

# STATUS OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE STATES OF BIHAR AND JHARKHAND

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*Women and child development are the important and crucial indicators of any nation to determine the reality of the economic growth. The condition of a nation is well reflected by looking at the status of its women and children. The country or a state government, in which higher attention has been paid towards women and child development, has become more developed than others. The paper aims to study the status of women and child development among the two poor performing states of India and provides a comparative structure to determine the status of women and child development on the basis of selected indicators.*

**Keywords:** *Women and Child Development*

## INTRODUCTION

According to the Census 2011 data Women and children together constitute about 67.7% population of the country. Empowerment and safeguarding of women and children, and ensuring their decent development are essential for sustainable and equitable development of the country. "Empowered women living with dignity and contributing as equal partners in development in an environment free from violence and discrimination and, well nurtured children with full opportunities for growth and development in a safe and protective environment,"<sup>1</sup> is the vision of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India. Promoting socio- economic empowerment of women through major policies and programmes, mainstreaming gender concerns in economics growth strategies, creating awareness to get their rights and legislative support along with appropriate development, care and protection of children by different policies and programmes are the key objectives of the government of India and all the states governments. Considering the importance of women & child development the government of India has created a separate ministry (Ministry of Women & Child Development) with effect from 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2006; earlier it was a Department under the Ministry of Human Resources Development, since 1985. The main objective for the creation of the new ministry was to fill the exiting gaps among different states related to women & child development and promoting inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral convergence.

At center level the government of India is undertaking the different programmes for women and child development under four sections – Mission POSHAN 2.0, Mission SHAKTI, Mission Vatsalya and Other Schemes. (See table- 1)

On going schemes for women and child development by central government of India are-

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**Table-1: Major Central Government Programmes for Women and Child Development**

<b>Mission POSHAN 2.0</b>	<b>Anganwadi Services, Schemes for Adolescent Girls, Poshan Abhiyan.</b>
Mission Shakti	Beti Bacho Beti Padho, One Stop Centre, Women Helpline, UJJAWALA, SWADHAR Greh, Working Women Hostel, National Creche Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, NIRBHAYA, NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR, Mahila Police Volunteers, Mahila Shakti Kendra.
Mission Vatsalya	Child Protection Scheme.
Other Schemes	Internship Scheme, Rashtriya Bal Kosh, CENEUS, Gender Budgeting, Kishori Shakti Yojana, General Grant-in-aid (GIA) Scheme for Assistance to Voluntary Organisations in the field of Women and Child Development, General Grant-in-Aid Scheme for innovative projects Family Counseling Centre Scheme General Grant-in-Aid Scheme in the field of Women and Child Development.

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Women & Child Development

Many studies have been conducted to analyze the status of women & child development in India as well as in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand. Some of the studies related to the selected indicators and states are-

Morla (2021) the article analyzed sector-level analysis and evaluation of schemes for women and child development in India and found that there should be coordination between various ministries working for child and women protection in India. On the basis of the sectoral evaluation he has recommended to the rationalisation of schemes to strategically unlock the growth potential of the women and child development (WCD) sector.<sup>2</sup>

Nayak & Saxena (2006) in their article they have found that the ineffective utilization of available finances sanctioned by the government of India to the states results in the denial of the ICDS scheme to vast numbers of children, women and adolescent girls. They have also highlighted that there is lack of concern of the state governments of Bihar and Jharkhand towards the proper implementation of the scheme.<sup>3</sup>

UNICEF (2021) Jharkhand faces several challenges in terms of political instability, volatile socio-political environment and several systemic issues for achieving social, human and economic development goals. Almost every second child in Jharkhand is stunted (low height for age), and three out of ten children are wasted (low weight for height). In terms of numbers, approximately two million children below age five are stunted in the State, which is the highest proportion of stunting in India next only to Bihar.<sup>4</sup>

