

**CULTURAL MILKSCAPE: A CORPUS-BASED  
CROSS-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS  
OF BREASTFEEDING DISCOURSES  
IN ITALIAN AND ANGLOPHONE NEWS**

**PAISAJE CULTURAL DE LA LACTANCIA:  
UN ANÁLISIS BASADO EN CORPUS Y  
DE ENFOQUE CONTRASTIVO DE LOS DISCURSOS  
SOBRE LA LACTANCIA MATERNA  
EN LA PRENSA ITALIANA Y ANGLÓFONA**

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**Abstract**

Applying corpus-assisted cross-linguistic discourse analysis, this article investigates how breastfeeding is discursively constructed in contemporary Italian and Anglophone news media. Two comparable news corpora, each consisting of 100 newspaper articles published between 2021 and 2023, were compiled from the Nexis Uni database. The study combines corpus-based discourse analysis with the appraisal framework to examine how breastfeeding is represented, evaluated and legitimised in media discourse. Frequency analysis and concordance examination of both datasets reveal that infant feeding is overwhelmingly framed as a maternal responsibility, with mothers emerging as the central social actors while fathers remain largely marginalised. Across the two corpora, breastfeeding is consistently represented as the optimal and morally desirable method of infant feeding, often supported through references to scientific authority that function to reinforce normative assumptions about maternal responsibility. While these similarities are evident, the analysis also points to certain cross-linguistic differences in how breastfeeding is discursively framed. In the Italian data, greater emphasis is placed on supportive infrastructures and institutional initiatives that enable breastfeeding in everyday contexts. By contrast, the English-language corpus more often presents breastfeeding in terms of individual challenge, personal responsibility and public health advocacy. Taken together, these patterns suggest that media discourse plays

a role in shaping expectations around motherhood, positioning breastfeeding not only as a health recommendation but also as a marker of what counts as appropriate maternal behaviour.

**Keywords:** breastfeeding discourse, corpus-assisted discourse analysis, appraisal, motherhood, media representation.

## Resumen

Este artículo investiga cómo se construye discursivamente la lactancia materna en los medios de comunicación italianos y anglófonos contemporáneos mediante un análisis comparado de corpus. Dos corpus periodísticos comparables, cada uno compuesto por 100 artículos publicados entre 2021 y 2023, fueron compilados a partir de la base de datos Nexis Uni. El estudio combina el Análisis del Discurso Basado en Corpus con la Teoría de la Valoración para examinar cómo la lactancia materna es representada, evaluada y legitimada en el discurso mediático. El análisis de frecuencias y de concordancias revela que la alimentación infantil se presenta predominantemente como una responsabilidad materna en ambos corpus, donde las madres emergen como los actores sociales centrales mientras que los padres permanecen en gran medida marginados. En los dos conjuntos de datos, la lactancia materna se representa de forma sistemática como el método óptimo y moralmente deseable de alimentación infantil, a menudo respaldado por referencias a la autoridad científica que refuerzan supuestos normativos sobre la responsabilidad materna. A pesar de estas similitudes, el análisis también pone de relieve diferencias translingüísticas en el énfasis discursivo. El discurso mediático italiano tiende a destacar infraestructuras de apoyo e iniciativas institucionales destinadas a facilitar la lactancia, mientras que la prensa anglófona la enmarca con mayor frecuencia a través de narrativas de desafío individual, responsabilidad personal y promoción de la salud pública. Los resultados muestran cómo el discurso mediático contribuye a la moralización de la maternidad al construir la lactancia materna no solo como una recomendación sanitaria, sino también como un referente normativo de la “buena maternidad”.

**Palabras clave:** lactancia materna, análisis del discurso asistido por corpus, valoración (appraisal), maternidad, representación mediática.

## 1. Introduction

Mothers are increasingly positioned as ‘risk managers’ responsible for safeguarding their children’s health and wellbeing (Furedi 2002; Reese 2005; Lee 2008). This

expectation reflects the broader logic of contemporary risk-conscious societies, where individuals are encouraged to anticipate and minimise potential dangers associated with everyday decisions (Beck 1992; Slovic 2000). Within this framework, parenting practices are increasingly guided by expert knowledge and public health recommendations that frame certain behaviours as responsible or desirable (Knaak 2005).

Many of these expectations emerge at the very beginning of motherhood. Decisions surrounding pregnancy and childbirth, such as the choice between vaginal birth and caesarean section, are often subjected to social scrutiny and moral judgement that may shape women's self-perception as mothers (Lobel and DeLuca 2007). Infant feeding practices represent another domain in which such expectations become particularly visible. Over the past decades, breastfeeding has increasingly been framed in public health discourse as the "cultural and biological norm" for infant feeding (Alberta Breastfeeding Committee 2009).

A range of organisations have actively promoted breastfeeding as the preferred method of infant feeding, including La Leche League International, the International Lactation Consultant Association, Breastfeeding USA, the Global Breastfeeding Collective and the National Breastfeeding Coalition. While these initiatives are often grounded in legitimate concerns about infant health, scholars have noted that pro-breastfeeding advocacy may sometimes adopt a persuasive rather than purely informational tone. Knaak (2005), for instance, argues that dominant infant-feeding discourse frequently functions as a vehicle of persuasion, characterised by informational biases, moral overtones and a restricted representation of choice.

Several studies have explored how breastfeeding discourse has shifted beyond purely medical considerations towards broader moral and cultural meanings. Researchers such as Kukla (2006), Avishai (2007), Wolf (2007) and Lee and Bristow (2009) observe that breastfeeding has increasingly become intertwined with normative expectations surrounding responsible motherhood. In this context, breastfeeding can come to operate as a symbolic marker of 'good motherhood', while women who do not breastfeed may be more likely to encounter judgement, stigma or feelings of inadequacy. As Petersen and Lupton (2000) contend, public health discourse often relies on moralised binaries that position some behaviours as responsible and others as problematic, in this way reinforcing normative expectations around health practices.

Within this discursive framework, breastfeeding may shape maternal identity and influence both social perceptions and self-evaluation. Women who successfully breastfeed may experience it as confirmation of maternal competence, whereas those who cannot or choose not to breastfeed may face feelings of guilt or self-

blame. Such pressures may be particularly acute for women who encounter medical or structural barriers to breastfeeding. These include conditions such as HIV infection, complications affecting milk supply, mastitis or nipple pain, the use of medications incompatible with breastfeeding and workplace environments that provide limited opportunities for breastfeeding. Psychological factors such as stress, anxiety and postpartum depression may further complicate the experience of infant feeding.

