

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POSTPARTUM FATIGUE AND BREASTFEEDING MOTIVATION IN EAST ACEH PROVINCE IN 2024

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ABSTRACT

Postpartum fatigue is a common condition experienced by mothers after childbirth due to physical, physiological, and psychological changes during the postpartum period. Excessive fatigue may affect a mother's ability to care for her infant and can reduce her motivation to breastfeed. Breastfeeding motivation is an important factor in the success of exclusive breastfeeding and contributes significantly to infant health and development. This study aimed to determine the relationship between postpartum fatigue and breastfeeding motivation among postpartum mothers in the service area of Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024. This study employed a quantitative correlational design. The population consisted of 56 postpartum mothers, and all participants were selected using a total sampling technique. Data were collected using the Postpartum Fatigue Scale (PFS) to assess fatigue levels and the Breastfeeding Motivational Instructional Measurement Scale (BMIMS) to measure breastfeeding motivation. Data were analyzed using univariate and bivariate analyses with the Spearman Rank correlation test at a significance level of 0.05. The results indicated that most respondents experienced moderate levels of postpartum fatigue and moderate breastfeeding motivation. Statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between postpartum fatigue and breastfeeding motivation. Higher levels of fatigue were associated with lower motivation to breastfeed. Therefore, efforts to reduce postpartum fatigue may contribute to improving breastfeeding motivation among postpartum mother.

Keywords: Postpartum Fatigue, Breastfeeding Motivation, Postpartum Mothers, Exclusive Breastfeeding.

INTRODUCTION

Postpartum fatigue is a multidimensional condition involving physical exhaustion, reduced energy, sleep disturbances, and emotional strain that may negatively affect maternal well-being and infant care. The postpartum period is a critical phase in a woman's life, characterized by substantial physical, psychological, and social adjustments following childbirth. During this period, mothers are required to adapt to physiological recovery while simultaneously caring for their newborns. One of the most common health problems experienced by postpartum mothers is fatigue. Postpartum fatigue is a multidimensional condition involving physical exhaustion, reduced energy, sleep disturbances, and emotional strain that may negatively affect maternal well-being and infant care (McBean & Montgomery-Downs, Mariman et al., 2024).

Community-based health education has been shown to improve mothers' knowledge and motivation regarding exclusive breastfeeding, highlighting the importance of continuous education during the postpartum period. (Sari, 2024) Research has shown that postpartum fatigue remains highly prevalent among mothers during the first weeks after delivery and may persist for several months if not properly managed. Longitudinal evidence further indicates that postpartum fatigue and sleep disturbances may persist for several months after childbirth regardless of infant feeding method, negatively affecting maternal recovery, physical functioning, and overall well-being (Mariman et al., 2024). Breastfeeding is a fundamental component of maternal and child health. Breastfeeding is a fundamental component of maternal and child health. Maternal motivation has also been shown to influence early breastfeeding practices, including colostrum feeding immediately after birth. (R. P. Sari et al., 2025) The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life because of its nutritional, immunological, and developmental benefits. However, successful breastfeeding depends on several factors, including maternal knowledge, family support, healthcare services, and maternal motivation. Family behaviour and support during the postpartum period have also been identified as important determinants of maternal adaptation and successful infant care, emphasizing the importance of family involvement in breastfeeding support (Sari et al., 2025). Recent evidence indicates that breastfeeding difficulties may negatively affect maternal mental health and reduce mothers' confidence to continue breastfeeding (Rowles et al., 2025).

Motivation plays an essential role in determining a mother's commitment to initiating and maintaining breastfeeding practices. Motivation plays an essential role in determining a mother's commitment to initiating and maintaining breastfeeding practices. A recent systematic review highlighted that intrinsic maternal motivation is one of the strongest predictors of breastfeeding initiation and continuation (Ant et al., 2025). Recent evidence has shown that breastfeeding motivation is a multidimensional construct that strongly predicts breastfeeding initiation and continuation across different cultural settings. (Yu et al., 2024) Previous studies have shown that mothers with better knowledge regarding breastfeeding benefits tend to demonstrate stronger breastfeeding motivation and better postpartum quality of life. (Inas, 2026) Cross-cultural validation studies also demonstrated that maternal attitudes and motivation toward breastfeeding are significantly associated with breastfeeding duration and exclusive breastfeeding practices. (Suppiger et al., 2024) Previous research conducted by Ndraha et al. (2024) demonstrated that appropriate lactation interventions significantly improve breast milk production and support successful breastfeeding among postpartum mothers. (Murni et al., 2024) Digital breastfeeding education has also been shown to improve maternal motivation while reducing postpartum fatigue during the first weeks after childbirth (Journal, 2025).