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) (2021) according to the report, the state of Jharkhand has shown an enhancement in terms of all indicators of nutrition from the year 2006 to 2016, and then further in 2018 except in case of wasting, the state still holds lower than the national average across all indicators except exclusive breastfeeding. As per NFHS-4 (2015-16), Jharkhand has the third highest rate of prevalence of stunting in India, while it has the maximum rate of prevalence for wasting and underweight in the nation. The prevalence of anaemia both in children and in women of reproductive age is also very high and rate of reduction is showing low intensity.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the above studies, Banerjee, C. (2017), Nutrition in Jharkhand - A new beginning; UNICEF India (2015), Jharkhand Nutrition Mission; Agnihotri Satish & Aparajita Patra (2019), An analysis of district level malnutrition data for Jharkhand; Sengupta K. 2016, Determinants of Health Status in India, have also examined the status of women and child development at national level as well as in the state of Bihar & Jharkhand.

## METHOD

The study is based upon the secondary data. The data have been collected from the report of National Family Health Survey 4 & 5 and have been classified in to six selected sections viz., Population and Household Profile, Marriage and Fertility, Infant and Child Mortality Rates, Nutritional Status of Children, Nutritional Status of Women, and Anaemia among Children and Women. These sections have further been divided in to selected respective indicators of National Family Health Survey 4 & 5. The POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLD PROFILE

An attempt has been made to highlight the population and household profile of the selected states and of national average before analyzing the NFSH data related to women and child development. Population and Household Profile includes- Percentage of female population (6 years) who ever have attended the school, Sex Ratio, Health Insurance Services, Scenario of Women Literacy Rate, Percentage of Women with 10 or more years of schooling.

**Table-2 : Population and Household Profile**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Female population age 6 years and above who ever attended school (%)	61.1	64.5	56.9	61.1	68.8	71.8
Sex ratio of the total population (females per 1,000 males)	1002	1050	1062	1090	991	1020
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/ financing scheme (%)	13.3	50.3	12.3	14.6	28.7	41.0
Women who are literate (15-49 Years)	NA	61.7	NA	55	NA	71.5
Women with 10 or more years of schooling (%)	28.7	33.2	22.8	28.8	35.7	41.0

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

**Table-2.1: Trends from NFSH-4 to NFSH-5 (%)**

Indicators	Jharkhand	Bihar	India
Female population age 6 years and above who ever attended school (%)	5.56	7.38	4.36
Sex ratio of the total population (females per 1,000 males)	4.79	2.63	2.96
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme (%)	218.19	96.57	42.85
Women with 10 or more years of schooling (%)	15.67	23.31	14.84

Source: Calculated from Table- 2

Table- 2 and Table- 2.1 show the demographic and household's profile of Bihar and Jharkhand with the comparison of national average. It is clear from the table that in terms of female population who ever have attended the school the state of Jharkhand is showing better status with 64.5 % in comparison to Bihar and is lagging behind the national average of 71.8% as per the data of NFSH 5. Sex ratio in both states have improved over the years of 2015-16 to 2019-20, state of Bihar with 1090 females per thousand males is higher than the Jharkhand and national average. Women literacy between 15 to 49 years is low respectively 61.7% and 55.0% in Jharkhand and Bihar than the national average of 71.5%.

Health insurance in the state of Jharkhand is showing significant increase with 218.19% as compared to NFSH- 4 data. This achievement is directly linked with the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhanmantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) which aims to benefiting 50 crore beneficiaries, intends to reduce the high OOPE (out-of-pocket expenditure) and save families from high health expenses. The state utilized merely 41 per cent of the total health budget during 2019-20.<sup>6</sup> Percentage of women with ten or more years of schooling has increased with 23.31% in the state of Bihar which is higher than the increase of Jharkhand (15.67%) and national average of 14.84%.

