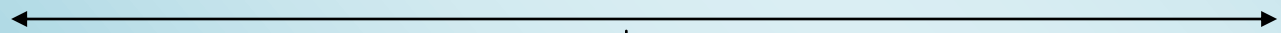


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HEALTH STATUS AMONG SLUM WOMEN IN GULBARGA CITY

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INTRODUCTION:

India, which is now becoming one of the fast developing countries in the world, suffers from the concomitant problems of increase in slums and poor health of the people living there. Slums are mushrooming every year due to the proliferation of the city, leading to large number migrants coming from villages in search of livelihood, especially from the districts of Salem, Villupuram, TV Malai, Tiruchi and from states like Bihar, UP, Odisha, to name a few. While the migration from the districts happens due to failure of monsoonal rains, those from the other states are drawn to the higher wages paid in the city. The spread of slums is also due to unchecked, unplanned and haphazard growth of industries giving way to creation of concrete jungles in the urban areas. The rapid urbanizations in the entire metropolis of India resulted in the speedy growth of slums. The slums have thus become most important factors that affect the environmental structure of Indian cities. In Chennai, the slum named Thideer Nagars could be found in multiple places in the city. Most the slums are located on the banks of Cooum river, nearby railway tracks or underneath of flyovers.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To analyze the factors for the poor socio-economic condition of women in slums.
2. To study various problems affecting the health of women living in slums
3. To highlight the threats to the health status of slum women during the antenatal and post natal periods.
4. To analyze in detail the factors leading to the low health status of women living in slums.

HYPOTHESIS:

1. As the level of education is very low the standard of health awareness is also very low in the area.
2. Due to male dominated society, the women remain socially and economically backward.
3. Marriage of slum women at the age of below 21 has adverse effect on their health status.

METHODOLOGY:

The researcher used the descriptive design to document the age of marriage of women, age of mother at first birth, the gap of pregnancy for the second and third child, places of delivery, number of children and pre and post natal care of women. Also the descriptive nature of the study collected the important information on the areas of intake of food habit, availability of sources of potable water, types of fuel used for cooking, types of diseases frequently affecting the women, and the level of health awareness of women. Purposive random sampling was adopted from the available people during the day time between 10 a.m to 12 Noon and again between 2 – 4 p.m in two slums Gulbarga city during the month of February and March 2015. Primary data was collected from 100 married women, 50 from each slum, in the age group of 19 to 40. The tool for the data collection was mainly from the interview method. The collected data were then collated and interpreted for studying the causes of poor health of women in the slums and bringing to the attention of the government and health departments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Based on the 10 years work experience of the researcher in slums in the city of Gulbarga the following parameters were selected to study in detail, according to the importance on health aspects of women.

1) Age of Marriage

The age of marriage for the women in the slums is a key factor in understanding their health status. It is found that 11 per cent of the women were married before 18 years of age. Only a negligible per cent of the women (5%) married after 21 years of age. The vast majority of women respondents (84%) married between 18 - 21 years of age.

2) Age at the time of First Birth

It is medically proven that pregnancy at early age is detrimental for the health of mother and child. In spite of the government taking several steps by enacting the laws and also disseminating awareness programmes for the prevention of marriage at an early age and avoiding pregnancy before the age of 19, the scenario among the poorer section has not changed much. It is appalling to learn that 67 per cent of the mothers delivered the first child before the age of 21.

3) Spacing between Pregnancies

The doctors say that there must be minimum three years gap for the second child to be born. Here in the study area, nearly half of the mothers (47%) have more than two children and this indicates clearly that the spacing between pregnancies is comparatively lower. Among 47%, more than quarter of the respondents (27%), have given birth between 2 – 4 years gap. It is shocking to find that 53 per cent of the mothers have two children who were born in less than two years gap. Only 20 per cent of the mothers have given birth to their children leaving 4 years space. Therefore it is very clear that most of the women (47%) from the study areas had low spacing years between two children and this in turn has adversely affected their health conditions.

4) Place of Delivery

One of the very important indicators for the health awareness of people is the place of delivery. It is good to note that the vast majority of the respondents (87%) chose the government hospital as the place of delivery, due to poor economical status. Only 11 per cent of the respondents preferred the private nursing home as the place of delivery, with an idea of quality care and good treatment. It is a good indicator that no mothers in the slums gave birth to their children at their homes. It is observed from the study areas that only 34% family eats fish and chicken once a week. About half of the respondents' families (46%) take fish once a week. It is sad to note that 20 per cent of the women who are below the poverty line and stay in a rented building had either fish or chicken on fortnight basis. Most of the times, these 20 per cent of the women had to eat unhygienic food which is also one of the main reasons for the poor health condition. It is awful to say that almost 80 per cent of the women did not receive balanced diet. Hence anemic and low blood pressure among the women during the pregnancy is the common fact.

