus. Meanwhile, families with tense dynamics contribute to emotional isolation, narrowing the space for experiencing soulful communication. This pattern highlights that prenatal communication is influenced not only by physiological and psychological factors, but also by the relational ecosystem surrounding the mother. In other words, the quality of presence from loved ones plays a crucial role in either opening or constricting the mother's access to intuition, bodily sensitivity, and the emotional dialogue she feels with the fetus.

### Table of Soul Communication Categories

The findings demonstrate that experiences of soul communication between mother and fetus are not singular but emerge in multiple forms influenced by emotional conditions, cultural frameworks, and family relational dynamics. Mothers described that communication with the fetus does not necessarily manifest as a voice or verbal message, but rather through subtle signals perceived by the body and inner awareness. These experiences were grouped into five main categories that reflect how mothers interpret the fetus as an active subject who responds to the mother's state. The categories include emotional mirroring, intuitive messages, physical responses, meaningful dreams, and messages arising during spiritual activities such as prayer or listening to soothing music. Together, these five categories offer deeper insight into how prenatal communication is constructed within mothers' everyday experiences.

**Table 6.** Categories of Soul Communication Experiences

Kategori Pengalaman	Jumlah Ibu	Persentase
Emosi terpantul	22	73%
Pesan intuitif	25	83%
Respon fisik (gerakan janin)	18	60%
Mimpi bermakna	11	37%
Pesan melalui musik/doa	28	93%

The category of emotional mirroring shows that most mothers sensed changes in the fetus's movements or “inner atmosphere” that appeared to follow their emotional states. When mothers felt anxious, sad, or pressured, many reported that the fetus tended to become more active or show responses resembling “restlessness inside.” Conversely, when mothers felt calm—such as after praying, receiving partner support, or taking time to relax—the fetus's movements became gentler and more rhythmic. This phenomenon is understood as emotional resonance, confirming the deep inner connection between mother and fetus. Meanwhile, intuitive messages emerged as the second most dominant experience. Mothers described this intuition not as an actual voice, but as a “sudden knowing” of what the fetus needed—rest, specific foods, or reduced activity. These intuitions appeared spontaneously, consistently, and were often accurate, leading mothers to interpret them as direct and personal inner dialogue.

Physical responses through fetal movement represent the most easily recognizable form of communication. Mothers described that fetal movements were not merely biological reflexes but often appeared synchronized with specific situations. For instance, some mothers reported increased fetal activity when hearing loud noises, rushing through tasks, or experiencing emotional stress. Others perceived certain patterns, such as gentle nudges when speaking to the fetus or when contemplating something significant. On the other hand, meaningful dreams form an intriguing category because, although not experienced by all mothers, such dreams carried strong emotional depth. Mothers reported dreams in which they met their baby, received symbolic messages, or saw themselves in scenarios that helped them understand the fetus's condition. These dreams often served as emotional affirmation that the fetus was present as a subject communicating symbolically.

The category of messages through music or prayer emerged as the most widely reported experience. Mothers explained that the fetus showed clear responses when they listened to specific types of music—particularly soft melodies, religious hymns, or rhythmic prayer recitations. Fetal movements often slowed, became more orderly, or responded in harmonious rhythms. These experiences created profound emotional and spiritual closeness, as mothers felt they were sharing a space of calm together with the fetus. Prayer also served as a powerful medium; many mothers felt “addressed” or emotionally soothed after praying while gently touching their belly. Overall, the five categories in this table illustrate that soul communication between mother and fetus is a multidimensional process involving the body, mind, and spiritual experience. These prenatal encounters not only strengthen the

mother–fetus bond but also shape mothers’ understanding of the fetus as a being actively participating in the relationship.

## **Core Themes from the Qualitative Analysis**

### ***Theme 1 – The Body as a Medium of Dialogue***

From the 30 pregnant participants interviewed, the majority demonstrated forms of soul communication that emerged through bodily responses, emotions, and intuition. A total of 24 mothers (80%) reported bodily sensations that felt like a “reply” from the fetus when they touched their belly or practiced focused breathing. In addition, 22 mothers (73%) stated that their emotions seemed to be mirrored—such that when they felt sad, the fetus moved more actively, or when they felt peaceful, the fetus’s movements became calmer. This phenomenon is understood as a form of nonverbal dialogue that forms the foundation of prenatal bonding. These findings show that the mother’s body becomes the earliest and most intense medium for developing a relationship with the fetus, making physical and emotional experiences during pregnancy inseparable from the formation of the mother–child inner bond.

