

India Studies in Business and Economics

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Editors

Issues on Health and Healthcare in India

Focus on the North Eastern Region

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
	Utpal Kumar De, Manoranjan Pal and Premananda Bharati	
Part I Determinants of Status of Health		
2	Two-Level Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Anemia Among Nonpregnant Married Women of Reproductive Age in Bangladesh	11
	Md. Golam Hossain, Kamruzzaman and Abdul Wadood	
3	Prevalence and Associated Determinants of Low Birth Weight in Developing Countries: A Multi-country Analysis from Nationwide Population-Based Survey	21
	Rashidul Alam Mahumud, Abdur Razzaque Sarker, Marufa Sultana, Md. Nurul Islam, Md. Ripter Hossain and Md. Golam Hossain	
4	On the Determinants of Child Health in India: Does Teenage Pregnancy Matter?	41
	Dipankar Roy and Avijit Debnath	
5	Determinants of Psychological Well-being and Its Impact on Mental Health	53
	Gurudas Bandyopadhyay	
6	Maternal Anemia: A Village Level Empirical Observation in Assam	97
	Pranti Dutta	
7	Identification of the Factors Influencing Child Immunization in West Bengal: A Case Study of Darjeeling District	109
	Maumita Ghosh and Shrabanti Maity	

8	Health in North-Eastern States of India: An Analysis of Economic Vulnerabilities	127
	Amrita Ghatak and N. Lalitha	
9	Association of Economic Inequality with Health Inequality: Women in Northeast India	163
	Susmita Bharati	
Part II Methods and Modelling		
10	Prevalence of Malaria and Hb E in Northeast India: An Econo-genomics Study	179
	R. Sarada, B.K. Misra and T. Vasulu	
11	Child Deprivation in Indian Context: Concern About Health- and Education-Related Issues	213
	Soumyendra Kishore Datta and Krishna Singh	
12	Health Performance Index and Healthcare Expenditure in Assam: Are There any Structural Change?	229
	Rimee Bhuyan, Nizara Kalita and Gayatri Goswami	
13	Assessing Burden of Infant Mortality on Socio-Economic Classes in North-Eastern India	241
	Sanjeeva Kumar Jha and Ningthoukhongjam Vikimchandra Singh	
14	Is India on the Path to Replacement Fertility Soon? Exploring the Role of Rural–Urban Differential Pace and Timing of Fertility Decline	255
	Tapan Kumar Chakrabarty and Mallika Deb	
15	Prevalence of Child Undernutrition in India: Estimating Extent of Deficits Using Distributions of Nutritional Outcomes	273
	Tapan Kumar Chakrabarty	
16	Health Expenditures Across Major States of India: Issues of Convergence and Equality	293
	Ramesh Chandra Das, Kamal Ray and Utpal Das	
17	Health and Deprivation: A Suggested Application to the North-Eastern States of India	307
	Atanu Sengupta and Parnasudha Karmodak	
18	Inequalities in Child Survival in Eight Northeastern States of India	319
	Partha De	

19 The Determinants Out-of-Pocket Healthcare Expenditure in Bangladesh: Evidence from Household Income and Expenditure Survey-2010	339
Rashidul Alam Mahumud, Abdur Razzaque Sarker, Marufa Sultana, Nurnabi Sheikh, Md. Nurul Islam, Md. Ripter Hossain and Md. Golam Hossain	
Part III Facilities and Prevalence of Morbidity	
20 Access to Life-Saving Medicines and Healthcare: A Case Study of Aurangabad District of Bihar	353
Imteyaz Ahmad and Anita Rath	
21 Meteorological Conditions and Malaria Cases—Study in the Context of Meghalaya	379
Strong P. Marbaniang and Laishram Ladusingh	
22 Comparative Study of Health-Related Physical Fitness Among Children Attending Municipal and International Schools in Nasik City	395
Manjusha Bhakay and Sabiha Vali	
23 Faces of Primary Health Centres (PHC) of Bengal Dooars: A Review in Terms of Potential Service Delivery Space Index (PSDSI) and Physical Accessibility Index (PAI)	409
Subhasis Bhattacharya	
24 Factors Affecting Morbidity and Utilization of Healthcare Services: A Case Study of Nagaon District of Assam	425
Nirmala Devi and Rajshree Bedamatta	
25 Morbidity Pattern of Elderly in India	445
Poulomi Chowdhury, Mausam Kumar Garg and Laishram Ladusingh	
26 Association of Nutritional Status and Drinking Water Among the Children of North East India	459
Madhuparna Srivastava, Papiya Roy, Susmita Bharati, Manoranjan Pal and Premananda Bharati	

Chapter 4

On the Determinants of Child Health in India: Does Teenage Pregnancy Matter?

Dipankar Roy and Avijit Debnath

4.1 Introduction

Children are vital to the nation's present and its future. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on issues that affect children and on improving their health. In determining the factors associated with child health, along with other determinants, age of mother at the time of pregnancy is also considered as a crucial one. Pregnancy is an overwhelming experience at any age but in case of a teenager it can lead to developmental crisis (Rodriquez & Moore, 1995). Generally teenagers, enjoying their parenthood have not had enough maturity to identify their role (Hanna, 2001) and their cognitive immaturity makes them more inclined to put their needs ahead of the developmental needs of their child. In recent years teenage pregnancy has become a concerning issue in every economy irrespective of its level of development or under development. A number of economic, societal and personal factors actually contribute to this. The figures of the incidence of teenage pregnancy vary across countries and worldwide the incidence of teenage pregnancy rate range from 143 per 1000 in some sub-Saharan African countries to 2.9 per 1000 in South Korea. Like that of women in their 20s and 30s, teenage pregnant also face many of the same obstetrics issues and thus additional medical concerns are required. Research has shown that the risk of low birth weight is connected to the biological age itself. Incidence of teenage pregnancy is thus associated with higher rates of adverse health consequences like morbidity and mortality of both teen pregnant and newly born babies, and thus has important implications for human resources and development prospects of a country. In spite of these

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