

Determinants of Child Undernutrition: An Investigative Study in West Bengal and Odisha

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The stellar performance of the Indian economy has ushered in new opportunities for the country. There has also been a substantial reduction in poverty in recent years. All these achievements however have not been able to bring about the much-needed development of the children in the country. The child development indicators, i.e., the state of undernutrition and malnutrition remain worrisome for the country. The declining poverty rates and the disassociation between child developments seems a little surprising. The objective of this paper is to see if there is any link between the anthropometric indicators as measured by stunting rates and poverty ratios or the reason why declining child development indicators are to be found elsewhere. The paper uses the OLS regression on the available data from NFHS and NSSO. The result does point towards the suggestive association between poverty reduction and child development, but it also hints towards other variables playing a major role in the process. The policy application for such a study can be huge considering the debate that exists in the mainstream today.

I Introduction

A key empirical question in development economics is to find out whether there is an intimate relationship between poverty and undernutrition. This question is more pertinent for developing countries as they struggle to manage adequate food with low income (Ray 1998). Recent research has shown that the effects can however, run both ways, i.e., people may have low income and thus remain undernourished or undernourishment leads to low income potential (Black, Walker, Fernald, Anderson (2008), Dasgupta and Ray (1986), Corsi, Mejía-Guevara, and Subramanian (2016)). Whatever may be the causal direction, poor nutritional standards as reflected by anthropometry measures have known to influence human capital formation and thus GDP in the long run (Galasso and Wagstaff 2017). Interestingly most of the developing countries in the world have

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The authors would like to acknowledge the comments received from Prof Debasish Mondal Professor Vidyasagar University on the draft of the article.