

**BIRTHING EXPERIENCES OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED
MOTHERS IN ACEH**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the birthing experiences of Acehnese women who delivered their babies after the tsunami on December 24, 2004 in Aceh. The tsunami destroyed the infrastructure in Aceh, killed more than 100,000 people and displaced another 400,000. It was estimated that there were 13,000 to 15,000 pregnant women among these internally displaced persons.

To understand the birthing experiences of women after the tsunami, ideas from postmodernist feminist approaches were drawn on to collect and interpret the data. Mimesis was used to identify the identities of the women through their representations. Identities of women became the starting point to analyze women's agency and the competing discourses around them. There were nine women who shared their stories with me in this study. There were five identities shown by these women, as Acehnese women; as internally displaced persons; as Muslims; as mothers; and as conflict affected persons. These identities are fluid and changeable, they are interwoven with each other.

Competing discourses were traced through women's identity and agency. They were three discourses that affect women's notion on birthing in Aceh. These discourses are socio-cultural discourses, discourses on emergency and discourses on conflict.

These women used their agency to analyze their situations and it shaped their subjectivities. Women's identities and subjectivities shaped their relationship with others, including their children, husbands and humanitarian workers. There were gaps between these women and humanitarian workers. Women prefer to deliver their babies with help of local providers rather than free health service provided by humanitarian organizations. Female genital mutilation occurs in Aceh, as a way to control women's sexuality and being seen as part of Islamic teachings.

KEY WORDS: MOTHERS/INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSON/

BIRTHING/ POST-MODERN FEMINISM/ASIAN TSUNAMI

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