

Health Profile Among Lodha and Munda Tribal Children of Midnapur District, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT The present study reports the nutritional assessment among the Lodha and Munda tribal children of Midnapur district of West Bengal. It has been observed the need of improvement of health status of female babies, particularly in rural areas and in large families.

INTRODUCTION

Progress of any country is totally depend upon their children. So it is necessary to build them up physically and mentally healthy and free from diseases and malnutrition. In population composition they have major components and nutrition point of view, who constitute a vulnerable group. Malnutrition has emerged as a major health problem and there is increasing evidence of its role in resistance to infection, work capacity, physical and mental development. The health care programme, expanded immunization and family welfare can not succeed unless the basic problem of malnutrition is effectively controlled. Thus nutritional investigation need to become an important and integral component of the maternity and child health care programmes. Information regarding health profile of tribal children is still scanty which is essential for the planning of comprehensive nutritional programme aimed at improving their health status. Keeping this in view present investigation for the nutritional assessment has been carried out on Lodha and Munda tribal children of Midnapur district, West Bengal.

The Lodha and Munda

The Lodha is one of the primitive tribal group residing mainly in Midnapur district (numbered: 5,37,183) of West Bengal, Mayurbhanj and Baleswar district (numbered:5100) of Orissa (Census 1981). Traditionally the forest dwelling Lodha had access to the forest, but this privilege has now been curtailed. Yet they

make surreptitious forays into forest which result in criminal cases being filed against them. Consequent to the colonization scheme some have taken to agriculture besides they supplement their income by working as daily wages labourers, when hunting and fishing yield little return.

The Munda, Horo-hon a large dravidian tribe of Chotanagpur classed on linguistic ground as Kolarian and closely akin to the Hos and Santhal (Das et al., 1966). The name Munda is of Sanskrit origin. It means headman of a village. Agriculture and hunting are the main source of their livelihood. They are widely distributed in Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. In West Bengal (2,30,016) they are distributed in the district Midnaur, Darjiling and New Jalpaigudi (Census, 1981).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

For the assessment, for their nutritional status 70 Lodha (46 boys and 24 girls) and 48 Munda (27 boys and 21 girls) aged 2 to 12 years were measured for the nutritional anthropometry (body weight, height vertex, head circumference and upper arm circumference from villages Daharpur, Kajla and Heerapadi of Midnapur District of West Bengal. Generally in rural/tribal area's due to their ignorance illiteracy and non availability of any record, correct age of children is very difficult to obtain. Therefore, age independent parameter i. E.: weight/height² (Rao and Singh, 1970) and Mid arm circumference/head circumference (Kanawati and McLaren, 1970) were taken for the understanding of dimension and magnitude of malnutrition. Reliability of such parameters have been established by several studies (Gupta and Bhandari, 1974; Gupta et al., 1981; Sharma, 1992).

Children having 0.0015, 0.310 and more values of weight/height² and mid arm circumference/head circumference respectively have been reflected normal, whereas below this as malnourished.

Table 1: Age Independent ratio's for nutritional assessment among the children of Lodha and Munda tribes of Midnapur district, West Bengal

Tribe	Number of Children	Weight/Height ²		Mid arm Circumference/ Head Circumference	
		0.0015 & above	Below 0.0015	0.310 & above	Below 0.310
Lodha					
Males	46	12 26.09%	34 73.91%	7 15.22%	39 84.78%
Females	24	4 16.67%	20 83.33%	3 12.50%	21 87.50%
Total	70	16 22.85%	54 77.15%	10 14.28%	60 85.72%
Munda					
Males	27	2 7.41%	25 92.59%	-	27 100%
Females	21	2 9.52%	19 90.48%	1 2.8%	20 95.24%
Total	48	4 8.33%	44 91.67%	1 2.08%	47 97.92%

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to weight/height² 73.91% (34) Lodha boys and 83.33% (20) girls whereas 92.59% (25) Munda boys and 90.48% (19) girls were suffering from malnutrition. Whereas mid arm circumference/head circumference detect 84.78% (39) Lodha boys and 87.50% (21) girls and 100% (27) Munda boys and 95.24% (20) girls as malnourished. In brief 77.15% (54) Lodha and 91.67% (54) Munda, and 85.72% (60) Lodha and 97.92% (47) Munda children were found in malnourished condition as weight/height² and mid arm circumference/head circumference parameters respectively (Table 1).

Both groups are residing in same geographical and nutritional conditions. Their main diet are rice, fish and meat (or availability). The Lodha has included in as primitive tribal groups of India for which special efforts has been made for their development. In this programme school ashram has been opened with free boarding and meals. Whereas Munda have no such provision. This is one of the main reason of higher percentage of malnourished children as compared to the Lodha children. But it may be pointed out that their parents, school and ashram persons should be educated for the

health awareness and concept of balance diet and educate them to take more nutrients from their available food stuffs from their surrounding regions.

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