Postpartum fatigue has been identified as a significant factor influencing breastfeeding behavior and motivation. Maternal fatigue may reduce intrinsic motivation and self-confidence, leading to early breastfeeding discontinuation if adequate support is not provided (Suppiger et al., 2024). Mothers experiencing excessive fatigue often report difficulties in caring for their infants, maintaining breastfeeding routines, and coping with emotional stress. maintaining breastfeeding routines, and coping with emotional stress. (Wigutomo Gozali, 2025) A previous study reported a significant relationship between postpartum fatigue and breastfeeding motivation, indicating that higher levels of fatigue were associated with lower motivation to breastfeed. (Yu et al., 2024).

Recent evidence also demonstrates that maternal sleep quality and postpartum functioning are closely associated with breastfeeding motivation. Poor sleep quality and increased fatigue may reduce maternal confidence and willingness to continue breastfeeding, ultimately affecting breastfeeding outcomes.(Güler & Çankaya, 2026).

Furthermore, longitudinal studies have shown that fatigue remains a major challenge during the postpartum period and may influence maternal adaptation and infant-feeding practices. Therefore, this study aimed to determine the relationship between postpartum fatigue and breastfeeding motivation among postpartum mothers in the service area of Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024. The findings are expected to provide evidence for healthcare professionals in developing interventions to reduce postpartum fatigue and improve breastfeeding motivation among postpartum mothers

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative correlational design to determine the relationship between postpartum fatigue and breastfeeding motivation among postpartum mothers in the service area of Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024. The population consisted of 56 postpartum mothers, and total sampling was used to include all eligible participants. Data were collected using the Postpartum Fatigue Scale (PFS) and the Breastfeeding Motivational Instructional Measurement Scale (BMIMS) questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Spearman Rank Correlation Test with a significance level of 0.05. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were maintained throughout the study.

RESULT

Table 1: Distribution of Variables Measured for Fatigue and Motivation Regarding Exclusive Breastfeeding in the Service Area of the Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024

Variables Measured	Category					
	Lightweight		Moderate		Severe	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Maternal Fatigue Postpartum	0	0	40	72	16	28
TOTAL						56
Motivation for Exclusive Breastfeeding	18	31	25	45	13	24
TOTAL						56

Table 2 Distribution of Postpartum Fatigue and Motivation for Exclusive Breastfeeding in the Service Area of the Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024

Postpartum Fatigue	Motivation for Exclusive Breastfeeding						Total
	Low		Currently		Tall		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	
Lightweight	0	0,0%	0	0	0	0	0
Moderate	7	18,1%	19	48,6%	14	33,3%	40
Severe	10	64,3%	6	35,7%	0	0,0%	16
Spearman Rho Rank p = 0,000							

Table 1 shows the distribution of the measured variables based on postpartum maternal fatigue and motivation for exclusive breastfeeding. Most respondents reported moderate fatigue, totaling 40 participants (72.0%), and most reported moderate motivation for exclusive breastfeeding, totaling 16 participants (28.0%).

Table 2 shows the relationship between postpartum fatigue and motivation for exclusive breastfeeding among mothers with infants aged 0–6 months. Respondents with moderate postpartum fatigue tended to have moderate motivation for exclusive breastfeeding, totaling 19 individuals (48.6%), while those with high motivation for exclusive breastfeeding numbered 14 (33.3%). Respondents experiencing severe postpartum fatigue tended to have low motivation for exclusive breastfeeding, totaling 10 individuals (64.3%), while 6 individuals (35.7%) had moderate motivation.

The results of the statistical test using Spearman's Rho Rank correlation yielded a significance level of 0.000, which is smaller than the α value of ≤ 0.05 ; therefore, H1 is accepted, meaning there is a significant relationship between postpartum fatigue and motivation for exclusive breastfeeding among mothers breastfeeding for 0–6 months. The contingency coefficient was -0.486, indicating that the variables of postpartum maternal fatigue and motivation for exclusive breastfeeding have a moderate strength of association with an inverse relationship: the higher the fatigue experienced by the mother, the lower her motivation for exclusive breastfeeding.

DISCUSSION

Based on the author's research findings, the majority of respondents experienced moderate fatigue. This finding is consistent with (Nursalam, 2025) who identified anxiety, depression, and inadequate social support as important factors contributing to postpartum fatigue. This was evident when, while filling out the questionnaire, respondents complained of a heavy head, dizziness, and even trembling in their extremities.

On days 7–14 of the postpartum period, women experience a psychological change known as taking hold, during which they begin to become more independent. During this phase, episodes of depression sometimes occur due to various factors; some women even struggle to adjust because they must care for their infants and manage household chores. Generally, multiparous postpartum mothers experience more complex fatigue because they must meet the needs of other family members, care for their baby, and breastfeed—all of which naturally require extra energy. Excessive fatigue is caused by mental and emotional stress, which places an additional burden on the adrenal glands. The adrenal glands are responsible for helping the body adapt to various types of stress. The more severe the stress—and the less effectively it is managed—the more the adrenal glands' performance will decline as they are forced to work harder to produce cortisol. People with adrenal dysfunction have high or low cortisol levels throughout the day. When the adrenal glands can no longer regulate cortisol to meet the body's needs, leading to an increase in total cortisol, this results in adrenal fatigue.