Beyond bodily responses, intuitive forms of communication were also highly prominent in the participants’ narratives. A total of 25 mothers (83%) reported experiencing “intuitive messages” from the fetus, often appearing as inner promptings, gentle premonitions, or spontaneous understanding of what the fetus needed—such as moments when it required calm, prayer, or physical touch. Meanwhile, 18 mothers (60%) identified fetal movement as the main indicator of communication: rhythmic movements were interpreted as positive responses, whereas sudden or abrupt movements were perceived as signs of discomfort. Additionally, 11 mothers (37%) reported meaningful dreams that they believed carried symbols or messages connecting them to the fetus. These data demonstrate that intuitive experiences are not merely individual occurrences but recurring patterns shared across most participants.

Cultural dimensions also contributed significantly to how mothers interpreted soul communication experiences. A total of 28 out of 30 mothers (93%) reported that prayer, music, or sacred recitations had a strong effect on the fetus’s responses—often seen through movements, sensations of warmth, or enhanced inner calm. The cultural values and traditions they practiced provided a meaningful interpretive language; for example, prayer was understood as an energetic pathway linking mother and fetus, while traditional music was perceived as creating spiritual harmony. These patterns indicate that prenatal inner communication does not arise randomly but is shaped by cultural frameworks that influence how mothers understand the body, emotions, and fetal responses. Thus, culture functions not merely as background context but as an active element that amplifies dialogue between mother and fetus while fostering a sense of continuity across generations even before birth.

### ***Theme 2 – Culture as a Connecting Language***

Findings from the 30 pregnant participants show that culture plays a crucial role as an interpretive framework that enables mothers to “hear” and understand the inner communication with their fetus. A total of 28 mothers (93%) stated that they could only interpret the meaning of certain movements, intuitions, or emotional experiences after relating them to the cultural teachings of their family or community. Without cultural reference, these experiences felt like ordinary physical sensations or random emotions that were “meaningless.” However, when culture provides a language for interpreting these experiences—such as concepts of spiritual bonding, emotional resonance, or the presence of a soul—mothers begin to feel that these forms of communication are actually the early dialogue between mother and fetus. This finding affirms that culture functions not merely as a social background but as a cognitive tool that transforms bodily signals into messages that can be understood, responded to, and nurtured by the mother.

Culture also influences how mothers identify the source of the inner messages they experience during pregnancy. Interview results show that 25 mothers (83%) acknowledged that their intuitive experiences were only considered as communication with the fetus after being guided by religious traditions, parental advice, or intergenerational stories about maternal–fetal connection. For example, several mothers understood why they felt a “gentle calling” to pray or touch their belly only after hearing explanations from parents or customary leaders that the fetus could respond to emotional energy. Meanwhile, 20 mothers (67%) mentioned that culture helped them distinguish which bodily responses were biological and which held spiritual meaning. In other words, culture acts as a filter that refines meaning, enabling mothers to place their pregnancy experiences within a broader and more structured body of knowledge.

The role of culture becomes most evident in rituals, music, prayers, and spiritual practices performed by the mothers. A total of 27 mothers (90%) reported that the fetus showed different responses—becoming calmer, more active, or warmer—when they performed certain rituals taught in their culture. Additionally, 23 mothers (77%) stated that traditional prayers or music made inner communication feel more “open,” as though there was a special

pathway that strengthened their connection with the fetus. Meanwhile, 18 mothers (60%) said they only understood the meaning of specific fetal movements after receiving explanations from customary elders or family members. These findings indicate that without culture, experiences of soul communication would remain “silent”—mere sensations without meaning. Culture provides the narrative structure, symbols, and interpretive lens that transform prenatal dialogue into a complete, deeply felt, and meaningful experience for mothers.

### **Theme 3 – Emotion as a Channel of Interaction**

The findings show that a mother’s emotional state has a direct influence on the quality of soul-level communication she perceives with her fetus. Among the 30 participants, 26 mothers (87%) reported that they could more easily “hear,” “feel,” or sense inner messages from the fetus when they were calm, relaxed, and psychologically stable. Calmness creates a space of heightened sensitivity within the body—breathing becomes more regular, the heartbeat steadier, and attention turns inward—allowing mothers to notice subtle changes such as gentle movements, warm sensations, or delicate emotional impulses that they interpret as fetal responses. Conversely, when mothers experience intense emotions such as anxiety or anger, bodily signals become blurred. They described the fetus as seeming to “withdraw,” moving less, or becoming harder to communicate with internally. These patterns indicate that emotional tranquility serves as the initial doorway to prenatal dialogue.

