

# Phenomenological Analysis of Mothers' Perspectives on Relactation in Abdya Regency, Indonesia

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**Abstract.** The provision of Breast Milk (BM) holds significant implications in the global context, supporting optimal infant health and development. This study employs phenomenological analysis to gain deeper insights into mothers' perspectives and experiences regarding relaxation and restarting breastfeeding after cessation. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of the various facets involving mothers' endeavours to reinstate exclusive breastfeeding practices. The study refers to a global framework encompassing diverse sources, including previous international research, policy documents regarding breastfeeding practices, and qualitative studies from various regions. By amalgamating these perspectives, the research aims to identify common patterns and variations in mothers' views and experiences of relaxation. The findings reveal prominent themes encompassing various crucial aspects. First, a profound comprehension of the multifaceted benefits of exclusive breastfeeding emerges, not only as a source of nutrition but also as a determinant of health, growth, and the emotional bond between mother and infant. Second, family and immediate environment support, including the roles of husbands, mothers-in-law, and other relatives, significantly impact the achievement of successful relactation. Third, guidance and directions provided by healthcare professionals, particularly village midwives and health practitioners, offer essential guidance and understanding for mothers throughout the relactation process.

Furthermore, the study portrays certain mothers' personalised and creative approaches while navigating the relactation process. These encompass utilising specific foods and natural elements and sourcing information from various avenues, including the experiences of fellow mothers and official guidelines. In the context of psychological impacts, the study presents an overview of the challenges and sentiments experienced by mothers during relactation, as well as the pivotal role of the emotional bond with the infant in mitigating stress and pressure. Through this phenomenological analysis, the research provides a richer understanding of mothers' viewpoints and experiences in the practice of global-scale relactation. These findings have implications for enhancing societal understanding, family support, and improved healthcare interventions to facilitate and advocate for exclusive breastfeeding practices through relactation. Thus, the study contributes to the global discourse on the significance of Breast Milk in promoting infant health and well-being worldwide.

**Keywords:** Phenomenological analysis; Mothers' perspectives Relactation; Abdya Regency.

## INTRODUCTION

Exclusive breastfeeding, abbreviated as EBF (Exclusive Breastfeeding), refers to providing breast

milk to infants from birth up to 6 months without additional foods or liquids [1-3]. This practice is optimal for nourishing infants, as breast milk contains essential nutrients for healthy growth

and development [4-6]. In 2020, statistical data showed that approximately 59% of infants received exclusive breastfeeding in the Aceh Province. However, there is a note that in the Abdya Regency (Southwest Aceh), a coastal area on the southwest coast often exposed to disaster risks, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding reached around 52% [7-9].

Regions like Abdya Regency, which possess significant disaster risk potential, often experience serious consequences such as loss of life, environmental damage, and material losses. Beyond measurable physical impacts, disasters also have the potential to induce significant psychological effects on both individuals and impacted communities. An individual's psychological condition can influence various aspects of life, including the success of providing exclusive breastfeeding to infants [10].

It cannot be ignored that a mother's psychological state plays a crucial role in the process of exclusive breastfeeding. A mother's calmness, confidence, and self-assuredness can affect breastfeeding's success. Positive feelings and emotions can enhance the production of the oxytocin hormone, boosting breast milk production [11, 12].

In response to the challenges of exclusive breastfeeding, relactation emerges as a potential solution. Relactation refers to the efforts of a mother who has previously given birth but not breastfed or has stopped breastfeeding to stimulate the reproduction of breast milk and resume the practice of exclusive breastfeeding [13]. Studies have indicated that maternal motivation factors, baby stimulation, family support, and the role of healthcare providers play pivotal roles in the success of relactation [14].

Two critical factors proven vital in relactation are a mother's strong determination and proper breast stimulation. Successful relactation is also more likely to occur in infants under three months of age [15]. The guidelines from the Indonesian Breastfeeding Mother's Association (AIMI) state that for successful relactation, a mother's mindset regarding the success of relactation needs to be robust and mental support from the immediate environment is necessary. Stress management in the initial weeks of relactation is crucial as babies might show resistance or frustration towards this change [16, 17].