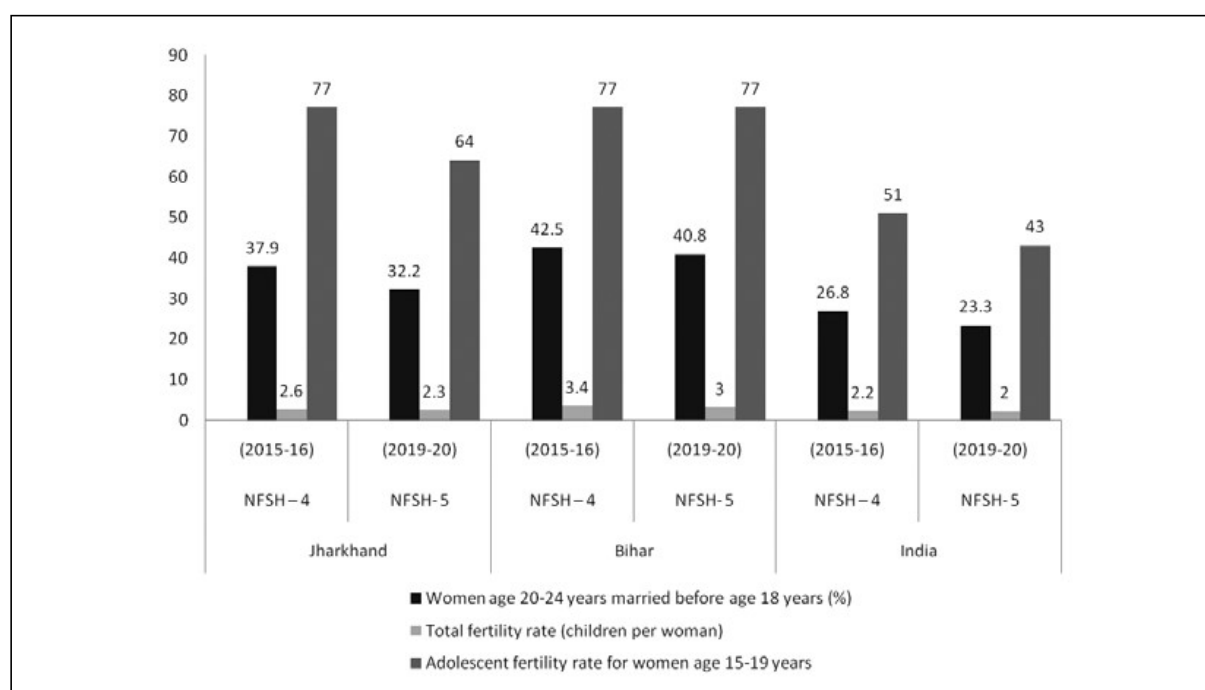
## MARRIAGE AND FERTILITY INDICATORS

Marriage and fertility are the major indicators of women development and high fertility is the major driver of population growth. After initiation major policies and programmes by the central and state governments reduction in the levels fertility rates have been reported. The timing of marriages and changing reproductive behaviour of women and men have also improved the socio-economic and labour force participation. The study includes three indicators under this section- (i) Percentage of women age 20-24 years married before 18 years, (ii) Total fertility rate and (iii) Adolescent fertility rate for women age 15-19 years.

**Table-: 3 Marriages and Fertility**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years (%)	37.9	32.2	42.5	40.8	26.8	23.3
Total fertility rate (children per woman)	2.6	2.3	3.4	3.0	2.2	2.0
Adolescent fertility rate for women age 15-19 years	77	64	77	77	51	43

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

**Figure – 1: Trends of Marriages and Fertility**

It is evident from the table- 3 and figure- 1 that the percentage of women years married before 18 years have been improved in both states the data which was reported 37.9% in 2015-16 has been declined to 32.2% (NFSH-5) in the case of Jharkhand, while the state of Bihar is still higher with 40.8% as per the national family health survey- 5 report. Both the states are lagging behind the national average of 23.3%. In case of TFR the performance of Jharkhand (2.3) is better than the Bihar and is just equal to national average of 2.0% in the year 2019-20.