Drawing on interviews with breastfeeding and non-breastfeeding mothers, Andrews and Knaak (2013) describe this phenomenon as a "culture of pressure" (2013: 88). Many participants in their study reported feeling expected to breastfeed and experiencing stigma when deviating from this norm. According to the authors, this pressure operates along multiple social axes. It can come from partners, relatives or employers who encourage breastfeeding, but also from peer networks in which women monitor and evaluate one another's parenting practices.

Although these expectations are frequently encountered in everyday interactions, they are also tied to broader cultural narratives around motherhood and infant care. Media discourse plays a role in circulating and reinforcing these narratives, shaping how particular parenting practices are represented and evaluated in the public sphere. From a linguistic perspective, media representations of social practices have increasingly been examined through corpus-assisted discourse analysis. Studies in corpus-assisted discourse analysis demonstrate how recurring lexical patterns in media texts contribute to the construction of social norms, ideological framings and behavioural expectations (Partington et al. 2013; Baker and Levon 2015). Research on health communication further shows that journalistic discourse frequently employs evaluative language, expert authority and moral framing to present particular behaviours as responsible or desirable (Crawford 2006; Brookes et al. 2022; Al Fajri et al. 2023).

In media discourse studies, scholars have also examined how parenting practices and family roles are linguistically constructed through recurring narratives and evaluative patterns that reinforce culturally dominant models of motherhood (Heffernan and Wilgus 2020; Zottola et al. 2024; Mary et al. 2025). Breastfeeding represents a particularly revealing site of analysis because it sits at the intersection of several overlapping discourses, including public health, parenting norms and gender expectations.

Against this background, the present study examines how breastfeeding is discursively constructed in Italian and English-language newspaper discourse. It focuses in particular on the linguistic patterns through which breastfeeding is represented, evaluated and legitimised in contemporary news media. By combining corpus-based approaches with qualitative discourse analysis, the study explores

how these representations contribute to shaping normative expectations around motherhood and infant feeding.

To address these issues, the study adopts a corpus-assisted approach that allows for systematic comparison of two comparable news corpora compiled from Italian and English-language newspapers. Through frequency analysis and concordance examination, it identifies recurring lexical patterns and discursive strategies used to frame breastfeeding practices. This cross-linguistic perspective makes it possible to trace both similarities and differences in how breastfeeding is represented across the two media contexts, offering insight into the role of media discourse in shaping contemporary understandings of motherhood and infant care.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Corpus Collection

The Italian and English-language corpora were compiled using Nexis Uni, an academic database providing access to professional and media sources. The dataset consists exclusively of newspaper articles published between 9 November 2021 and 9 November 2023, a period selected to capture recent debates on breastfeeding and parenting practices in the post-pandemic context, when issues related to maternal care, work-life balance and public breastfeeding gained renewed visibility. Limiting the corpus to this time frame made it possible to work with a stable and closed dataset, supporting more consistent cross-linguistic comparison.

Two comparable corpora were compiled, one for each language. The Allattamento corpus consists of 100 Italian newspaper articles selected from a larger dataset retrieved through keyword searches (i.e. *allattamento*). The Breastfeeding corpus was compiled following the same criteria and includes 100 English-language newspaper articles published within the same time span, retrieved through keyword searches (i.e. *breastfeeding*). For both corpora, articles were selected based on their relevance to the topic following an initial keyword-based retrieval and subsequent manual screening, rather than random sampling. In qualitative discourse-oriented research, corpus size is often determined by the principle of data saturation (Guest et al. 2006; Sim et al. 2018), that is, the point at which additional texts no longer introduce substantially new themes or linguistic patterns. Preliminary screening indicated that recurring narratives and lexical patterns stabilised within this range of texts, making 100 articles an appropriate size for qualitative corpus-assisted analysis. Using the same number of texts in each corpus helps ensure comparability

between the two datasets while providing a sufficiently broad sample of media discourse. The English corpus comprises 73,245 tokens (62,473 word types).

The Italian corpus draws on articles from major national and regional outlets, including *Corriere della Sera*, *La Nazione* and ANSA. These sources were chosen because they target a broad, non-specialist readership and thus reflect how breastfeeding is discussed in the public sphere, rather than within specialised medical communication. The English-language corpus, by contrast, includes articles from newspapers across a range of anglophone contexts, such as *Daily News* (South Africa), *Kerryman* (Ireland), *Newry Democrat* and *The Sun* (Nigeria). This broader geographical spread reflects the aim of the study, which is not to compare two equivalent national press systems, but to examine how breastfeeding discourse is constructed across two distinct linguistic media spaces, one nationally bounded (Italy) and one transnational (anglophone media).

The composition of the corpora follows the distribution of texts retrieved through the search process rather than a pre-defined balance of political orientations. While editorial differences may shape how issues are framed, a systematic analysis of ideological variation would require a larger dataset with a different design. At the same time, the relatively contained size of the corpora made it possible to read all texts closely, supporting qualitative interpretation alongside corpus-assisted analysis (Baker 2023).

## 2.2. Methodology

To investigate the discursive representation of breastfeeding in Italian and English-language news media, this study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse-analytical approach combining quantitative corpus methods with qualitative interpretation. Particular attention was paid to the semantic scope of the search terms used to compile the corpora. While the English term *breastfeeding* refers specifically to feeding an infant with breast milk, the Italian term *allattamento* functions as a broader hypernym encompassing a wider range of infant-feeding practices, including breastfeeding and formula feeding. Consequently, the Italian search term potentially captures a wider semantic field than its English counterpart. This difference was considered when interpreting lexical patterns emerging from the two corpora.

Methodologically, the two datasets should be considered comparable rather than equivalent corpora. They were designed to be comparable in terms of genre (newspaper discourse), time period and thematic focus on infant feeding and parenting. However, the corpora are not perfectly symmetrical. As discussed above, *allattamento* encompasses a broader semantic range than *breastfeeding*,

and the English-language corpus includes newspapers from different anglophone contexts rather than a single national press system. The findings should therefore be interpreted as discursive tendencies observable across two linguistic media environments rather than as strict one-to-one contrasts.

The corpora were analysed using Sketch Engine, a corpus analysis platform that provides tools such as frequency lists, concordances and collocation analysis (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). Articles were formatted as individual documents prior to upload in order to create a clean textual dataset suitable for analysis. The texts were combined into a single dataset for each language and analysed as a whole without the use of metadata variables (i.e. newspaper source or publication date), as the study focuses on the overall discursive construction of breastfeeding in mainstream news discourse rather than differences between specific outlets.

