

Higher rates of early initiation of breastfeeding associated with health facility delivery in Nepal

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Background:

Initiation of breastfeeding within one hour from birth is one of the five key essential newborn care messages, implemented along with birth preparedness package since 2008. This study aimed to determine the trend of early initiation of breastfeeding (EIBF) and to assess the effect of health facility delivery on EIBF in Nepal.

Methods:

We analyzed the data from the last four nationally representative Nepal Demographic and Health Surveys (NDHS) conducted in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. Data on the early initiation of breastfeeding was obtained from the mothers of infants born within 24 months prior to the survey. The explanatory variable was the place of delivery, dichotomized as either the health facility, or home delivery. Survey year had a significant interaction with the place of delivery. Multivariable logistic regression was conducted separately on pooled samples before (NDHS 2001 and 2006) and after (NDHS 2011 and 2016) the program implementation. Adjusted odds ratio (AOR) with 95% confidence interval (CI) for EIBF was calculated after adjusting for predetermined covariates.

Results:

The rate of EIBF increased by 26.5% points (from 32.8% in 2001 to 59.3% in 2016) among infants delivered in a health facility, compared to an increase by 17.1% points (from 29.9% to 47.0%) among home born infants. EIBF increased by 32.5% points before, compared to 49.7% points after BPP. Delivery in a health facility was associated with a higher odd of EIBF in later years (AOR 2.3, 95% CI 2.0, 2.8), but not in earlier years (AOR 1.3, 95% CI 0.9, 2.0). Delivery by caesarean section, first-born infant, and lack of maternal education were associated with a lower rate of EIBF in both periods.

Conclusions:

Higher EIBF was associated with health facility delivery in Nepal, only after programmatic emphasis on essential newborn care messages. This implies the need for explicit focus on EIBF at birth, particularly when mother is less educated, primiparous or undergoing operative delivery.

Key messages:

- The rate of initiation of breastfeeding within an hour from birth is increasing in Nepal, with higher rates in health facility delivery, as shown by the recent four nationally representative surveys.
- Programmatic focus on essential newborn care messages may have contributed to significant association of higher rates of early initiation of breastfeeding when delivered in health facility.