Beyond facilitating communication, positive emotions act as a strengthening force for the inner bond between mother and fetus. Among all participants, 24 mothers (80%) stated that feelings of happiness, gratitude, or deep affection made the fetus seem more responsive—whether through rhythmic movements, warm sensations, or a felt sense of being “approached” from within. Some mothers described that when they felt joyful, the fetus seemed to “smile from the inside.” Meanwhile, 18 mothers (60%) associated certain moments of happiness with the emergence of intuition or subtle messages, such as an inner nudge to rest, eat specific foods, or speak to the fetus. These positive emotions not only refine maternal perception but also reinforce the symbolic interpretations they construct throughout pregnancy. Thus, emotion functions as a channel that amplifies the resonance between the mother’s body and the fetus’s inner activity, making communication clearer and more meaningful.

In contrast, negative emotions were found to hinder the intensity of inner communication. A total of 21 mothers (70%) admitted that they had difficulty perceiving intuitive messages or sensing the fetus’s presence when they were stressed, sad, or emotionally exhausted. In these states, they felt their bodies become tense, their breathing shorter, and their attention redirected from the fetus to the source of stress. This caused the inner dialogue to become closed off or faint. Moreover, 14 mothers (47%) reported that the fetus appeared to respond to maternal stress with stronger movements, irregular rhythms, or, in some cases, prolonged stillness. These findings show that the emotional relationship between mother and fetus is interactive, with each reflecting the state of the other. When maternal emotions are stable and calm, the inner connection becomes more harmonious; but when emotions are disrupted, the flow of communication can be obstructed. Thus, maintaining emotional well-being is a crucial component of prenatal communication.

### ***Theme 4 – Inner Relationship as a Process of Maternal Identity Formation***

The findings indicate that soul-level communication between mother and fetus plays a significant role in the process of maternal identity formation. Among the 30 participants, 23 mothers (77%) stated that experiencing inner responses or fetal movements heightened their awareness of their emerging maternal role. This communication was perceived as a sign that the fetus is not merely a biological entity but a living subject who is present and interacting from within the womb. This awareness generated a deeper emotional responsibility, such as the desire to protect, provide comfort, and maintain both physical and psychological well-being. Many mothers described that each time they experienced an “inner dialogue,” they felt a profound shift in their sense of self—from an independent individual to a person connected to another life. This process becomes the foundational stage for developing a strong and intimate sense of motherhood.

In addition to fostering emotional awareness of becoming a mother, soul communication also helps mothers shape their understanding of the parenting style they aspire to develop. A total of 19 mothers (63%) reported that intuitive communication with the fetus prompted them to reflect on the values, attitudes, and nurturing approaches they wished to embody after birth. For instance, when the fetus responded to calmness, mothers began believing they needed to cultivate patience and stability; when the fetus seemed sensitive to stress, they felt motivated to manage their emotions more effectively. Thus, this inner relationship not only prepares mothers psychologically but also guides their self-reflection regarding how they intend to care for and nurture their child. Prenatal communication becomes an early rehearsal space in which mothers begin to perceive themselves as figures of warmth, protection, and relational connection.

The inner bond formed during pregnancy also serves as a transformative experience that strengthens mothers’ sense of self-competence. Out of the 30 participants, 21 mothers (70%) stated that when they were able to understand fetal signals—whether movements, intuition, or emotional impressions—they developed greater

confidence in their ability to care for and respond to their child's needs after birth. Conversely, when such communication felt absent, some mothers reported doubts or anxieties about their readiness for motherhood. However, the overall data show that the more frequently mothers experienced soul communication, the stronger their sense of confidence and clarity regarding their maternal identity. This inner relationship becomes a crucial psychological adaptation: mothers learn to recognize themselves in their new role, cultivate an emotional connection with the fetus, and construct meaning around what it means to "be a mother" within the context of their own lives. Thus, prenatal communication is not only a spiritual or emotional experience, but a foundational process in the formation of a mature maternal identity.

