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## Original Article

## Prevalence of Undernutrition of Lodha Children Aged 1-14 Years of Paschim Medinipur District, West Bengal, India

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## Abstract:

**Objective:** Childhood undernutrition among tribal children is a serious public health problem in India. The present study was conducted to assess the prevalence of undernutrition (underweight, stunting and wasting) among Lodha children of Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, India.

**Methods:** This cross sectional study was conducted in a village of Paschim Medinipur district. A total of 165 (early childhood=74, late childhood=91) children aged 1-14 years were measured and included in the present study following simple random method. The children were further divided into two categories: early childhood: under 6 years (<72 months) and late childhood:  $\geq 72$  months. Anthropometric measurements such as height and weight were made following standard techniques. Children were considered underweight, stunting and wasting as weight-for-age, height-for-age and weight-for-height Z-score below  $-2$  standard deviation using the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) reference population.

**Findings:** The prevalence of underweight, stunting and wasting was 33.9%, 26.1% and 19.4 %, respectively. Of these, 9.1%, 9.7% and 3.6% children were found to be severely underweight, stunted and wasted. Moreover, the prevalence of underweight (47.3% vs 23.1%) and stunting (35.1% vs 18.7%) was significantly higher in early childhood compared to during late childhood. They had 2.05 (RR= 2.05; 95% confidence interval (CI): 1.31– 3.20) and 1.88 (CI: 1.11–3.19) times greater chance to be underweight and stunted than during late childhood. Whereas, the prevalence of wasting was similar in both groups (20.3% vs 18.9%; RR=1.09; CI:0.58-2.02). Similarly, the rates of severe underweight (early childhood vs late childhood: 16.2% vs 3.3%) and stunting (20.3% vs 1.1%) were significantly higher in early childhood. They had 4.92 (CI: 1.44–16.79) fold and 18.45 (CI: 2.49-136.42) fold more risk to be an underweight and stunted compared to during late childhood.

**Conclusion:** The nutritional status of the Lodha children, especially during early childhood was unsatisfactory. There is an urgent requirement to improve the nutritional status of children in this ethnic group.

## Keywords:

Tribe . Undernutrition . Stunting . Underweight . Wasting . Children

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