

ANTHROPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS
IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

C.J. SONOWAL
MILONJYOTI BORGOHAIN



Anthropological Investigations in Contemporary India

A cross-cultural perspective

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About the Book

The field of Anthropology took a while to gain recognition as a significant academic discipline, even though it had already spread and its potential had been discussed theoretically among hopeful Indian students. It was not until decades later that anthropology was given equal importance to other social and bio-social disciplines. Relying solely on database disciplines like economics, demography, and geography was insufficient for assessing and understanding complex societal issues. Anthropology's interpretive methodology recognises that each human society is unique, providing anthropologists with valuable insight into diverse domains and enabling them to offer appropriate solutions. Through the use of critical theories and the deconstruction of conventional narratives, Anthropology has become a fascinating subject of global interest.

Within this book, readers will find insightful theoretical analyses and detailed micro-level studies that broaden our understanding of pressing contemporary issues through an anthropological lens. Each paper within the book contextualises its findings within the larger societal framework, providing a comprehensive view of the situations being examined. This book's particular strength lies in its emphasis on decolonising anthropological knowledge, exploring the nuances of stigma from an anthropological perspective, highlighting the significance of religion as an ethnic marker, exploring the problems and prospects of writing indigenous ethnohistory of tribes and indigenous people, illuminating food culture through an anthropological lens, examining borderland markets, and exploring the connection of biology and society within the realm of health issues.



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Impact of Supplementary Food and Socio-economic Predictors on Nutritional Status of Children Attending Anganwadis in Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, India

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Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), a healthy child is the wealth of a nation. India, a developing country, covers 40.0% of undernourished children worldwide. Undernutrition predominantly occurs due to insufficient availability of proper food, early age at marriage and first birth, gestational age, delivery mode, height (cm) and weight (kg) of the children, lack of breastfeeding, family size, low birth weight, open defecation and low socio-economic condition of the family (Khan & Nalli, 2018). Malnutrition is more prevalent, especially in central India, such as Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh (Dakshayani & Gangadhar, 2015).

In India, many recent studies have shown a high malnutrition rate in preschool children's nutritional status (Purohit, 2017). The government of India initiated the Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) scheme on 2 October 1975 under the national nutritional policy to reduce malnutrition and break the vicious cycle of morbidity and mortality among children below six years old. It has become the world's most extensive programme for early and proper childhood growth and development

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(Joseph, 2014). ICDS service provides a vast network of ICDS centres, known as "Anganwadi", which is derived from the Hindu word "Angan" (Surwade et al., 2013, pp. 107-10).

The literal meaning of Angan is the courtyards of a house where children can play and get supplementary food and preschool education (ICDS Report, 2009). Other than these, Anganwadi provides immunisation, health check-ups, referral services, and health and nutrition education for the betterment of children (Sharma et al., 2006). It is a childcare centre located within the village and is run by one trained female person called an Anganwadi worker (Bhattarai et al., 2017). She is a community-based front-line voluntary worker of the ICDS programme (Ahmad et al., 2020). Her primary work is to support the family, particularly mothers, to ensure adequate health and nutrition care, early recognition and timely treatment of infirmities (Das et al., 2020). It serves the highly vulnerable and underprivileged sections of backward and remote areas of the nation and provides services at the doorsteps of the beneficiaries to ensure their maximum involvement (Chudasama et al., 2016).

Nutrition also improves their ability to learn, communicate, think analytically, socialise effectively and adapt to new environments and people. Growth and development are continuous processes which begin at conception and end at maturity. Poor health of children alters their nutritional status. This poor nutritional status of the child leads to the development of infectious diseases and, finally, malnutrition, which may lead to permanent physical and mental impairment (Sheila et al., 2014). The nutritional status is determined by a complex interaction between internal and external factors: internal factors like age, sex, nutrition, behaviour, physical activity and diseases and external environmental factors like food safety and cultural, social and economic circumstances (Thurstan et al., 2020). Given the above background, the study's objective was to assess the impact of supplementary food provided by ICDS and the socio-economic status of parents on the nutritional status of studied children.

Material and Methods:

The study was based on a cross-sectional method and was conducted on 780 children (392 girls and 388 boys) from 50 ICDS Centers from 5

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