Two complementary analytical procedures were employed. First, frequency analysis was conducted to identify the most recurrent lexical items associated with breastfeeding in each corpus. Particular attention was paid to word classes relevant for discourse analysis, including nouns referring to social actors, verbs describing actions or processes and evaluative adjectives expressing stance or judgement. These items were identified through frequency lists and subsequently examined in relation to their discursive functions.

Second, concordance analysis was used to examine these frequent lexical items in their immediate textual contexts. This qualitative step enabled closer examination of how statistically prominent items function in discourse and how evaluative meanings are constructed in the texts.

The analysis is grounded in Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis (Baker 2014; Baker and McEnery 2015; Egbert and Baker 2019; Egbert et al. 2020), which combines corpus-linguistic techniques with discourse analysis to investigate how recurring linguistic patterns contribute to the construction of social meanings. This approach enables systematic exploration of lexical patterns while also allowing qualitative interpretation of the discursive implications of these patterns.

The study also draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics Appraisal Framework (Martin and White 2005) to interpret evaluative language in the corpus. Rather than applying full manual annotation, the framework was used as an interpretative model to analyse evaluative meanings emerging from concordance analysis. Particular attention was paid to the Attitude subsystem (Affect, Judgement and Appreciation), which captures different forms of evaluation in discourse, and to the Engagement subsystem, which examines how speakers position their statements in relation to alternative viewpoints. In particular, the analysis considers instances of *dialogic contraction*, whereby propositions are presented as authoritative or

difficult to contest. In analysing Appreciation, the study also draws on Lee's (2015) extension of the Valuation subsystem, distinguishing between Sociality, Maintenance, Salience and Validity values in order to provide a more fine-grained interpretation of evaluative meanings.

In addition to evaluative language, the analysis also considers broader strategies of discursive legitimation. Drawing on Van Leeuwen's (2007) framework, the study examines processes such as moral evaluation, naturalisation and mythopoesis, which contribute to legitimising social practices by presenting them as morally desirable or culturally natural. Finally, the interpretation draws on the concepts of interdiscursivity (Pêcheux 1983; Fairclough 1992) and heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) to account for the interaction of multiple discourses within media texts.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1. Analysis of the Allattamento Corpus

A preliminary noun frequency analysis of the Allattamento corpus shows that words such as “mamma” [*mother/mum*] (r. freq.: 163; n. freq.: 2.33) and “donna” [*woman*] (r. freq.: 132; n. freq.: 1.89) appear among the most frequent nouns in the dataset (see Table 1).

| Noun         | Raw frequency | Normalised frequency<br>per 1,000 words |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Allattamento | 240           | 3.43                                    |
| Bambino      | 177           | 2.53                                    |
| Mamma        | 163           | 2.33                                    |
| Anno         | 150           | 2.14                                    |
| Donna        | 132           | 1.89                                    |

Table 1. Top 5 nouns in the Allattamento corpus by raw frequency and normalised frequency per 1,000 words

Although this pattern may initially appear unsurprising, closer examination reveals a relevant aspect of how infant-feeding practices are discursively represented in the Italian press. The prominence of “mamma” [*mother/mum*] and “donna” [*woman*] indicates a strong emphasis on the maternal and feminine dimensions of infant feeding. By contrast, references to fathers remain relatively marginal: the term “papà” [*father/dad*] occurs only 18 times (n. freq.: 0.36).

This lexical asymmetry may be interpreted as an instance of naturalisation (Van Leeuwen 2007), whereby infant feeding is discursively represented as a self-evidently maternal domain. In this respect, the corpus does not simply foreground mothers as central social actors but also constructs breastfeeding—and infant feeding more broadly—as cultural practices belonging primarily to women. This maternal framing is particularly significant in the Italian context, where parenthood remains shaped by restrictive legal and political discourses around family formation. Against this background, the corpus suggests that fathers remain largely absent from discussions of infant feeding and early caregiving, which are overwhelmingly attributed to mothers.

Use of the concordance tool made it possible to examine the contexts in which “mamma” [*mother/mum*] and “donna” [*woman*] occur in the corpus. The concordance lines reveal recurring discursive patterns in which mothers are portrayed as subjects requiring comfort, protection and institutional support in order to breastfeed successfully:

- (1) Da ieri infatti il Vittoriale ha il Baby Pit Stop Unicef, *ambiente protetto* dove le mamme possono allattare *a proprio agio*. (Since yesterday the Vittoriale has hosted a UNICEF Baby Pit Stop, a *protected environment* where mothers can breastfeed *comfortably*)
- (2) [...] ma è fondamentale mettere le mamme in condizione di allattare serenamente. (it is essential to create conditions that allow mothers to breastfeed serenely)
- (3) [...] assicurare un ambiente che *consenta* alle madri che allattano e che lavorano di conciliare queste due attività (ensuring an environment that *allows* breastfeeding mothers who work to reconcile these two activities)
- (4) Il focus della Settimana è infatti sul delicato equilibrio tra allattamento e occupazione lavorativa affinché tutta la comunità contribuisca a *sostenere* le mamme [...] (The focus of the week is the delicate balance between breastfeeding and employment, so that the whole community can contribute to *supporting* mothers)

These concordance lines reveal several recurring lexical patterns. First, process-enabling expressions such as “mettere in condizione” [*create the conditions for*], “mettere a proprio agio” [*put someone at ease*] and “consentire” [*allow/enable*] frame breastfeeding as a practice that depends on supportive conditions. Second, verbs such as “aiutare” [*help*] and “sostenere” [*support*] construe processes that position institutional actors as enabling agents in breastfeeding practices. In Halliday’s (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) terms, these verbs can be interpreted as material processes, since they describe actions aimed at enabling or facilitating breastfeeding.

A third pattern concerns evaluative constructions expressing normative necessity, such as “è fondamentale” [*it is essential*]. These constructions present the creation of breastfeeding-friendly environments as something socially necessary. Similarly, adjectival and adverbial expressions related to comfort and protection like “spazio confortevole” [*comfortable space*], “ambiente protetto” [*protected environment*], “a proprio agio” [*at ease*] and “serenamente” [*serenely*] further contribute to this supportive discursive framing.

Collectively, these patterns suggest that breastfeeding is not simply represented as a natural maternal act, but as a practice that often relies on favourable social and institutional conditions. This introduces an interesting discursive tension. On the one hand, breastfeeding is frequently legitimised through processes of naturalisation (Van Leeuwen 2007), appearing as the expected or normative way of feeding an infant. On the other hand, the linguistic patterns observed in the corpus simultaneously imply that breastfeeding may be difficult to enact in practice and therefore requires forms of institutional, social and interpersonal support.