The adolescent fertility rate is defined as the number of births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 19 years. As per the report of 'Population Reference Bureau' having children in early ages of 15 to 19 years

exposes adolescent women to high risks. Their chance of dying is twice as high as that of a woman who waited until the age of 20s. It is clear from the table that the adolescent fertility rate in both the states is still higher than the national average and representing slow improvement in case of Jharkhand and no change in Bihar (77%).

## CHILDREN AND MORTALITY RATES

In year 2015, a new global development agenda was set to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The proposed SDG target for child mortality aims to end, by 2030, preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 deaths per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>7</sup>

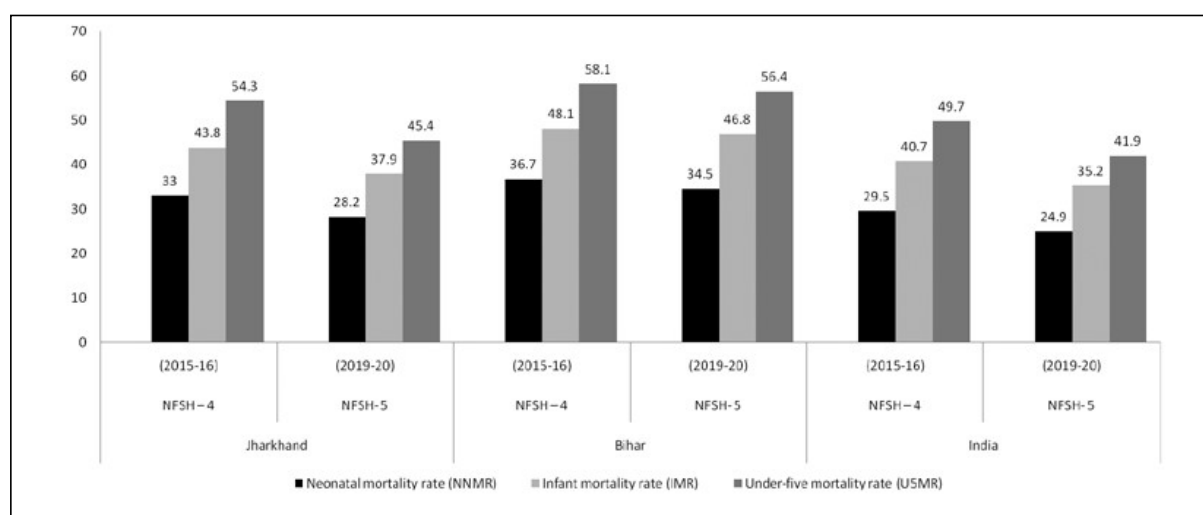
WHO has defined Neonatal mortality rate (NNMR) as number of deaths during the first 28 completed days of life per 1000 live births in a given year or other period; May be subdivided into early neonatal deaths, occurring during the first 7 days of life, and late neonatal deaths, occurring after the 7th day but before the 28th completed day of life.<sup>8</sup>

**Table-: 4 Infant and Child Mortality Rates (per 1,000 live births)**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Neonatal mortality rate (NNMR)	33.0	28.2	36.7	34.5	29.5	24.9
Infant mortality rate (IMR)	43.8	37.9	48.1	46.8	40.7	35.2
Under-five mortality rate (U5MR)	54.3	45.4	58.1	56.4	49.7	41.9

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

**Figure – 2: Trends of Child Mortality**



Source: Table- 4

**Table-: 4.1 Trends of Child Mortality (NFSH – 4 to NFSH -5)**

Indicators	Jharkhand	Bihar	India
Neonatal mortality rate (NNMR)	-14.54	-5.99	-15.59
Infant mortality rate (IMR)	-13.47	-2.70	-13.51
Under-five mortality rate (U5MR)	-16.39	-2.92	-15.69