The objective of this research is to investigate mothers' perceptions of relactation, the reasons behind their decision to engage in relactation, the factors influencing this decision, their self-concept and self-confidence during relactation, the psychological impacts they experience during the relactation process, the support from family and the immediate environment in their relactation efforts.

By delving deeper into these aspects, this research aims to provide a richer insight into the importance of psychological support, motivation, and the environment in the success of exclusive breastfeeding practice through relactation. These aspects are integral in maintaining infants' health and growth through exclusive breastfeeding, especially in regions with higher disaster risks.

## METHODS

The research design employed in this study is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach aims to understand individuals' subjective experiences within a broader and deeper context, providing in-depth insights into the perceptions, thoughts, and emotions that underlie their actions or decisions. The sampling process in this study utilises the Purposive Sampling Technique. This method allows the researcher to select samples that fit specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selection criteria include various aspects, such as infants under six months of age with a history of standard delivery, mothers who have ceased breastfeeding within a specific timeframe, primipara (first-time mothers), non-working mothers, absence of nipple abnormalities, appropriate infant weight for age, absence of infant lip abnormalities (such as cleft lip and cleft palate), and both the mother and baby being in good health.

The adopted research type is descriptive research. This method gathers data in words or descriptions to provide an in-depth depiction of the studied phenomenon. The research is planned to be conducted in the Southwestern Aceh Regency Area from January to December 2023. Data will be collected through several techniques, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and analysis of other relevant supporting documents. With this study design, it is expected that this research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the perceptions and

experiences of mothers engaging in relactation within a broader context, including potential psychological impacts. The outcomes of this research can contribute significantly to supporting exclusive breastfeeding through relactation and offer insights for developing improved interventions to support mothers during the relactation process.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*The Importance of Exclusive Breastfeeding in Relactation.* Exclusive breastfeeding, especially in relactation, is significant beyond mere nutrition provision to infants. This practice carries profound implications for infant health, growth, and the formation of emotional bonds between mother and child. Based on the interview analysis with the participants, it is evident that most mothers recognise the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, as explained in the following analysis.

Analysis Aspect	Findings
Belief in Health Benefits	Informants share a similar belief in the health benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. They know breast milk contains essential substances that strengthen children's immune systems and shield them from health risks.
Enhanced Immune System	Several informants who link breastfeeding with improved immunity express that exclusive breastfeeding boosts children's immune systems.
Natural Nutritional Superiority	Many mothers acknowledge that breast milk is a natural source of nutrition with crucial elements that other types of food cannot match. This recognition motivates them to provide breast milk for optimal infant care.
Weight Loss Relationship	Some informants associate breastfeeding with postpartum weight reduction, believing that the breastfeeding process aids in regaining the body's shape after childbirth.
Difference Between Breast Milk and Formula	Mothers grasp the significant distinctions between breast milk and formula milk. They recognise that breast milk is more fitting and nutritionally richer, with inherent protection for babies, particularly premature ones.

Relactation emerges as a significant adaptive strategy in challenging situations. Babies facing environmental changes and stressors in disaster scenarios require additional support from the natural nourishment contained in breast milk. These nutrients are crucial in helping babies adapt to unfavourable conditions and reducing the risk of growth disturbances. Furthermore, exclusive breastfeeding profoundly contributes to forming an emotional bond between the mother and her baby. Breastfeeding nurtures an intimate bond that strengthens the bond of affection and care. In disaster situations where emotional stability may be disrupted, this bond gains added significance by providing comfort and solace to the baby.