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This interpretation ties in with previous research on women’s experiences of breastfeeding in public settings. For example, Hauck et al (2021) show that discomfort may stem from social surveillance, unsolicited advice, stigma, fear of conflict or awkward encounters with strangers. In this light, the emphasis on comfort, protection and reassurance in the corpus can be read not only as supportive, but also as an implicit recognition of the social difficulties breastfeeding mothers may face.

Example (4) warrants particular attention, as it highlights a structural issue affecting an increasing number of mothers: the difficulty of reconciling breastfeeding practices with employment responsibilities. In Italy, maternity protection is regulated by Legislative Decree No. 151 of 26 March 2001, which provides five months of leave distributed between the pre- and post-partum periods. Although this period can be extended on a voluntary basis, such extensions are not mandatory and may come with reduced pay. When these provisions are considered alongside public health recommendations, a clear tension becomes apparent. Guidelines issued by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the European Union, and endorsed by the Italian Ministry of Health, recommend continuing breastfeeding for up to two years or beyond, depending on the preferences of both mother and child.

In practice, this creates difficulties for many working mothers, who may struggle to balance professional commitments with breastfeeding. Following these recommendations would likely require forms of maternity protection that extend beyond the period currently guaranteed by law. Against this backdrop,

the prominence of verbs such as “aiutare” [*help*] (r. f. = 34; n. f. = 679.46) and “sostenere” [*support*] (r. f. = 31; n. f. = 619.5) in the corpus can be read as reflecting the broader structural constraints faced by mothers trying to combine breastfeeding with employment.

Let us now move on to evaluative constructions expressing normative necessity, such as “è necessario” [*it is necessary*] and “è fondamentale” [*it is essential*]:

- (5) Per raggiungere l’obiettivo del 70% entro il 2030, *è necessario* però promuovere un maggiore sostegno all’allattamento, in particolare in tutti i luoghi di lavoro. (To achieve the 70% target by 2030, *it is necessary*, however, to promote greater support for breastfeeding, particularly in all workplaces.)
- (6) *È necessario* infatti che il sostegno alla natalità si attui con segnali concreti come questo, soprattutto nelle zone periferiche come le nostre [...]. (*It is necessary*, in fact, that support for birth rates be implemented through concrete measures such as this, especially in peripheral areas like ours)
- (7) I benefici dell’allattamento sono ampiamente noti, ma *è fondamentale* mettere le mamme in condizione di allattare serenamente. (The benefits of breastfeeding are widely known, but *it is essential* to create the conditions for mothers to breastfeed serenely.)

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These examples illustrate the use of impersonal evaluative constructions that frame particular actions as necessary or desirable. From a discursive perspective, such structures perform what Jakobson (1981) describes as a conative function, insofar as they orient readers towards recognising the need for specific actions or policy interventions. At the same time, these constructions rely on impersonal grammatical forms that do not explicitly identify a responsible actor. This impersonality is discursively significant because it allows responsibility to remain diffuse. Rather than addressing a specific institutional or political actor, the discourse tends to present these actions as matters of general necessity or common sense. This gives the statements an appearance of neutrality and universality, while leaving largely unspecified who is actually responsible for putting these measures into practice.

Examples (5) and (6) further highlight the need to address structural barriers to breastfeeding. At the same time, example (6) suggests that breastfeeding discourse may intersect with broader political narratives about birth rates, family policy and traditional parenthood. This can be read as a form of interdiscursivity (Pêcheux 1983; Fairclough 1992), although the limited size of the corpus does not allow broader generalisation.

The final part of the analysis focuses on evaluative adjectives identified through the frequency lists generated during corpus analysis:

| Adjective | Raw frequency | Normalised frequency<br>per 1,000 words |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|
| buono     | 115           | 2.30                                    |
| nuovo     | 101           | 2.02                                    |
| delicato  | 72            | 1.44                                    |
| materno   | 54            | 1.08                                    |
| semplice  | 51            | 1.02                                    |

Table 2. Top 5 adjectives in the Allattamento corpus by raw frequency and normalised frequency per 1,000 words

- (8) Il focus della Settimana è infatti sul *delicato equilibrio* tra allattamento e occupazione lavorativa affinché tutta la comunità contribuisca a sostenere le mamme [...]. (The focus of the Week is on the *delicate balance* between breastfeeding and employment so that the whole community can contribute to supporting mothers.)
- (9) Ma fino a oggi nessuno aveva pensato a “coprire”, con una figura ad hoc, quel *momento complicato e delicato* che accompagna le neomamme subito dopo il parto e nei primi sei mesi di vita del loro bambino. (But until now no one had thought of “covering”, through a dedicated role, that *complex and delicate moment* that accompanies new mothers immediately after childbirth and during the first six months of their baby’s life.)

Examples (8) and (9) show the recurrent use of the adjective “delicato” [*delicate*] to characterise breastfeeding-related situations. In these concordance lines, “delicato” [*delicate*] functions as a premodifier of nouns such as “momento” [*moment*], “equilibrio” [*balance*] and “congiunzione” [*intersection*], thereby portraying breastfeeding and early motherhood as situations requiring care, sensitivity and social support. Within the appraisal framework (Martin and White 2005), these instances can be interpreted as cases of Appreciation, since they evaluate situations rather than individual behaviour. More specifically, they tend to realise Appreciation: Valuation, attributing significance to breastfeeding-related experiences by framing them as fragile or complex phases in women’s lives. In terms of Lee’s (2015) refinement of Appreciation, these cases are best understood as Sociality Valuation, since “delicato” encodes a broad social evaluation of vulnerability and sensitivity rather than material harm, epistemic validity or central importance. Expressions such as “momento delicato” [*delicate moment*] construct early motherhood as a sensitive period requiring attention and assistance, while “delicato equilibrio” [*delicate balance*] highlights the precarious relationship between breastfeeding and professional responsibilities.

- (10) “Assistenti materne”, che avranno il compito di accompagnare le neomamme in una quotidianità solo in apparenza *semplice*. (“Maternal assistants”, whose role will be to accompany new mothers in a daily routine that is only apparently *simple*.)
- (11) L'allattamento al seno per un tempo prolungato (almeno 12 mesi) potrebbe portare a *migliori risultati* a scuola durante l'adolescenza: lo suggerisce uno studio condotto presso l'Università di Oxford e pubblicato sulla rivista *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. (Prolonged breastfeeding (at least 12 months) may lead to *better results* at school during adolescence: this is suggested by a study conducted at the University of Oxford and published in the journal *Archives of Disease in Childhood*.)
- (12) I bambini allattati al seno più a lungo sembrano avere il 39% in più di probabilità di ottenere *risultati migliori* agli esami che in Inghilterra si devono sostenere a 16 anni rispetto ai coetanei non allattati al seno [...]. (Children who are breastfed for longer appear to have a 39% higher probability of achieving *better results* in the exams that students in England take at the age of 16 compared to peers who were not breastfed.)

