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A Comparative Study of Growth and Nutritional Status between Tribal and Non-tribal Girls of Tripura

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ABSTRACT The present cross-sectional study was carried out to evaluate physical growth, percentage of fat mass and the nutritional status of 1403 school going Chakma tribal and non-tribal Bengali girls (703 Chakma tribal and 700 Bengali girls) aged 6 to 18 years from Dhalai, North, Unokoti, Gomoti and South District of Tripura. Physical growth was assessed by using four standard anthropometric measurements like height, weight, triceps and subscapular skinfolds. The stratified multistage cluster random sampling method was employed for selecting the subject from different schools of rural areas of Tripura. The nutritional status in terms of stunting (Height < 3rd percentile), thinness (BMI > 5th percentile) and overweight (BMI < 85th percentile) were measured by the classification of World Health Organization, using the WHO growth reference data of 2007. The present study revealed that 16.14 percent non-tribal and 15.64 percent tribal children were stunted. The overall prevalence of thinness was 11.29 percent for non-tribal and 3.70 percent for tribal, while 0.71 percent non-tribal and 1.85 percent tribal girls were overweight. Chakma tribal girls have greater percentage of fat mass than the non-tribal Bengali girls in the order of 2.13 percent and 2.08 percent respectively which is found to be statistically significant. This study revealed that both underweight and overweight coexisted among the tribal and non-tribal girls of Tripura, although the prevalence of overweight was not so high. Prevalence of undernutrition of the present study population may be attributed due to low socio-economic status, improper dietary intake, uneducated parents, gender discrimination and large family size etc.