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Background and Motivation

- Women's nutritional status crucial for their well-being: Focus on undernutrition trends among Muslim (15-49) women in India.
- Investigate disparities across socioeconomic dimensions and regions.
- Despite economic growth, India grapples with undernutrition, particularly among women and children.
- Focus on Marginalized Groups: Muslim women face severe undernutrition with high socioeconomic disparities.
- Research Gap: The study is the first to explore and examine the nutritional status of Muslim women in India.
- Initiatives: Government programs like ICDS, NMN, JSY, PMMVY, and NFSA played crucial roles (MOHFW et al., 2019).
- There is a need to address socioeconomic inequalities in accessing nutrition programs.

Data and Methods

- BMI Calculation: Ratio of weight (kg) to the square of height (meters); undernutrition indicated by BMI<18.5, severe undernutrition by BMI<16.
- Analyses ever-married Muslim women aged 15-49, excluding pregnant or recently pregnant women.
- Disparity Ratio: Ratio of the highest to the lowest underweight prevalence, providing a comprehensive view.
- Predicted Probabilities: Estimation of underweight probabilities across different socioeconomic categories.
- Regional Diversity: Analysis conducted at the all-India level and across different geographic regions to address regional variations.

Key Findings

- Overall decline in undernutrition among Indian women from 36.3% in 1998 to about 14% in 2021.
- Religious Variation: Decrease was observed for all women, prevalence dropping below 10% for Christians, Jains, and Sikhs.
- Education Gap: Reduction in undernutrition gap based on women's education over the study period.
- Rural-Urban Disparity: There is significant disparity, with rural areas showing over double the prevalence compared to urban areas.
- Wealth Quintiles: Almost a fivefold difference in undernutrition prevalence between poorest (24%) and richest (5%) quintiles.
- Regional Disparities: Central and Eastern regions, socioeconomically poorer, exhibit significantly higher undernutrition prevalence than the Southern region.
- Due to awareness, education, WASH practices (Kumar and Mohanty, 2023), and healthcare access, undernutrition prevalence declined from 34% (1998) to 11% (2021).

Results

- Concentration Index with respect to undernutrition: Captures socioeconomic inequalities in underweight prevalence based on wealth quintiles.
- Values towards -1 show a disproportionate distribution of the prevalence of underweight among poorer groups.

Conclusions

- SDGs emphasise eliminating hunger (2030-goal 2); nutrition is pivotal for holistic socioeconomic progress (WHO, 2017).
- Significant disparities exist based on caste, education, geographic region, residence, and wealth quintiles.
- Socioeconomic Variation: Higher prevalence in SC/ST community (14%), rural areas (13%), and women with no formal education (13%).
- Unidimensional health policies focusing solely on average undernutrition might deepen socioeconomic disparities; therefore targeted efforts are needed.
- State-level focus, utilisation, and budgetary allocations impact inter-state/regional nutritional disparities.
- Study strengths include novelty, reliable data, and consistency with existing literature.
- Limitations include inadequate demonstration of causal relationships and reliance on BMI as a measure.
- Future Research: There is a need for future research on mediating factors influencing undernutrition among women in India, considering specific socioeconomic characteristics.

References


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