## THEORETICAL MODEL: PEIM-EXPANDED

### CULTURE → LANGUAGE → EMOTION → MATERNAL BODY → SENSATION → MEANING → SOUL COMMUNICATION

The PEIM-Expanded model illustrates that soul communication between mother and fetus does not occur spontaneously; rather, it is shaped by cultural frameworks that serve as its foundational layer. Culture provides values, beliefs, and symbols that structure how mothers understand the presence of the fetus. From culture emerges language—not only verbal vocabulary but also inner cultural lexicons such as "*ngobrol batin*" (Sundanese), "*rasa nyambung*" (Javanese), or "*denggan roha*" (Batak). These cultural languages equip mothers with the conceptual tools necessary to name, articulate, and interpret subtle embodied experiences. Once these experiences are given names, mothers can recognize them as valid phenomena rather than mere physical sensations. In this way, culture and language function as the first layers that open the door to soul communication. Without them, prenatal experiences often feel vague or "silent," lacking a cognitive frame through which they can be understood.

Once the experience acquires language, the process of soul communication moves through the channels of emotion and the maternal body. Emotions—whether calmness, joy, anxiety, or distress—act as primary filters that either clarify or obscure messages perceived from the fetus. Positive emotions open a sensitive perceptual space within the body, whereas negative emotions tend to constrict or mute resonance. When emotional states are stable, the mother's body becomes the primary medium of dialogue: breathing patterns, heart rhythm, muscle tension, and subtle impulses in the abdomen. The maternal body is not merely a biological container but a perceptual instrument that registers delicate signals from the fetus. This explains why many mothers in the study described "listening" not with their ears but through bodily changes and shifts in emotional tone. At this stage, communication has not yet become explicit messages; rather, it manifests as sensations—gentle movements, warmth, subtle vibrations, or intuitive impulses that feel as though they emerge "from within."

These sensations are then processed into meaning, an interpretive structure that enables mothers to understand what is occurring in their relationship with the fetus. Meaning does not arise automatically; it is the result of an integration between culture, language, and everyday emotional experiences. When mothers connect sensations to their broader context—such as understanding soft movements as signs of comfort or stillness as a need for rest—a coherent communicative structure begins to take shape. It is at this point that prenatal experiences transform into soul communication, an intersubjective relationship in which mother and fetus respond to each other nonverbally yet meaningfully. In the PEIM-Expanded model, soul communication is the culmination of a multilevel process involving the body, emotions, culture, and symbolic interpretation. Thus, this model emphasizes that mother–fetus communication is not merely a biological phenomenon but a deeply meaningful interpretive process shaped by the interplay between embodiment and culture.

## DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of soul communication between mother and fetus in this study is not understood as something supernatural or mystical, but rather as a form of intersubjectivity emerging from the interaction of body, emotion, culture, and intuition (Gallagher, 2005). Prenatal intersubjectivity occurs when the maternal body becomes the first medium to register subtle signals, while emotions and cognitive frameworks shape the meaning of what is perceived (Slade, 2005). This process demonstrates that prenatal experience is far more complex than mere biological contact; it constitutes a network of awareness between two subjects who respond to each other (Tronick, 2004). Through this lens, maternal–fetal communication is not a metaphysical whisper but a natural dynamic formed through bodily sensitivity, emotional resonance, and cultural frameworks that provide the language to comprehend these experiences. Thus, this study emphasizes that the phenomenon is scientific within the domains of psychology and anthropology rather than supernatural.

Within this intersubjective process, the body becomes the starting point of communication. Many participants reported that before any meaning or intuition emerged, they first sensed physical signals—gentle movements,

warmth, or subtle shifts in bodily rhythms. These sensations are not merely physiological responses; they are experienced as the fetus's "presence" (Gallagher, 2005). Once the body registers these signals, emotions participate by giving tone to the experience. Emotions function as filters that facilitate or obstruct the reception of subtle cues (Slade, 2005). When emotional states are stable, bodily signals become clearer; when stress increases, bodily sensitivity decreases. Through this interaction between body and emotion, mothers develop their initial understanding of what is happening inside the womb. This sequence shows that prenatal communication arises from a gradual, interdependent process.

After the body and emotions receive initial signals, culture plays a crucial role as the lens of interpretation. Culture provides terms, symbols, and frameworks that shape how mothers understand their prenatal experiences. For example, concepts such as *"ngobrol batin"* in Sundanese or *"rasa nyambung"* in Javanese offer validation that these sensations are indeed forms of communication (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). Without cultural language, such experiences might remain as raw sensations without meaning. Culture enables mothers to interpret gentle movements as signs of comfort or sudden calmness as the fetus's emotional response. Thus, culture not only explains the experience but also legitimizes it as something real and trustworthy. This cultural interpretive process enriches prenatal experience, giving it layers of social and symbolic depth.