This study found that respondents' motivation for exclusive breastfeeding ranged from low to moderate to high on average. This is related to the questionnaire responses, in which respondents considered breastfeeding to be very important, but some felt compelled to do so because it is the best way to feed their babies; they felt they were not good at breastfeeding; and they found breastfeeding to be complicated and repetitive, so that most respondents had difficulty determining whether it was going well or not. The results of the analysis using Spearman's correlation test's Rho showed that the fatigue experienced by postpartum mothers was negatively correlated with their motivation for exclusive breastfeeding among mothers breastfeeding for 0–6 months ($p \leq \alpha$), meaning there is a significant relationship between postpartum mothers' fatigue and their motivation for exclusive breastfeeding in the Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center (Puskesmas) Service Area, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024, at a 99% confidence level. The correlation coefficient indicates a moderate inverse relationship, suggesting that the higher the fatigue experienced by mothers, the lower their motivation to practice exclusive breastfeeding among mothers with infants aged 0–6 months in the service area of the Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024.

The fatigue experienced by postpartum mothers is significantly associated with their motivation to practice exclusive breastfeeding. These findings are also supported (Manullang Rasmi, 2025) who reported that mind–body–based psychoeducation significantly improved breastfeeding self-efficacy among postpartum mothers. Strengthening mothers' confidence through educational interventions may help maintain breastfeeding motivation despite postpartum fatigue. These findings are supported by who reported that mothers with stronger intrinsic breastfeeding motivation were more likely to continue exclusive breastfeeding despite postpartum challenges. These findings are consistent with Gozali & Pratiwi (2025), who reported that higher postpartum fatigue was significantly associated with lower breastfeeding motivation ($p = 0.001$). This is consistent with the view (Brown et al., 2022) that a mother's stress, anxiety, and unhappiness (Wigutomo Gozali, 2025) during the breastfeeding period play a significant role in the success of exclusive breastfeeding. Stress is heavily influenced by elevated cortisol levels in the body, which disrupt the release of oxytocin from the neurohypophysis. Psychological distress resulting from adapting to a new role, breastfeeding motivation is also closely associated with breastfeeding self-efficacy and positive maternal attitudes, highlighting the importance of psychological support during the postpartum period (Cecilia Peñacoba-Puente & Expand, 2025).

the responsibilities of motherhood, and a lack of family support to help care for the baby and manage household chores leads to emotional changes such as anxiety. Consequently, mothers may lack confidence in their ability to produce breast milk, thereby reducing the success of exclusive breastfeeding. These findings are also consistent with who reported that oxytocin massage significantly improved breast milk flow among postpartum mothers, emphasizing the importance of breastfeeding support during the postpartum period. In addition to psychological factors, physiological issues experienced by mothers such as sore nipples, enlarged breasts, and low milk supply can also reduce a mother's motivation to breastfeed exclusively. This leads to a blockage of the let-down reflex, which increases vasoconstriction in the alveolar blood vessels, preventing the hormone oxytocin from reaching the myoepithelium (Tomori et al., 2022), reported that lactation-house interventions combined with breastfeeding education successfully improved maternal knowledge, breastfeeding confidence, and breast milk production among postpartum mothers. (Rosmani & Damanik, 2022) In addition, postpartum mothers require adequate family support, relaxation, and proper breastfeeding management because these factors contribute to optimal breast milk production and successful exclusive breastfeeding (Manurung, 2020). Partner support also plays a crucial role in maintaining maternal motivation to breastfeed. Mothers who receive emotional and practical support from their husbands are more likely to maintain exclusive breastfeeding despite experiencing postpartum fatigue (Mardawiah, 2024).

CONCLUSION

- 1) In this study, the majority of postpartum fatigue among mothers was classified as moderate, caused by a high level of physical activity and adaptation to the new role of motherhood.
- 2) The respondents' motivation for exclusive breastfeeding was mostly moderate, due to their own physiological challenges and a lack of family support in helping with household chores.
- 3) Postpartum fatigue is associated with motivation for exclusive breastfeeding among mothers breastfeeding infants aged 0–6 months in the service area of the Leubok Pempeng Community Health Center, Peureulak Subdistrict, East Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, in 2024.

SUGGESTION

1. For healthcare professionals
The results of this study can be used as a novel and innovative approach in midwifery to raise awareness about the importance of early detection of postpartum fatigue, thereby increasing mothers' motivation to practice exclusive breastfeeding
2. For future researchers
Further research is needed to identify factors associated with postpartum fatigue and to use observational methods to determine how to increase mothers' motivation to practice exclusive breastfeeding

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