Examples (11) and (12) draw attention to the evaluative role of the adjective “buono” [*good*] and its comparative form “migliore” [*better*]. In these cases, breastfeeding is framed in explicitly positive terms, with particular emphasis on its perceived benefits. This includes claims that children who are breastfed may achieve better educational outcomes than those who are formula-fed. Given that educational success is a matter of concern for many parents, such claims are likely to carry considerable persuasive force.

This persuasive force is further reinforced through references to scientific authority. Example (11), for instance, cites research conducted at the University of Oxford and published in *Archives of Disease in Childhood*. From the perspective of appraisal theory, this strategy can be interpreted in terms of Engagement, specifically *dialogic contraction* (Martin and White 2005), since invoking scientific expertise restricts the space for alternative viewpoints and presents the value of breastfeeding as difficult to contest.

At the same time, this rhetorical pattern may also have exclusionary effects. By consistently presenting breastfeeding as the better option, the discourse can implicitly cast alternative feeding practices as less desirable, while overlooking the different circumstances faced by women who cannot or choose not to breastfeed. In this sense, pro-breastfeeding rhetoric goes beyond promoting a particular health practice; it also plays a role in shaping a moralised understanding of motherhood, against which women's choices and bodily conditions may be judged.

### 3.2. Digital Discourse Surrounding Baby Pit Stops

A recurring pattern in the Allattamento corpus concerns references to Baby Pit Stops (r. freq.: 36; n. freq.: 0.72), spaces described as safe environments where mothers can breastfeed and change their babies in public settings. To contextualise this pattern, a brief qualitative reading of UNICEF Italia's public communication on Baby Pit Stops was conducted. The extracts below are used as supplementary contextual material rather than as part of the corpus itself.

On the UNICEF Italia website, Baby Pit Stops are described as “una sosta sicura per allattare” [*a safe rest stop for breastfeeding*], a formulation that conveys a sense of security and protection for mothers. Particularly revealing, however, is the way breastfeeding itself is characterised in the institutional discourse:

- (13) Italian version: Allattare è un *gesto semplice e naturale* che tutte le mamme *dovrebbero* poter fare ovunque: non ci sono orari fissi, né un numero definito di poppate nell'arco della giornata. Esistono molteplici modi di allattare ed è difficile per le mamme prevedere dove e quando il bambino chiederà di nutrirsi.

English translation (provided by the author): Breastfeeding is a *simple* and *natural gesture* that all mothers *should* be able to do anywhere: there are no fixed schedules or a defined number of feedings throughout the day. There are multiple ways to breastfeed and it's challenging for mothers to predict where and when the baby will ask to be nourished.

- (14) Italian version: Allattare *non è solo compito delle donne* — perché funzioni davvero occorre una rete fatta da governi, famiglie, comunità locali, luoghi di lavoro e sistemi sanitari.

English translation: Breastfeeding *isn't just a women's duty* — for it to genuinely succeed, a network involving governments, families, local communities, workplaces and healthcare systems is essential.

What is particularly striking in example (13) is the way breastfeeding is described as “semplice” [*simple*] and “naturale” [*natural*]. The use of *semplice* sits somewhat uneasily with the broader corpus evidence, in which breastfeeding is often portrayed as difficult to manage alongside professional responsibilities. At the same time, the label “naturale” does more than simply describe; it implicitly constructs breastfeeding as the normative standard of infant feeding, thereby casting alternative practices in a less legitimate light. Although this does not explicitly stigmatise women who cannot or choose not to breastfeed, it contributes to constructing breastfeeding as the expected maternal behaviour, in line with Goffman's (1963) discussion of stigma. In Van Leeuwen's framework (2007), this representation combines *naturalisation* and *moral evaluation*, presenting breastfeeding as the expected maternal behaviour and rendering alternative feeding practices comparatively less legitimate.

Both examples (13) and (14) contain evaluative constructions expressing normative necessity. In example (13), this occurs through the modal expression “dovrebbero poter fare ovunque” [*should be able to do anywhere*], which frames breastfeeding as an activity that ought to be enabled across social contexts. In example (14), however, breastfeeding is described as “non solo compito delle donne” [*not just a women’s duty*]. While this formulation appears to challenge an individualised responsibility, it nevertheless rearticulates breastfeeding as a collective obligation distributed across social actors. The noun “compito” [*duty/task*] remains revealing, as it frames breastfeeding within a discourse of obligation rather than choice, even as responsibility is extended beyond women alone.

More broadly, these formulations also participate in a process of mythopoesis (Van Leeuwen 2007), constructing the “good mother” as one who breastfeeds and organises her life around the child’s needs. In this way, institutional discourse surrounding Baby Pit Stops promotes breastfeeding support while reinforcing culturally embedded expectations about maternal behaviour.

3.3. Analysis of the Breastfeeding Corpus

The initial frequency analysis of the Breastfeeding corpus reveals a particularly high frequency of the noun *mother* (r. freq.: 476; n. freq.: 6.50) (see Table 3), which emerges as the most frequent lexical item in the noun frequency list. This pattern reinforces the close association between motherhood and infant feeding in the English-language news discourse analysed in this study, suggesting that infant feeding continues to be discursively framed primarily as a maternal responsibility.

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| Noun   | Raw frequency | Normalised frequency<br>per 1,000 words |
|--------|---------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Mother | 476           | 6.50                                    |
| Baby   | 462           | 6.31                                    |
| Breast | 460           | 6.28                                    |
| Milk   | 416           | 5.68                                    |
| Health | 330           | 4.51                                    |

Table 3. Top 5 nouns in the Breastfeeding corpus by raw frequency and normalised frequency per 1,000 words

Several concordance lines illustrate how breastfeeding is frequently discussed in relation to the challenges faced by working mothers attempting to balance infant feeding with professional responsibilities:

- (15) However, for working mothers, the *challenge* of balancing breastfeeding with their *busy work schedules* often leads to a *difficult decision* or even giving up on breast-feeding altogether.
- (16) Despite the legislation, research shows that *many companies are not making provision for mothers to express breast milk at their workplaces*, and it is hard for the government to enforce compliance within the private sector environments.
- (17) However, breast-feeding can be *challenging* for new mothers, especially those doing it for the first time.

