

3rd International Conference on

Gynecology & Obstetrics

November 24-26, 2016 Dubai UAE

Patterns and determinants of small size at birth of infants –a proxy indicator of low birth weight: Evidence from Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey

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Birth weight of a baby is a key predictor of child health and survival. However, in most developing countries, it largely remains unknown, as deliveries mostly occur outside health facilities. Under such circumstances, mother's perceived knowledge about the size of her baby, can be used as a proxy indicator of birth weight. The objective of this study is to analyze mothers' reported size at birth of infants as a useful proxy indicator of birth weight in the absence of actual birth weight data in Bangladesh and identify the factors associated with small size at birth or by implication low birth weight. The data for the study come from the 2011 Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey. Descriptive statistical methods, chi-square test and multilevel logistic regression model are used for data analysis. About one in six (17.2%) of the infants were reported to be small size at birth or low birth weight. Mother's education, parity, antenatal visits, pregnancy planning, and region of residence appeared as the significant predictors of small size at birth. Female infants were 1.3 times more likely to be at risk of being small size than males. The study findings highlight the need of targeted intervention for specific groups of mothers with higher risk of small size at birth. Adequate antenatal care visits combined with counselling and support to specific groups of women identified as high risk group in the study should be a focus to reduce adverse birth outcomes such as small size at birth in Bangladesh.

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