Source: Calculated from Table-: 4

It is clear from the Figure -2 and table 4.1 that the demographic indicators- NNMR, IMR, U5MR of India has improved over the years especially, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per 1000 live birth has fallen from 40.7 to 35.2 during 2015-16 to 2019-2021 and is expected to reduce to 24 in the state by 2031-35. Similarly, the Under-5 mortality rate (U5MR) per 1000 live births has reduced from 49.7 to 41.9. However, in the state of Bihar U5MR are still higher 56.4 than the national average and the data of Jharkhand. Table 4.1 also reveals that there are improvements in all three selected indicators of child mortality in Jharkhand in comparison to Bihar, but as far as SDGs are concerned it will be quite difficult to achieve the targets related to child mortality by the year 2030.

## NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN

Malnutrition among children can be indentified in terms of these indicators- stunting, wasting, underweight and overweight as per the NFSH data. According Economic Survey (2020-21) of Jharkhand, among the children aged 0-5 years, 10.9 % children are stunted, wasted as well as underweight; 22.4 % children are stunted and underweight and 11.1% children are wasted and underweight. These numbers are relatively high in comparison to the national average. Jharkhand (10.9 %) has the highest prevalence of the multiple burden of malnutrition (under five children who are stunted, wasted and underweight); followed by Madhya Pradesh (8.5 %) and Bihar (8.1 %).<sup>9</sup>

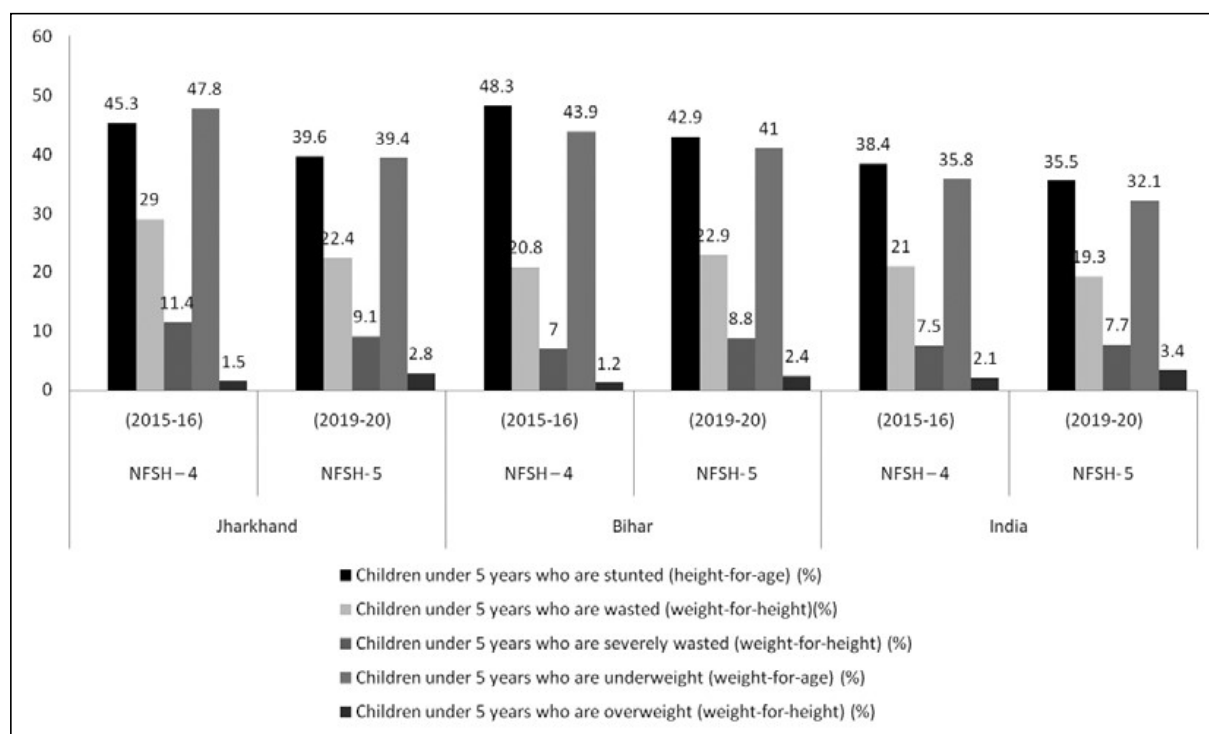
The present study analyzes the five indicators,- (i) Children under 5 years who are stunted, (ii) Children under 5 years who are wasted, (iii) Children under 5 years who are severely wasted, (iv) Children under 5 years who are underweight and (v) Children under 5 years who are overweight, of National Family Health Survey data. (Table- 5)

