

**DETERMINANTS OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT AMONG LAO LOUM
INFANTS IN LAO PDR**

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DETERMINANTS OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT AMONG LAO LOUM INFANTS IN LAO PDR.**CHANSY DALAVONG 4638498 PRRH/M****M A. (POPULATION AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH)****THESIS ADVISORS: YOTHIN SAWANGDEE, Ph.D., SUPORN KOETSAWANG, M.D.****ABSTRACT**

Lao Loum is the major ethnic group in Lao PDR, comprising nearly 70 percent of the population. This study examines maternal factors and fetal factors among low birth weight Lao Loum infants and suggests certain factors as determinants of low birth weight.

The data was collected in hospitals in Vientiane: Mahosot, Setathirat, and Mother and Child hospital. The sample was 100 cases selected by purposive sampling. The data was analyzed by using binary logistic regression.

The results indicate that 20 percent of respondents drank alcohol during pregnancy. Sixty-five percent had medical care at least one time during pregnancy. More than 50 percent took pre-natal vitamins for one month or more. More than one quarter had no education or only primary education. More than 50 percent of these women worked at home as housewives and looking after children. Nearly 20 percent of the women were adolescent mothers. One quarter was shorter than 150 cm. Thirty-five percent weighed less than 45 kg. Forty-two percent were underweight (BMI<20 kg/m²). Thirty-four percent gained less than 8kg in weight during the pregnancy. Nearly half knew their child's sex before delivery (44 percent). Some of the mothers had complications during pregnancy; 10 percent had vaginal bleeding and 8 percent had high blood pressure. Fifteen percent had previously had one or more induced abortions. For 60 percent of the women it was their first baby. Thirty-six percent of babies were born at preterm.

Having obstetric problems during pregnancy, such as urinary tract infections, having suffered traumas such as those caused by traffic accidents, giving birth at less than 37 weeks of pregnancy age, and poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy seem to be determinants of low birth weight. Having had a previous induced abortion is also a determinant of low birth weight.

Early prenatal care and contraception should be promoted. Further, the study would like to suggest that future researchers on low birth weight in Laos should investigate more by collecting and comparing similar data in other ethnic and religious groups such as Lao Soung, Lao Theung, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Christian groups

KEY WORDS: LOW BIRTH WEIGHT/ PRE-DELIVERY WEIGHT/ BODY MASS INDEX/WEIGHT GAIN/ PARITY/ ANTENATAL CARE/ HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE/ PRENATAL BLEEDING/ URINARY TRACT INFECTION/ LAOS/DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

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