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## Factors Affecting Birth Weight of a Newborn: Community-Based Original Study

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**Article Info:** Received 06 March 2018; Accepted 30 March. 2018

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**Source of support:** Nil

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### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Birth weight is one of the most important indicators of neonatal health, reflecting not only the nutritional status of the fetus but also the effectiveness of prenatal care, maternal health, and environmental factors. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a low birth weight (LBW) infant weighs less than 2500 grams at birth, which increases the risk for infant mortality, infections, and long-term developmental delays

**Objective:** This study investigates the factors affecting birth weight of newborns in a community setting to better understand the influences of maternal and environmental factors on neonatal birth weight.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional community-based study was conducted over six months, collecting data from 500 pregnant women in the local health center. Information was gathered through structured interviews and medical records. The birth weight of the newborns was documented along with maternal age, nutrition, smoking, alcohol consumption, and presence of any chronic conditions.

**Results:** The study found that maternal age, nutrition, smoking habits, and the presence of chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes were significantly associated with the birth weight of the newborn. Infants born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy had a lower mean birth weight compared to those whose mothers did not smoke. Additionally, the nutritional status of the mother had a direct impact on fetal growth.

**Conclusion:** The study highlights the importance of maternal health and lifestyle choices in determining the birth weight of a newborn. Interventions aimed at improving maternal nutrition, reducing smoking, and managing chronic conditions can improve neonatal outcomes.

**Keywords:** Birth weight, maternal health, smoking, maternal nutrition, community-based study, prenatal care.

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### Introduction

Birth weight is one of the most important indicators of neonatal health, reflecting not only the nutritional status of the fetus but also the effectiveness of prenatal care, maternal health, and environmental factors. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a low birth weight (LBW) infant weighs less than 2500 grams at birth, which increases the risk for infant mortality, infections, and long-term developmental delays (1). On the other hand, high birth weight, which is

typically over 4000 grams, can result in delivery complications such as shoulder dystocia and increased need for cesarean sections (2).

Several factors contribute to birth weight, and these include maternal factors such as age, nutrition, and pre-existing medical conditions, as well as lifestyle factors like smoking and alcohol consumption. Maternal age is a well-documented risk factor for both low and high birth weight, with

teenage mothers and women over the age of 35 being at higher risk of having infants with low birth weight (3). Maternal nutrition is another significant determinant. Studies show that undernutrition during pregnancy can result in intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR), which leads to low birth weight (4). Furthermore, maternal smoking and alcohol consumption are well-established risk factors for restricted fetal growth, as these behaviors reduce oxygen and nutrient supply to the fetus, impairing its development (5, 6).

In addition to maternal factors, environmental conditions, including socioeconomic status and access to healthcare, play an essential role in determining birth weight. Women in lower socioeconomic groups often experience inadequate prenatal care, poor nutrition, and higher levels of stress, all of which can contribute to the birth of low-weight infants (7). Chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and obesity in pregnant women also pose risks for both low and high birth weight (8, 9).

Given the significant role birth weight plays in infant health, identifying the modifiable and non-modifiable factors affecting birth weight is critical for public health interventions. This community-based study aims to explore the various factors influencing birth weight in a local population, highlighting maternal behaviors, health conditions, and environmental factors that may contribute to birth weight outcomes.

**Aim and Objectives**

**Aim:**

To identify and analyze the factors affecting the birth weight of newborns in a community setting.

**Objectives:**

1. To assess the impact of maternal age, nutrition, smoking, and chronic diseases on birth weight in a community-based setting.
2. To explore the socioeconomic and environmental factors influencing birth weight among pregnant women.

**Material and Method**

A community-based cross-sectional study was conducted. The study population comprised 500 pregnant women attending the local health center for antenatal care. Structured interviews were conducted to gather demographic data, including maternal age, socio-economic status, smoking habits, alcohol consumption, and health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. Information about the mother's nutritional habits was collected through a food frequency questionnaire.

Inclusion criteria included pregnant women aged 18-40 years who attended the health center for prenatal care during the study period. Exclusion criteria consisted of women with multiple gestations (twins or more), women with a history of preterm birth, and those who refused consent.

Birth weight data were obtained from medical records at the time of delivery. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were used to examine the association between the identified factors and birth weight.

**Results**

**Table 1: Distribution of Newborn Birth Weight Based on Maternal Factors**

| Maternal Factor   | Low Birth Weight (<2500g) | Normal Birth Weight (2500-4000g) | High Birth Weight (>4000g) |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Maternal Age      | 23%                       | 65%                              | 12%                        |
| Maternal Smoking  | 30%                       | 60%                              | 10%                        |
| Maternal Diabetes | 35%                       | 55%                              | 10%                        |

**Table 2: Impact of Maternal Nutrition on Birth Weight**

| <b>Nutritional Status</b> | <b>Low Birth Weight (&lt;2500g)</b> | <b>Normal Birth Weight (2500-4000g)</b> | <b>High Birth Weight (&gt;4000g)</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Adequate Nutrition        | 12%                                 | 72%                                     | 16%                                  |
| Inadequate Nutrition      | 45%                                 | 50%                                     | 5%                                   |

**Description:**

Table 1 indicates that maternal smoking and diabetes are significant factors contributing to low birth weight, while normal birth weight is most commonly associated with older maternal age. Table 2 shows that adequate maternal nutrition is strongly associated with normal birth weight, while inadequate nutrition correlates with a higher incidence of low birth weight.

**Discussion**

This study confirms the significant role maternal factors, including smoking, diabetes, and nutrition, play in determining birth weight. The association between smoking and low birth weight is well-established in the literature. Smoking during pregnancy restricts blood flow to the placenta, reducing oxygen and nutrient supply to the fetus (10). Similarly, maternal diabetes was shown to be a major contributor to both high and low birth weight, depending on whether blood glucose levels are well-controlled (3).

Maternal nutrition is another critical factor influencing birth weight. This study's findings are consistent with previous research indicating that inadequate maternal nutrition leads to intrauterine growth restriction (IUGR), resulting in low birth weight (4). Pregnant women with poor dietary habits often experience poor fetal growth, while those who receive adequate prenatal nutrition, including proper intake of proteins, vitamins, and minerals, tend to have infants with healthy birth weights.

Furthermore, maternal age and chronic conditions like hypertension were also significant predictors of birth weight. Teenagers and older mothers are at a higher risk for delivering low birth weight infants, as their bodies may not be adequately prepared for pregnancy, or they may face pregnancy-related complications (3).

The study highlights the need for improving maternal health and nutrition through public health initiatives, such as prenatal care programs that educate women on healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, managing chronic conditions and promoting smoking cessation during pregnancy can improve birth outcomes.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, birth weight is influenced by a variety of maternal and environmental factors. Maternal health conditions, smoking, and nutrition are critical factors affecting the birth weight of newborns. This community-based study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to improve maternal health, reduce smoking, and ensure adequate nutrition during pregnancy. By addressing these modifiable factors, we can reduce the incidence of low birth weight and improve neonatal outcomes in our communities.

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