

**EARLY CHILDHOOD MORTALITY IN SOUTH INDIAN STATES:
A STUDY OF LEVELS, DIFFERENTIALS, TRENDS AND CHANGE FROM NFHS AND SRS**

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Abstract

Mortality is one of the three major components of population change, the remaining two being fertility and migration. It becomes important to study the mortality levels among various socio-economic and demographic segments of population. Early childhood mortality indicates the adverse situation of maternal and child health. The global mortality situation reveals that the developing countries have higher levels of mortality compared to developed ones, and in India, the situation of south Indian states seem to be better than the other parts of the country. This study intends to examine the levels, differentials, trends and change of early childhood mortality, i.e., neonatal mortality, post-neonatal mortality, infant mortality, child mortality in south Indian states namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu comparing the national averages by using the data from National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and Sample Registration System (SRS) (1992-93, 1998-99 and 2005-06). The data reveals that the state Kerala seems to be having lowest level of neonatal, post-neonatal, infant and child mortality rates followed by Tamil Nadu. All the four south Indian states fall below the national average, and Kerala and Tamil Nadu lie below the south Indian average with regard to these rates. It is found that these early childhood mortality rates seem to be higher among the mothers residing at rural areas, belonging to Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists, scheduled caste group, whose level of education and values of family wealth index are low, whose age is below 20 years, who have higher birth order, whose birth interval is low and who delivered very small size births and among female children, portraying higher the socio-economic and demographic desirable status and lower the early childhood mortality. Mostly all the four early childhood mortality rates during these periods of NFHS and SRS show a declining trend. The states Kerala and Tamil Nadu visualise mostly higher percentage of change in all the four early childhood mortality rates. All the four states in all these rates stand above the national average, and Kerala and Tamil Nadu stand above the south Indian average.