These examples reveal a recurring pattern in which breastfeeding is framed as a demanding practice, particularly in relation to employment and workplace environments. This tendency is further supported by the presence of lexical items belonging to the semantic field of difficulty, including *challenge* (r. freq.: 48; n. freq.: 0.66) and *challenging* (r. freq.: 13; n. freq.: 0.18). The recurrent association between motherhood and difficulty suggests that English-language media discourse often portrays breastfeeding as an activity requiring negotiation between maternal and professional roles.

To explore how alternative infant-feeding practices are represented, concordance lines containing the expression *formula feeding* were examined:

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- (18) But before you completely rule off breastfeeding and *jump on the band wagon of formula feeding*, let's take a look at the facts behind some common myths *so that you can make an informed choice* on how to feed your baby.
- (19) Breast-feeding can *provide protection against many childhood illnesses* such as diarrhoea, allergies and middle ear infections. Yet, formula feeding is widely accepted in South Africa, *even though* it creates a significant *financial strain* in low-income households.

In examples (18) and (19), formula feeding is generally represented less favourably than breastfeeding through several discursive strategies. These include evaluative language privileging breastfeeding, references to social perceptions surrounding formula feeding and appeals to medical authority highlighting the health benefits of breastfeeding. The texts also foreground the financial burden associated with formula feeding in certain contexts, particularly for low-income households (example 19).

Further collocational patterns were explored using the Word Sketch function in Sketch Engine. The noun *feeding* (r. freq.: 245; n. freq.: 3.34), which ranks eighth among the most frequent nouns in the corpus, was selected as the node word for analysis. This choice was motivated by the analytical usefulness of *feeding* in the English corpus, given its broader semantic range in structuring discourse around infant feeding practices, rather than by the absence of an equivalent item in the Italian data.

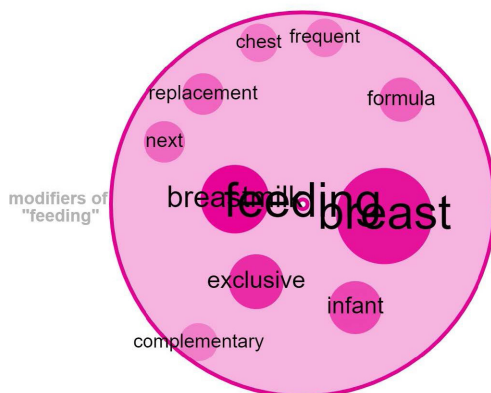


Figure 1. Visual representation of the most frequent modifiers of the noun *feeding* in the Breastfeeding corpus (English-language dataset)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the collocations *breastfeeding* and *breastmilk feeding* display a stronger association with the noun *feeding* than the broader hypernym *infant feeding*. Alternative practices such as *formula feeding* and *complementary feeding* occur less frequently. This distribution suggests that English-language news discourse tends to foreground breastfeeding when discussing infant feeding more generally. Concordance analysis further shows that references to feeding practices frequently co-occur with references to mothers, reinforcing the discursive construction of mothers as the primary agents responsible for infant feeding.

The pro-breastfeeding orientation of the corpus becomes even more evident in examples emphasising the medical benefits associated with breastfeeding:

- (20) Among breastfeedings many *benefits*, breast milk contains optimal nutrition and gives an immune system boost to your baby. It also lowers long-term disease risk for both you and your child.
- (21) For mothers, breastfeeding helps to reduce the risk of *postpartum depression* and it helps to *protect mothers* from developing *breast cancer* and *ovarian cancer*.
- (22) There are *benefits for mum too*, it lowers a mother's risk of *breast cancer* and may reduce the risk of *ovarian cancer*, and also *burns around 500 calories* a day.

Across these examples, breastfeeding is presented as beneficial not only for infants but also for mothers. Several texts emphasise the reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer, presenting breastfeeding as a practice contributing directly to maternal health. Example (22) additionally highlights the potential weight-loss effects

associated with breastfeeding. Such arguments resonate with broader public health discourses surrounding postpartum weight gain and maternal wellbeing (Badon et al. 2019). From an appraisal perspective, these claims can be interpreted as instances of dialogic contraction, as they are presented as unproblematic, factual assertions that leave little room for alternative viewpoints or contestation (Martin and White 2005). At the same time, this focus may intersect with broader body-related discourses, including fat-shaming narratives, contributing to the complex interdiscursivity surrounding maternal bodies (Brookes and Baker 2021; Coltman-Patel 2023).

Another noteworthy finding emerging from the frequency analysis is the recurrence of the term *August* (r. freq.: 170; n. freq.: 2.32). Concordance lines reveal that this temporal marker frequently occurs in relation to awareness campaigns such as World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month:

- (23) Breast-feeding Week is observed annually in the first week of *August* by the World Health Organization.
- (24) Each *August*, National Breastfeeding Month is celebrated nationally to raise awareness about the rewards and challenges of breastfeeding.

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References to *August* tend to cluster around institutional advocacy campaigns aimed at promoting breastfeeding awareness. This recurring pattern points to the strong visibility of organised public health initiatives in English-language media discourse.

Additional contextual material also indicates the involvement of organisations such as the United States Breastfeeding Committee (USBC) in advancing these initiatives. On the USBC website, a section entitled Disrupting Formula Marketing Constellation features audiovisual materials designed to raise awareness of formula marketing practices. The use of the metaphor *constellation* is particularly suggestive, evoking a complex and interconnected network of commercial promotion.

- (25) Laurence Grummer-Strawn, MPA, MA, PhD and Rachel Crossley, MSc help us learn about the *aggressive* and *unethical* marketing of commercial milk formula that undermines efforts to improve breastfeeding.
- (26) In this third and final session in the series, Sally Mancini, MPH, presents research from the Rudd Center on infant formula and toddler milk marketing in the United States, demonstrating that *deceptive* formula marketing continues after infancy.

In these examples, adjectives such as *aggressive*, *unethical* and *deceptive* are used to characterise formula marketing practices. In the appraisal framework, these items can be interpreted as instances of Appreciation: Valuation, evaluating the

practices of formula manufacturers as socially and morally problematic. In line with Lee’s (2015) adaptation of the Valuation subsystem, these cases can be more specifically understood as Maintenance Valuation, as they foreground the harmful and disruptive effects of such practices on public health and breastfeeding outcomes. The pro-breastfeeding discourse promoted by the USBC is therefore partly constructed through negative evaluation of formula marketing, reinforced by references to scientific research.

