

Antenatal Care and Reproductive Health of Adolescent Mothers: A Study of Slums in Delhi

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Abstract

Reproductive health is an integral part of general health and a core feature of human development. It reflects the health of a woman during her childhood, and is crucial during adolescence and adulthood, as the status of her health, nutrition, and access to healthcare determines the newborn's health. Pregnancy during adolescence is a result of the lack of knowledge, education, experience, income, and power relative to older women, and is considered as child pregnancy. A cross-sectional slum based study was carried out in six slums of Delhi among 300 respondents who had ever given live birth. Results showed that 76.9 percent of the women had at least one child. Public source of availing Ante Natal Care (ANC) services were high. As services have been improved and are better facilitated, it has added a push for institutional deliveries. Along with free medicines and free check-up are lucrative for poor women, as almost 56.9 per cent of women utilised ANC services from government hospital and 33.1 percent from the government dispensary. Most of the deliveries were institutional deliveries which is safer than that of home deliveries, which is recognized as critical for reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality. The regression analysis showed number of visits for ANC comes out to be highly significant as the number of ANC visits increase, probability of low birth weight of babies' decreases. The association between low birth weight and socio-economic factors was found significant. The standard of living index was also associated with better pregnancy outcomes as lower the standard of living or economic status of the household, more will be the probability of low birth weight. The study also shows that among all the six slums more than 80 percent of the women had normal delivery. There is an urgent need for improving reproductive health at school and community level for adolescent living in slums of Delhi to reduce the maternal and infant mortality.