Table – 5 represents the nutritional status of children under five categories. As per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare data 39.6% under 5 years children were reported as stunted in the state of Jharkhand while 42.9 % children lives in Bihar. The status of Jharkhand is little improved in comparison to the state of Bihar but both sates are lagging behind to the national average of 35.5% in the year of 2019-20. Number of wasted children I the selected sates just equal in Jharkhand with 22.4% and in Bihar 22.9%, while the nation average stood at 19.3%. The percentage of Children under 5 years who are severely wasted reported higher in Jharkhand with 11.4 % and 9.1% for NFSH- 4 & 5 on the other hand percentage of Bihar is just near to the national average of 7.0%. Under weight children is a major problem of the country because of the many efforts taken by the both the center and state levels 32.1 % children under five years are still underweight and for the sates of Jharkhand and Bihar the percentage of underweight children are 39.4% and 41.0%. Overweight children contribute very less proportion of the population among less than 5 years children. On an average approx 2.2% children are overweight in the selected states. (Figure- 3)

**Table-: 5 Nutritional Status of Children**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Children under 5 years who are stunted (height-for-age) (%)	45.3	39.6	48.3	42.9	38.4	35.5
Children under 5 years who are wasted (weight-for-height)(%)	29	22.4	20.8	22.9	21.0	19.3
Children under 5 years who are severely wasted (weight-for-height) (%)	11.4	9.1	7.0	8.8	7.5	7.7
Children under 5 years who are underweight (weight-for-age) (%)	47.8	39.4	43.9	41.0	35.8	32.1
Children under 5 years who are overweight (weight-for-height) (%)	1.5	2.8	1.2	2.4	2.1	3.4

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

**Figure – 3: Nutritional Status of Children**



## NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN

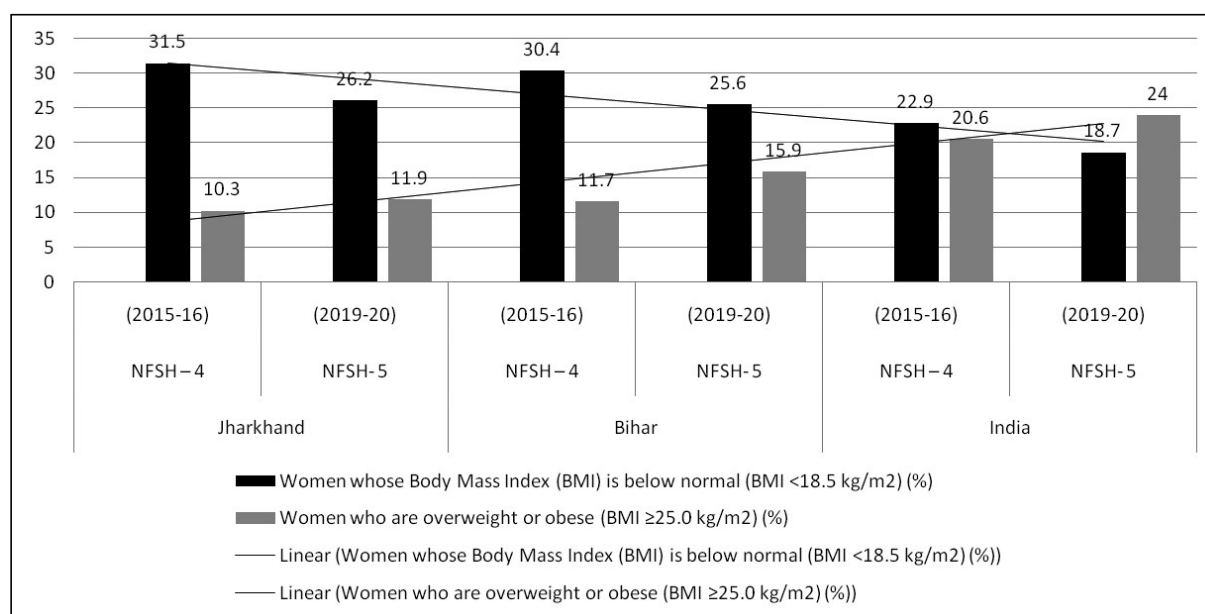
Under this section of the paper two indicators - Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) and Women who are overweight or obese (BMI ≥25.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) have been chosen to analyze the current status of Body Mass Index in the corresponding states and the national average. As far as malnutrition is concerned underweight and overweight both are problematic for the physical and mental development.