Turning to evaluative adjectives more broadly, the frequency list reveals the recurrence of the adjective *good* (r. freq.: 116; n. freq.: 1.58) (see Table 4).

| Adjective | Raw frequency | Normalised frequency per 1,000 words |
|-----------|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| good      | 116           | 1.58                                 |
| new       | 102           | 1.39                                 |
| exclusive | 85            | 1.16                                 |
| infant    | 79            | 1.08                                 |
| important | 58            | 0.79                                 |

Table 4. Top 5 adjectives in the Breastfeeding corpus by raw frequency and frequency per 1,000 words

This pattern often occurs in superlative constructions referring to breastfeeding as the *best* way to feed a child. The slogan *breast is best*, which appears three times in the corpus, further reinforces this evaluative framing.

- (27) Breast milk is widely recognised as the *best* source of nutrition for infants, providing all the essential nutrients they need in the first six months of life.
- (28) Breast feeding is a life-saving intervention. It is the *best* and safest thing for the child
- (29) Breastfeeding is the *best* way to feed a baby. It is a universally accepted fact that a mother’s milk provides all the nutrients that a baby needs for the first six months of life.

These examples consistently present breastfeeding as the optimal method of infant nutrition. While this paper does not seek to challenge the extensive scientific evidence supporting the benefits of breast milk, it is important to acknowledge the potential emotional impact of such discursive constructions, particularly for women who cannot or choose not to breastfeed.

One article included in the corpus, published in *The Guardian*, illustrates this dimension through the headline “*Unable to breastfeed my baby due to cancer, I*

*was made to feel like a failure*" (2023). The passage recounts the experience of a woman who becomes pregnant while undergoing cancer treatment. Despite her medical condition, healthcare professionals repeatedly present breastfeeding as the "optimal" method of infant feeding. This framing has clear emotional consequences: the language of optimality contributes to a sense of failure when the woman is physically unable to breastfeed. More broadly, the account illustrates how institutional expectations surrounding breastfeeding can be felt very directly at the individual level.

The woman also describes a lack of guidance on alternative feeding options. Healthcare professionals consistently emphasised breastfeeding, yet offered little to no information about formula feeding, leaving her feeling isolated and uncertain about how to proceed. The passage further introduces an economic dimension to the issue. The suggestion that she should purchase donor breast milk from a milk bank, at a significant cost, points to the financial barriers that may accompany alternatives to breastfeeding. In this sense, infant feeding practices emerge not only as medical decisions, but as ones shaped by wider social and economic inequalities.

### 3.4. Comparative Discussion of the Allattamento and Breastfeeding Corpora

The comparison highlights both similarities and differences in the discursive representation of breastfeeding across the Italian and English-language corpora. In both corpora, infant feeding is strongly centred on maternal figures. The prominence of "mamma" [*mother/mum*], "donna" [*woman*] and *mother* suggests that infant feeding is discursively framed primarily as a maternal responsibility. In Van Leeuwen's terms (2007), this can be read as a form of naturalisation, reinforced by mythopoetic narratives of the "good mother".

Despite this shared focus on maternal actors, the concordance analysis reveals significant differences in the contexts in which mothers appear. In the Italian corpus, mothers are frequently portrayed as subjects who require supportive conditions and institutional assistance in order to breastfeed successfully. This pattern emerges clearly in a series of recurrent process-enabling constructions, such as "mettere in condizione" [*create the conditions for*], "mettere a proprio agio" [*put someone at ease*] and "consentire" [*allow/enable*]. These expressions tend to appear in descriptions of initiatives geared to facilitate breastfeeding, including the provision of dedicated spaces and support programmes.

Relatedly, references to "spazi confortevoli" [*comfortable spaces*] and "ambienti protetti" [*protected environments*] frame breastfeeding as something that becomes possible in supportive social and physical settings. From the perspective of the appraisal framework, these can be read as instances of Appreciation: the

evaluation is directed not at individual actors, but at the surrounding conditions, foregrounding the importance of enabling infrastructures.

This focus on supportive environments is further reinforced by verbs associated with assistance, such as “aiutare” [*help*] and “sostenere” [*support*]. Working together, these patterns suggest that, in the Italian discourse, breastfeeding is not constructed solely as an individual maternal responsibility, but as a practice embedded in broader social arrangements. Initiatives such as Baby Pit Stop facilities exemplify this orientation, as they are represented as spaces that make it easier for mothers to breastfeed in public settings.

In the Breastfeeding corpus, maternal figures remain central, but the discourse brings different aspects of the experience into view. Concordance lines for *mother*, for instance, frequently occur in contexts that highlight the practical challenges women face when trying to combine breastfeeding with professional responsibilities. As seen in earlier examples, these include difficulties related to returning to work, managing feeding schedules and handling workplace constraints.

Lexical items associated with difficulty, such as *challenge* or *difficult decision*, contribute to framing breastfeeding as a demanding practice requiring sustained personal effort. This contrast becomes particularly evident in the way the two corpora construct the relationship between breastfeeding and employment. In the Italian dataset, difficulties are more often linked to structural conditions and institutional responses, such as maternity leave policies or organised support initiatives. In the English corpus, by contrast, similar challenges are more frequently narrated in terms of individual experience and personal choice.

A further point of divergence concerns the role of institutional and advocacy discourses. In the Breastfeeding corpus, breastfeeding is often discussed in connection with awareness campaigns tied to the temporal marker *August*, referring to initiatives such as World Breastfeeding Week and National Breastfeeding Month. This recurring reference suggests that English-language media discourse tends to situate breastfeeding within broader public health campaigns focused on awareness-raising.

In the Italian corpus, institutional actors such as UNICEF and local health authorities are also present, but the emphasis more often falls on practical interventions designed to support breastfeeding in everyday contexts. References to breastfeeding-friendly spaces, public facilities and local support networks point to a discourse that foregrounds infrastructural support rather than awareness campaigns alone.

Evaluative language further highlights differences between the two corpora. In the Allattamento corpus, evaluation often centres on the description of breastfeeding

as a sensitive or complex phase in women’s lives. Adjectives such as “delicato” [*delicate*] frequently appear in contexts that evoke moments of transition or the balancing of maternal and professional roles. In the appraisal framework, these instances can again be understood as Appreciation, capturing the perceived complexity of the situation rather than judging individuals directly.

