

## Prevalence and Determinants of Hypertension among the Santal Indigenous Group in Bangladesh

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**Abstract :** Santals are one of the oldest indigenous groups of South Asia who, according to anthropological evidence, are thought to be the origins of the Bengali race. The aim of the study was to explore, according to our best knowledge for the first time, the prevalence and determinants of hypertension in this relatively isolated and marginalized indigenous group who still live mostly in a traditional style. Under a cross-sectional analytical design, the study was conducted on the adult (age $\geq$ 18 years) Santals (n=389, M/F 184/205, age in years,  $38\pm 15.3$ ) of a village located in a remote rural area of northern Bangladesh. Subjects were selected by purposive sampling, and data were collected by interviewer-administered pretested questionnaire. Blood pressure was measured by following the WHO guideline of JNC-7 has been used to classify the blood pressure. The prevalence of hypertension was 4.9% among the respondents. Females had a much higher prevalence (5.4%) of hypertension compared to males (4.3%). Among the risk indicators of hypertension, more than half (50.9%) of the study population took extra salt in their meals, whereas 10.5% of respondents used extra salt occasionally, which is an important risk factor for high blood pressure. High waist circumference was found in 19% of the study subjects in terms of central obesity. Older age group (p=0.003, OR=1.1, 95%CI-1.02-1.10), respondents who completed more than primary school (p=0.038, OR=7.1, CI-1.11, 44.6), overweight and obesity (p=0.004, OR=17.1, CI-2.5, 118.1), were the major determinant for hypertension as found from the binary logistic model. None of the respondents received any medication, neither they visit any doctor ever for their hypertension control. The prevalence of hypertension was found to be low but not ignorable. Pre-hypertension in the case of systolic blood pressure needs attention among Santal indigenous population.

**Keywords :** hypertension, indigenous group, Santals, Bangladesh

**Conference Title :** ICPHDA 2023 : International Conference on Public Health in the Digital Age

**Conference Location :** Zurich, Switzerland

**Conference Dates :** January 16-17, 2023