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Nutritional Status of Adolescent Girls across the Rural-Urban Interface of Bengaluru

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Abstract

Nutrition is essential for growth and development of human beings and the nutritional status is the state of individual's health determined by what we eat. A proficient nutritional status of a country's population is responsible for its socio-economic development. Increased employment opportunities among men and women have a direct influence on the lifestyle changes, diet and consumption patterns which in turn influence health and nutritional status, especially among women and adolescent girls. Adolescence is the growth stage between infancy and adulthood of a person and is broadly considered as the age ranging from 10 to 19 years. Although adolescents are the most valuable human resources, their health has been neglected for many years because they were considered to be less vulnerable to disease than young children or the very old.

Among the adolescents, girls are the worst sufferers of malnutrition especially in rural areas of Asian countries. Regrettably, assessment of the nutritional status of adolescent girls has been the least explored area of research in India. Carried out in the framework of the Indo-German collaborative research project 'The Rural-Urban Interface of Bengaluru - A space of Transition in Agriculture, Economics and Society', subproject 'Food Insecurity at different stages of Urbanisation', funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) of the Government of India, the present study focused on the nutritional status of adolescent girls in the rural-urban interface of Bengaluru, India. Primary data was collected along a north and south transect crossing through Bengaluru and covered 467 respondents (adolescent girls). Anthropometric measurements and multinomial logistic regression were used to analyse the magnitude and factors influencing their nutritional status across the city's rural-urban interface. Factors such as age, education, wealth index and location dummy had a significant influence on the nutritional status of adolescent girls. In particular, urbanisation had a direct impact on the nutritional status of adolescent girls: when moving along the gradient from rural to urban of both south and north transect, the magnitude of overweight increased to the tune of 33%. Urban adolescent girls were relatively more prone to overweight because of change in lifestyle and consumption of unhealthy food items. The study revealed that rural girls were suffering from undernutrition and urban girls were suffering from overnutrition, i.e. clearly demonstrating the double burden of malnutrition.

Keywords: Adolescent girls, anthropometric measurement, multinomial logistic regression, nutritional status, urbanisation