In the Breastfeeding corpus, evaluative language more often takes a normative form. The adjective *best*, frequently found in expressions such as *the best way to feed a baby*, positions breastfeeding as the optimal feeding method. While both corpora promote breastfeeding as desirable, the Italian discourse tends to emphasise the outcomes associated with breastfeeding, whereas the English discourse more explicitly foregrounds the practice itself as the preferred option.

Jointly, these evaluative patterns contribute to the construction of a normative hierarchy in which breastfeeding is presented as both medically and morally preferable. This tendency aligns with earlier research on the moralisation of infant feeding practices (Kukla 2006; Wolf 2007; Lee and Bristow 2009). As Knaak (2005) observes, contemporary breastfeeding discourse often encourages mothers to internalise breastfeeding not simply as a health recommendation, but as a moral obligation.

At the same time, both corpora contain examples that complicate this normative framing. Personal testimonies from women unable to breastfeed highlight the emotional consequences that may arise when strongly prescriptive representations of breastfeeding collide with lived experiences shaped by medical or personal constraints.

Another similarity concerns the recurrent use of scientific discourse as a source of authority. In both corpora, references to medical research and public health institutions reinforce breastfeeding promotion while limiting the discursive space available for alternative feeding practices, thus functioning as instances of dialogic contraction (Martin and White 2005).

To synthesise the main findings of the comparative analysis, Table 5 provides an overview of the key discursive tendencies identified in the Allattamento and Breastfeeding corpora.

| Discursive dimension            | Allattamento corpus                                     | Breastfeeding corpus                                        | Illustrative examples                                   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Central actors                  | Mothers represented as primary agents requiring support | Mothers represented as central actors navigating challenges | <i>mamma, donna</i> vs mother                           |
| Representation of breastfeeding | Enabled through supportive environments                 | Demanding personal practice requiring negotiation           | <i>mettere in condizione</i> vs references to challenge |

| Discursive dimension           | Allattamento corpus                                                | Breastfeeding corpus                                 | Illustrative examples                       |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Role of institutions           | Emphasis on infrastructures supporting breastfeeding               | Emphasis on awareness campaigns and advocacy         | Baby Pit Stops vs World Breastfeeding Week  |
| Representation of difficulties | Structural issues requiring institutional support                  | Personal experiences and individual dilemmas         | maternity policies vs workplace challenges  |
| Evaluative language            | Appreciation emphasising sensitive life stages ( <i>delicato</i> ) | Normative evaluation ( <i>best, breast is best</i> ) | <i>delicato</i> vs <i>best</i>              |
| Discursive orientation         | Socially supported practice embedded in community structures       | Public health priority and personal responsibility   | enabling environments vs advocacy discourse |

Table 5. Summary of the main discursive tendencies emerging from the comparative analysis of the Allattamento corpus and Breastfeeding corpus. The patterns reported in the table are derived from the frequency lists and concordance analyses discussed in the previous sections

Taken together, these findings suggest that although both corpora promote breastfeeding as a desirable practice, they do so through different discursive strategies. The Italian corpus places greater emphasis on supportive environments and institutional measures that facilitate breastfeeding, framing it as a practice embedded in collective infrastructures. The English corpus more frequently frames breastfeeding through narratives of individual challenge, public health advocacy and moral evaluation of alternative feeding practices.

These differences should not be interpreted as reflecting fundamentally opposing attitudes toward breastfeeding in the two contexts. Rather, they illustrate how similar public health objectives may be articulated through different discursive orientations shaped by social, institutional and cultural factors. Viewed through the combined lens of corpus-based methods and discourse analysis, breastfeeding emerges not only as a biological practice but also as a socially mediated phenomenon whose meanings are negotiated within media discourse.

4. Conclusions

This study examined how breastfeeding is discursively constructed in contemporary Italian and Anglophone news media through a corpus-assisted cross-linguistic analysis of two comparable newspaper corpora. By combining corpus-based methods with discourse-analytical interpretation, the analysis explored how breastfeeding is represented, evaluated and legitimised in Italian- and English-language media discourse.

Overall, the findings reveal a strong convergence between the two datasets. Across both corpora, infant feeding is overwhelmingly framed as a maternal responsibility. Mothers consistently emerge as the most important social actors in frequency lists and concordance patterns, while fathers remain largely marginal. In this sense, breastfeeding is primarily constructed as an activity tied to maternal roles and expectations.

Breastfeeding is also repeatedly presented through evaluative discourse as the optimal, or ‘best’, method of infant feeding. By contrast, formula feeding tends to be positioned, often implicitly, as a less desirable option. Scientific discourse plays a central role in backing up this framing: references to medical research, health institutions and expert recommendations regularly function to legitimise breastfeeding, while narrowing the space in which alternative feeding practices can be discussed.

At the same time, the comparison points to notable cross-linguistic differences. In the Italian corpus, breastfeeding is often represented as a practice that depends on supportive infrastructures and institutional initiatives, which are framed as enabling it in everyday contexts. In the English-language corpus, by contrast, the emphasis shifts towards individual responsibility and personal experience, with particular attention to the challenges mothers face when trying to reconcile breastfeeding with professional commitments. This contrast may partly reflect broader cultural tendencies often associated in the literature with more collectivist orientations in Mediterranean contexts and more individualised framings in anglophone settings, although such interpretations should be approached with caution (Hofstede 2001).

A further point of divergence concerns how breastfeeding benefits are framed. In the Italian corpus, positive evaluations tend to foreground outcomes for the child, such as developmental or educational advantages. In the English corpus, by contrast, the emphasis more often falls on maternal health, particularly through references to reduced risk of breast and ovarian cancer.

As a whole, these findings suggest that breastfeeding in media discourse is not simply presented as a biological practice, but is layered within wider narratives about gender roles, responsibility and the moral expectations surrounding motherhood. Through evaluative language, scientific authority and recurring cultural narratives, media discourse contributes to constructing breastfeeding as a normative benchmark of good motherhood, while alternative feeding practices may be implicitly marginalised.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. First, the study is based on relatively small specialised corpora consisting of 100 newspaper articles for each language. Second, the English corpus includes texts from different anglophone

regions rather than a single national press system. Finally, the analysis focuses exclusively on newspaper discourse and does not consider other influential media genres such as social media or healthcare communication.

Future research could extend this investigation by expanding the corpora to include larger datasets and additional media genres, as well as by examining breastfeeding discourse in specific national contexts. Further studies might also explore how fathers and other caregivers are represented in infant-feeding discourse and how digital environments shape contemporary discussions of breastfeeding.

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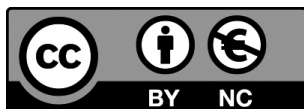
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