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Working conditions, socioeconomic factors and low birth weight: Path analysis

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Background: In recent years, with socioeconomic changes in the society, the presence of women in the workplace is inevitable. The differences in working condition, especially for pregnant women, has adverse consequences like low birth weight.

Objectives: This study was conducted with the aim to model the relationship between working conditions, socioeconomic factors, and birth weight.

Patients and methods: This study was conducted in case control design. The control group consisted of 500 women with normal weight babies, and the case group, 250 women with low weight babies from selected hospitals in Tehran. Data were collected using a researcher made questionnaire to determine mothers' lifestyle during pregnancy with low birth weight with health affecting social determinants approach. This questionnaire investigated women's occupational lifestyle in terms of working conditions, activities, and job satisfaction. Data were analyzed with SPSS16 and Lisrel8.8 software using statistical path analysis.

Results: The final path model fitted well (CFI=1, RMSEA=0.00) and showed that among direct paths, working condition ((β=0.032), among indirect paths, household income β (β=0.42), and in the overall effect, unemployed spouse (β=0.1828) had the most effects on the low birth weight. Negative coefficients indicate decreasing effect on birth weight.

Conclusions: Based on the path analysis model, working condition and socioeconomic status directly and indirectly influence birth weight. Thus, along with attention to treatment and health care (biological aspect), special attention must also be paid to mothers' socioeconomic factors.

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