*Strategies and Efforts for Successful Relactation.* Exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) is the fundamental cornerstone in ensuring optimal health and growth of infants in the early stages of their lives. However, it's not uncommon for mothers to face challenges in resuming or reinstating breast milk production after a period of cessation. Understanding the strategies and efforts that can be undertaken for successful relactation becomes crucial, which involves initiating or reinitiating breastfeeding after a pause. Based on the interview analysis with participants, it is evident that mothers employ strategies and efforts to achieve the success of their relactation, as explained in the following analysis.

Aspects of Analysis	Findings in the Table
Variation of Approaches	The analysis results depict the diverse approaches each participant took to ensure the success of the relactation process. These approaches encompass using specific foods, natural ingredients, and assistance from medical professionals. Despite facing obstacles and challenges, these mothers uniquely and creatively strive to ensure good breast milk production for the well-being of their babies.
Compliance with Instructions	Many participants are willing to follow instructions from healthcare providers, especially village midwives. These instructions involve using vitamin supplements or massage techniques to support breast milk production. Compliance with these instructions reflects trust

Aspects of Analysis	Findings in the Table
	in medical professionals' advice and the belief that these actions will yield positive outcomes.
Family Empowerment	In pursuing successful relactation, the participants consider family support crucial, particularly from husbands and mothers-in-law. This support encompasses emotional support, breast milk production nutrition, and baby care assistance. The active presence and role of the family in this process showcase synergy and collaboration that strengthen the mother's efforts in relactation.
Personal Approaches	Some participants adopt a more personal and creative approach to the relactation process. They employ strategies such as consuming specific foods believed to enhance breast milk production or seeking information from various sources, including the experiences of other mothers and official guidelines like the KIA handbook. This approach reflects mothers' diligent efforts in designing steps tailored to their needs and conditions.

Exclusive breastfeeding is essential in relactation. It goes beyond providing nutrition to the baby. It involves a complex process that requires strategic efforts. In the journey towards successful relactation, mothers employ diverse strategies, including medical guidance, family support, and creative personal approaches. These efforts aim to ensure the provision of high-quality exclusive breastfeeding, promoting optimal health and growth for the baby. Therefore, a profound understanding of the strategies and efforts for relactation success is essential for mothers dedicated to offering the best for their infants.

*Breastfeeding Information Sources.* The analysis obtained from exploring information sources related to breastfeeding highlights the significance of diversity in the knowledge outlets utilised by mothers. This diversity reflects mothers' eagerness to seek comprehensive and accurate knowledge about breastfeeding practices. Across various backgrounds and contexts, informants rely on multiple sources, ranging from traditional knowledge inherited from their surroundings to medical guidance from healthcare providers and

official literature such as the KIA book. The involvement of healthcare professionals like village midwives also emerges as a pivotal component in ensuring breastfeeding success. This analysis portrays that information sources concerning breastfeeding are not singular but a result of mothers' proactive efforts to seek guidance to provide the best care for their infants.

Aspect of Analysis	Findings
Diversity of Information Sources	Informants rely on various sources of information, such as their environment, culture, tradition, healthcare providers, and health literature, to acquire in-depth knowledge about breastfeeding practices.
Traditional and Environmental Sources	Some informants, like mothers, grandmothers, or local communities, depend on knowledge from their immediate environment with breastfeeding experience, reflecting societal ingrained traditions.
Role of Healthcare Professionals	Healthcare professionals such as village midwives, doctors, and health workers are valuable information sources due to their profound understanding of infant and maternal nutrition and health.
Written Sources and KIA Book	The Mother and Child Health Handbook (KIA) is a significant information source for some informants, underscoring the importance of health literature as a practical guide for optimal breastfeeding.
Comprehensive Understanding	The amalgamation of information sources offers mothers a comprehensive understanding of the significance of exclusive breastfeeding and how to implement breastfeeding practices by blending traditional and medical knowledge.