**Table-: 6 Nutritional Status of Women (age 15-49 years)**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Women whose Body Mass Index (BMI) is below normal (BMI <18.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) (%)	31.5	26.2	30.4	25.6	22.9	18.7
Women who are overweight or obese (BMI ≥25.0 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ) (%)	10.3	11.9	11.7	15.9	20.6	24.0
% change over the years (2015-16 to 2019-20)						
BMI <18.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	-16.82		-15.78		-18.34	
BMI ≥25.0 kg/m <sup>2</sup>	15.33		38.26		16.50	

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

**Figure – 4: BMI Based Nutritional Status of Women**



Source: Table- 6

It is remarkable from the table- 6 & Figure- 4 that positive results have been achieved at all levels in terms of below normal weight. Decrease of 16.80%, 15.78% and 18.34% have reported respectively in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar and at national average in comparison to NFSH-4 and NFSH-5 data. A problem, which is notable from the figure- 4 that the trend line of women who are overweight is increasing at all levels over the corresponding years, is a matter of concern for the country.

## PREVALENCE OF ANAEMIA AMONG CHILDREN AND WOMEN

According to the NFHS- 5 the prevalence of anaemia in children and women across most states and Union territories is still persisting. The paper analyses three indicators – (i) Percentage of Children (6-59 months) who are anaemic, (ii) Percentage of Non-pregnant women (15-49 years) who are anaemic, (iii) Percentage of Pregnant women (15-49 years) who are anaemic & (iv) Percentage of All women (15-49 years) who are anaemic.