5) Sources of Drinking Water

Every family in the study areas has access to drinking water facility. The corporation of Chennai provides drinking water which is available almost every day through hand pumps. Where there is no facility of hand pumps, the drinking water is provided through tanks.

6) Types of Diseases

Most of diseases are mainly due to water borne in nature and also due to unhygienic environment. The diseases mentioned by all three slum dwellers were headache, fever, cough and cold. In the study areas, mainly during the rainy seasons, increased number of women and children acquired common diseases like diarrhea, typhoid, dengue and dysentery.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Door to door health services should be provided in the slum areas by government and non government organizations.
2. Doctors and health service providers' behavior needed to be more cordial towards slum women.
3. Reducing price of medicine so that slum people could afford it.
4. Quality of sanitation facilities to be improved.
5. Distribution of iron tablet, and vitamin tablets by the Government in the locality is needed.
6. Government and non-government organizations should work in increasing awareness on different health issues.
7. Female doctors are needed to be appointed in the maternal child health centers.
8. There should be regular spray to control mosquito and proper garbage cleaning facility by Chennai City Corporation.

CONCLUSION:

This study on the health status of women in slums in the city of corporation of Chennai reveals that the poor socio economic conditions of families adversely affect women's health. It is still a practice in slums for the women to take food after the male members of their families. This kind of structural gender imbalance do exist almost in every strata of society in India. In fact, the health of women in the study areas was found to be affected due to want of proper food, working long hours without proper rest, not getting enough nutritious food during breastfeeding their children and lack of balanced diet in general. The health of women is also affected due to the practice of marrying off the girls at the completion of 18 years of age, and also due to the resultant early age pregnancies. The spacing between pregnancies is very low which too led to their declining health.

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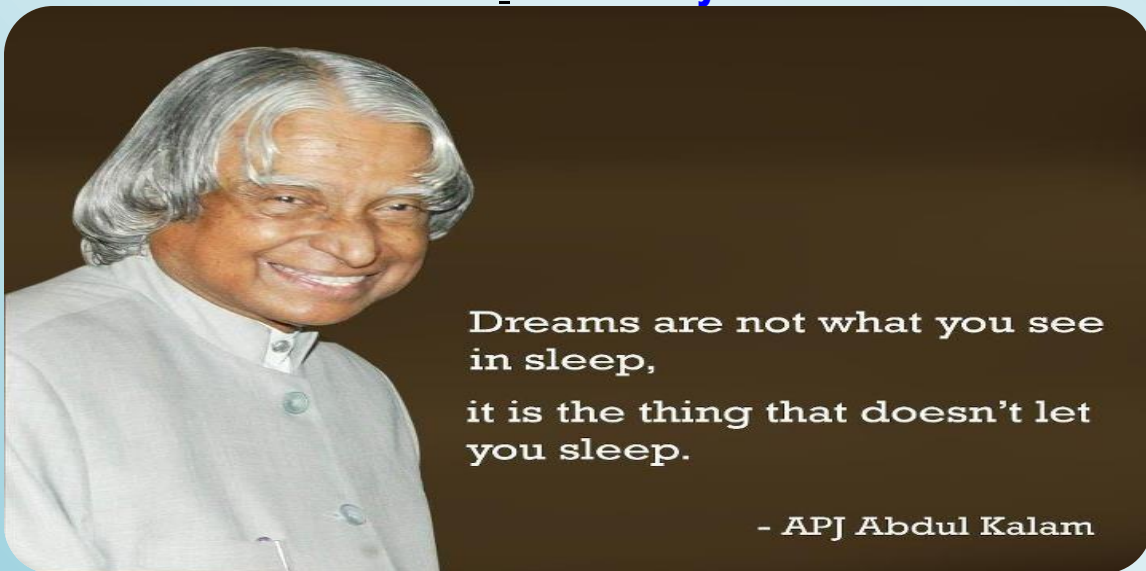
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Dreams are not what you see
in sleep,
it is the thing that doesn't let
you sleep.

- APJ Abdul Kalam