A profound analysis of the previously outlined table reveals compelling evidence of the determination and enthusiasm possessed by mothers in their quest to acquire accurate and reliable knowledge about breastfeeding practices. This steadfastness is evident through the diverse information sources they harness to enhance their understanding and implementation of breastfeeding. Upon examining the spectrum of infor-

mation sources, it becomes clear that mothers do not rely solely on a single source of information; instead, they actively seek various perspectives that can aid them in understanding the best actions for their infants. Confronting diverse challenges and needs, mothers diligently utilise various knowledge sources, ranging from local and traditional wisdom to official medical guidance and health literature. Information sources from their immediate environment, such as knowledge passed down from mothers and grandmothers, imbue breastfeeding practices with cultural and traditional depth.

On the other hand, the relationships they foster with healthcare professionals, including village midwives and healthcare workers, provide profound insights into the nutritional and health aspects of breastfeeding. The significance of health literature is also evident in the mothers' efforts to gain comprehensive knowledge. The Mother and Child Health Handbook (KIA) is a dependable source for practical guidance and deeper insights into breastfeeding. This amalgamation of diverse information sources reflects the mothers' eagerness to comprehend breastfeeding comprehensively and ensure that every decision aligns with their endeavour to provide the best care for the health and growth of their infants. Overall, this in-depth analysis demonstrates that mothers are not passive recipients of information but active agents in seeking the required knowledge. The diversity of information sources underscores their spirited commitment to fulfilling their crucial role as mothers seeking to offer their children optimal care and nutrition through informed breastfeeding practices.

*Breastfeeding in Disaster or Displacement Situations.* The provision of Breast Milk (known as ASI - Air Susu Ibu) plays a crucial role in maintaining the health and well-being of infants, especially in the context of natural disasters or displacement scenarios. In such challenging conditions, the significance of breastfeeding extends beyond nutrition, encompassing profound implications for the physical and psychological well-being of the infants and the mother. Exclusive breastfeeding amid disasters or displacement has a remarkable impact on bolstering the infant's immune system against diseases and reducing the risk of infections. Breast milk also holds the distinct advantage of providing natural nutrition that cannot be rivalled by formula milk. Additionally, breastfeeding practices offer a milk sense of security, comfort, and essential emotional support

that both the infant and the mother greatly need in uncertain circumstances.

Aspect of Analysis	Findings
Consistency in Breastfeeding Practices	The table analysis reveals a remarkable consistency in breastfeeding practices amidst disaster or displacement. Mothers maintain their prioritisation of exclusive breastfeeding as the primary care for their infants. Despite challenging circumstances and potential disruptions in routines, these mothers exhibit an unwavering commitment to breastfeeding, reflecting their determination to provide optimal protection and nutrition to their infants.
Commitment to Infant Well-being	From the perspective of these mothers, breastfeeding is not merely an obligation but a profound commitment to the well-being of their infants. The occurrence of disasters or displacement does not alter this view. Despite rising challenges, breastfeeding remains essential in nurturing infant growth and development.
Significant Role of Breastfeeding in Challenges	A deeper analysis highlights that mothers possess a profound understanding of breastfeeding's significance in addressing challenging conditions such as disasters or displacement. They recognise breastfeeding as more than a source of nutrition; it also effectively protects against the heightened risk of infections and diseases. This perception reflects their awareness of the unique nutritional benefits of breast milk, particularly vital in situations with elevated health risks.
Family Support Factor	A notable finding is the pivotal role of family support, particularly from husbands and mothers-in-law, in upholding breastfeeding practices during trying circumstances. This support encompasses both emotional and practical aspects, including ensuring sufficient nutrition for the mother and providing supplementary care for the infant. Such support is critical in sustaining breastfeeding practices and fostering maternal confidence.

