

OBSTETRIC OUTCOMES AMONG NATIVE AND IMMIGRANT MOTHERS: A LONGITUDINAL AND POPULATION-BASED STUDY FROM TAIWAN

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Purpose: Migration is an important determinant in the global health situation, and has implications for those countries who host immigrants and the host country's health care system. This study aimed to investigate maternal characteristics and obstetric outcomes in Taiwan, focusing on the role of the mother's immigrant status.

Materials and methods: A longitudinal and population-based comparison was conducted to examine the outcomes of fetuses between native and immigrant mothers in Taiwan from 2001 to 2007, using the 2001 to 2007 Birth Registry. In addition to the mother's immigrant status, maternal age, parity, maternal health conditions, antenatal complications, treatments during labor, and complications during labor were included in the analysis to assess whether or not they would account for the differences, if any, in fetal outcomes (stillbirth, gestations at delivery, birthweight, Apgar score at 1 and 5 minutes, and congenital anomalies) between immigrant and native mothers. Empirical estimations were done using bivariate and multivariate analyses.

Results: Immigrant mothers were relatively young had lower cesarean-section rate. After controlling for other factors, infants of immigrant mothers had lower stillbirth rate, longer gestations at delivery, higher birthweight, better Apgar scores at 1 and 5 minutes, and lower rate of congenital anomalies.

Conclusion: The health immigrant theory stated that the average health status of immigrant mothers is better than native mothers, thus the obstetric outcomes of the immigrant mothers in Taiwan were better than native mothers. The obstetric outcomes cannot be explained solely by traditional risk factors, and protective factors as well as selective migration may offer further clues.