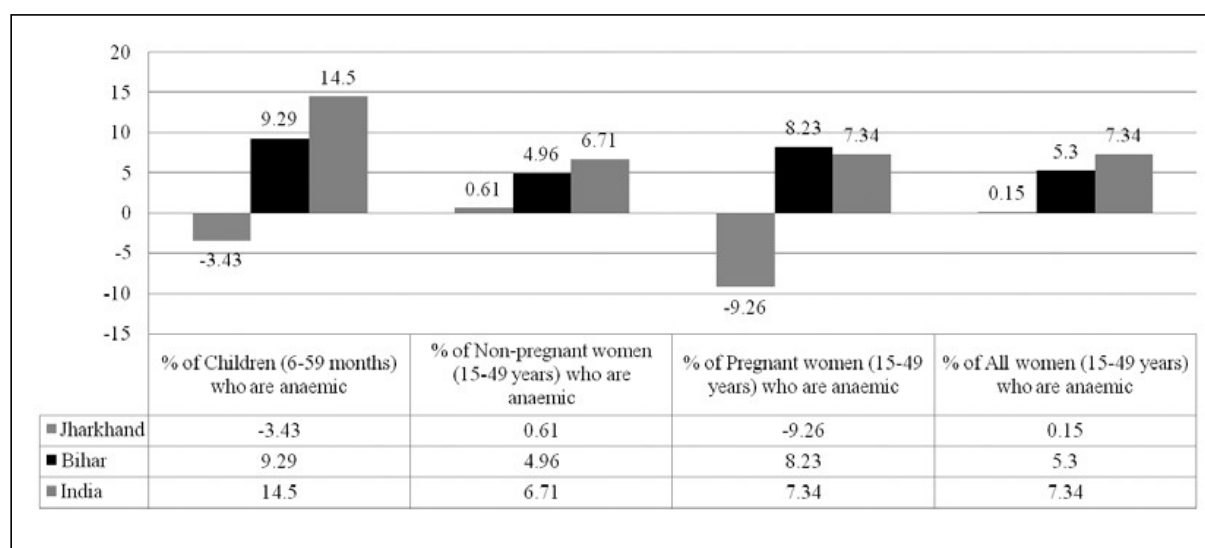
Table- 7 highlights the trends of the prevalence of anaemia in Jharkhand and Bihar with a comparison with national average. It's a very alarming situation for the country that in all the selected parameters and areas the prevalence of anaemia is still high with an average of 60% women and children are anaemic. 67.5% children are at high risk in Jharkhand while 69.4% children under 6 to 59 months are in severe conditions; as for as national average is associated 67.1% children under the same group are anaemic. Pregnant and Non-Pregnant women in the age group of 15-49 years are anaemic with 65.7% in Jharkhand and 63.6% in Bihar.

**Table-: 7 Anaemia among Children and Women**

Indicators	Jharkhand		Bihar		India	
	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)	NFSH – 4 (2015-16)	NFSH- 5 (2019-20)
Children age 6-59 months who are anaemic (<11.0 g/dl) (%)	69.9	67.5	63.5	69.4	58.6	67.1
Non-pregnant women age 15-49 years who are anaemic (<12.0 g/dl) (%)	65.3	65.7	60.4	63.6	53.6	57.2
Pregnant women age 15-49 years who are anaemic (<11.0 g/dl) (%)	62.6	56.8	58.3	63.1	53.1	57.0
All women age 15-49 years who are anaemic (%)	65.2	65.3	60.3	63.5	53.1	57.0

Source: NFSH 4 & 5, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India

Figure- 5: Anaemia among Children and Women (% change from NFSH-4 to 5)



Source: Calculated from Table-: 7

From the analysis of the table -7, Figure- 5 presents the trends of selected indicators of the prevalence of anaemia among children and women in India. Only the state of Jharkhand is showing improvement in the status of Children (6-59 months) with decrease of 3.43% and among the pregnant women between 15- 49 years with -9.26 percent. In case of Bihar all four selected parameters are presenting increasing trends during the years 2015-16 to 2019-20; highest increase is calculated among the children between 06 to 9 months with the enhancement of 9.29 percent. NFSH-5 data shows that at national level 67.1% children are anaemic and it is 14.5% more than the data of NFSH- 4.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the study and analysis of the NFSH-4 & 5 data it is found that after the implementation of different policies and programmes the status of women and children have improved in the case of some selected indicators. The state of Jharkhand holds better position than the state of Bihar in terms of Female Population Attending School, Women Literacy Rate, Women with 10 or more Years of Schooling, Households covered under Health Insurance, TFR, NNMR, IMR, U5MR, BMI, Nutritional status of children and Prevalence of Anaemia among Children & Women. As far as national average and the status of best performing states (SDG India – Index and Dashboard 2020-21)<sup>10</sup> is concern both the states are lagging behind. There is a need of strong state government commitments towards the proper implementation Central and State governments programmes and schemes at grass root levels and to create awareness among beneficiaries.

## NOTES

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