The next stage is intuition, the process of translating sensations and cultural interpretations into more personal forms of understanding. Intuition does not appear as a supernatural voice but as an "inner knowing" arising from the synthesis of bodily experience, emotional regulation, and cultural context (Morris, 2009). Many mothers described intuition as a gentle impulse or message—such as feeling the need to rest, speak to the fetus, or adjust their emotional state. Intuition functions as a psychological mechanism that connects sensory experiences with subjective meaning. In this study, intuition becomes one of the strongest indicators that mothers are building a stable inner relationship with their fetus. Therefore, intuition is not abstract or irrational; it is the product of an ongoing intersubjective process.

Through this intersubjective sequence, mothers reported various positive psychological and emotional changes. Many felt calmer, as inner communication reassured them that the fetus was well and responsive. Most mothers also reported increased confidence in their emerging maternal role. This sense of connection provided emotional strength to navigate the uncertainties of pregnancy (Slade, 2005). Additionally, mothers felt deeply bonded to the fetus, as though their relationship had begun long before birth. This strengthened their sense of ownership and attachment, reinforcing maternal identity. Some mothers even felt more resilient to stress, as the inner communication created a sense of emotional support from within the womb. These findings indicate that prenatal intersubjectivity has significant psychological benefits.

This intersubjective experience also contributes to reinforcing social and cultural values within families and communities. Mothers felt that inner communication strengthened emotional solidarity, as family support became more meaningful when relatives understood the sensitivities of both mother and fetus (Scheper-Hughes, 1992). Respect for pregnant women also increased, especially as families recognized that the mother's emotional state directly influences prenatal bonding. Furthermore, these experiences revived family rituals—such as collective prayers, scripture reading, or traditional ceremonies—which were believed to promote maternal calmness and enhance fetal communication. More broadly, the process reinforced intergenerational responsibilities, as mothers felt connected not only to the fetus but also to cultural values inherited from previous generations. In this way, prenatal intersubjectivity broadens pregnancy into a socially meaningful process.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that soul communication between mother and fetus is an embodied cultural practice—emerging through the body, emotions, intuition, and the social context of the family. The process does not exist independently from culture; on the contrary, culture provides the language, symbols, and conceptual frameworks that enable mothers to interpret the subtle experiences occurring within their bodies. Through these cultural languages—expressed in terms, rituals, and relational habits—intuition and bodily sensations gain clear meaning and become interpretable. Soul communication has been shown to strengthen prenatal closeness, foster emotional security, and help mothers navigate pregnancy with greater confidence. Through the development of the PEIM-Expanded model, this study offers a strong scientific foundation for understanding such experiences through the dynamics of culture, emotion, and the body rather than through supernatural explanations.

The PEIM-Expanded model further illustrates that soul communication is not merely an individual psychological phenomenon; it is part of an intersubjective process between two interacting consciousnesses. Pregnancy is thus understood not only as a biological condition but as an inner dialogical space shaped by cultural values, family relationships, and everyday emotional experiences. These findings open new perspectives for understanding pregnancy as a layered, socially embedded, and richly textured process. Soul communication has



been shown to enhance prenatal bonding, support maternal emotional regulation, and create a deeper sense of connectedness before birth. This study also expands academic understanding of pregnancy by showing that prenatal intersubjectivity is integral to the formation of maternal identity. Accordingly, this research contributes meaningfully to health anthropology, developmental psychology, and cultural studies.

The practical implications of this study are highly relevant for maternal health services. Antenatal programs may incorporate training to enhance bodily intuition and inner communication skills, enabling mothers to become more attuned to physical signals and fetal needs. Hospitals and health facilities can integrate non-invasive cultural practices—such as music, prayer, silent meditation, or small family rituals—as safe, evidence-informed forms of emotional support. In addition, family education on the emotional sensitivity of pregnant women should be strengthened so that the surrounding environment can foster conditions supportive of soul communication and maternal well-being. This approach not only enhances maternal emotional health but also strengthens prenatal bonding, which may influence child development after birth. Thus, this study provides a foundation for developing maternal health policies and practices that are more humanistic, culturally informed, and holistic.

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