Aspect of Analysis	Findings
Spirit of Facing Challenges	A more profound analysis underscores the determination and resilience of mothers in confronting potential challenges during disaster or displacement scenarios. Despite environmental changes and potential resource constraints, their enthusiasm for providing exclusive breastfeeding remains unwavering. This willingness reflects a solid drive to offer the best to their infants and a belief that breastfeeding remains the optimal choice under all circumstances.
Decision Driven by Infant's Interests	Mothers exhibit a deep understanding that the decision to continue exclusive breastfeeding in disaster or displacement situations is driven by the consideration of their infant's interests. They acknowledge that breastfeeding offers invaluable health benefits, protection, and nutrition to their infants. This perspective is a powerful motivator for sustaining breastfeeding practices amid challenging circumstances.
Awareness of Infant's Health Condition	Awareness of the infant's health condition in disaster or displacement situations significantly influences mothers' perspectives. They recognise that the risk of diseases and infections might be heightened in such scenarios, thus perceiving breastfeeding as an effective means of protection for their infants. This awareness compels them to prioritise breastfeeding as an avital preventive measure/

In the context of natural disasters or displacement situations, a deeper analysis of the table's content reveals distinct variations in the perspectives and viewpoints of these mothers. However, amidst these variations, the central point remains steadfast: their unwavering priority is the well-being of their children through breastfeeding, even amidst challenging circumstances like disasters or displacement. This viewpoint reflects these mothers' profound sense of responsibility towards their children. When faced with unexpected natural disasters or situations of displacement that may restrict access to resources, these mothers remain committed to upholding

the welfare of their infants through breastfeeding. This perspective extends beyond a mere nutritional choice. It encapsulates an unshakable expression of love and the moral duty of a mother to shield and nurture their children's optimal development. This commitment also mirrors fundamental values such as dedication and sacrifice that mothers willingly undertake for the well-being of future generations. In moments of adversity, such as disasters or displacement, they deliberately focus on this essential task, underscoring the immense strength of their determination to provide the best for their children despite unfavourable circumstances.

Hence, these perspectives and commitments exemplify mothers' resilience in safeguarding and guiding future generations through breastfeeding, even in situations fraught with challenges and limitations. This is a genuine reflection of mothers' power in nurturing and guiding generations through the invaluable act of breastfeeding, even within adversity and constraints.

### CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion drawn from the comprehensive analysis above underscores the paramount importance of exclusive breastfeeding within the relactation process, which has profound implications for infants' and mothers' health and well-being. Through the various aspects examined, it becomes evident that breastfeeding practices have wide-ranging effects, whether in normal circumstances or during situations of disaster or displacement. In the context of relactation, mothers adopt diverse approaches and strategies tailored to their individual needs and conditions. Yet, they collectively share a common understanding of the significance of exclusive breastfeeding. This perspective extends beyond mere nutrition, encapsulating maternal values, responsibilities, and commitments to the well-being of their offspring.

Moreover, the role of family and community support is pivotal in facilitating the success of the relactation process. Mothers recognise the emotional, physical, and practical support family members and healthcare professionals provide. This support motivates them and fosters an environment conducive to effective breastfeeding practices. The diversity of information sources accessed by mothers to acquire breastfeeding knowledge reflects their enthusiasm for seeking

comprehensive and reliable information to bolster breastfeeding success. It signifies their endeavour to amalgamate traditional and contemporary knowledge to provide optimal infant care. When considering the importance of breastfeeding in disaster or displacement scenarios, it is evident that maternal perspectives remain centred on the well-being of their children. In challenging and uncertain circumstances, these mothers steadfastly prioritise breastfeeding as the optimal means of protection and support for their infants. This viewpoint underscores a profound sense of responsibility, commitment, and unwavering maternal love, even in adversity.

In summary, the multifaceted analysis conducted, coupled with the findings extracted from various

aspects and tabulated data, unequivocally highlights the paramount significance of exclusive breastfeeding for ensuring the health and well-being of both infants and mothers. Breastfeeding practices transcend mere nutrition to embody maternal values, commitment, and a determined spirit in confronting challenges. Irrespective of the context, from relactation to disaster scenarios, breastfeeding is a strong foundation for securing optimal development and safeguarding the health of future generations.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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