

Health status and its correlates among adolescent Girls in Sikkim, India

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: In India, adolescents constitute one quarter of total population but never remained the focus of public health policies. Adolescent girls are in a more disadvantageous situation, particularly in traditional societies, as compared to the boys of same age. They remain vulnerable to a variety of health risks. The present study investigates relationship between general health status and socio-demographic factors among a group of adolescent girls in Sikkim. It also evaluates the relationship between general health indicators and prevalence of certain reproductive morbidities.

Methods: The present study includes 1250 girls from all the four districts of Sikkim. Two stage sampling method was followed in selecting the study participants. Information on socio-demographic characteristics, prevalence of certain reproductive morbidities was collected through pre-tested questionnaires. Anthropometric measurements were taken following standard techniques. Blood sample were collected from each participant and were tested for hemoglobin concentration, erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and total leukocytes count (TLC) in pathological laboratory following similar protocols. Blood pressures were measured consecutively for three times and averaged for analysis. Both bivariate and multivariate analyses were carried out.

Results: Significant associations were found between prevalence of obesity, anemia, abnormal TLC, abnormal ESR, hypertension and place of residence. Correlations between systolic and diastolic blood pressures as well as anthropometric measures including body mass index, waist circumference, mid upper arm circumference were found significant. Girls from higher economic group are significantly more likely to be hypertensive (OR = 2.49) and are significantly less likely to be anemic (OR = 0.56).

Conclusion: The findings of the study suggest overall poor health profile of the adolescent girls under study. Girls from rural areas as well as from low economic status group are found to have comparatively poor health status. Hypertension emerged as important health concern among girls of well off families. In spite of better

developmental indices and substantial investment in health care infrastructure development, Sikkim has in general many public health challenges particularly in adolescent health.