

Association of socio-economic variables with nutritional status of pre-school children

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to assess the relationship between socio-economic variables and nutritional status of pre-school children of Beldour block of Khagaria district of Bihar state. A village named Pansalwa was purposively selected and there from a sample of 100 pre-school children (1 to 6 years) was selected at random. Test of associations like correlation and Chi-square were used to examine interrelationships. Weight profile of the children were highly correlated with parental literacy and occupational status at 1 per cent level of significance ($r=0.36$ and 0.314). Weight for age status of the children was found to be positively associated with their fat and sugar intake as well as with nutrients like energy, protein and calcium intake, too. Statistical analyses of the data showed a highly significant association between washing of mother's hands before feeding the child and prevalence of diarrhoea among children. Analyses of the findings based on Gomez classification depicted a highly significant association between the age of the child and prevalence of moderate malnutrition among children (Chi-square value = 6.0). Conclusively, it might be stated that analyses of the findings clearly demonstrate the interrelationships between identified socio-economic variables and nutritional status of pre-school children.

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Increasingly it is being felt that good or bad nutriture is the final outcome of interplay of the host of factors, not necessarily related to the availability of foods alone.

An individual's nutriture is determined by a number of factors acting directly or indirectly. These include food availability, purchasing power of the people, distribution of income, food consumption pattern, intra-family food distribution, level of nutritional knowledge, levels of employment, illiteracy and ignorance. Besides, factors like susceptibility to disease, particularly diseases of the digestive system and to infestations as a result of unsafe drinking water, poor sanitation and unhygienic living conditions are equally important determinants, contributing to what is called 'nutrition knowledge' (Ali, 1992).

The beginning of malnutrition, which starts around 5 to 6 months of age, reaches its peak around 2 years and then more or less stays at that level. In the National Family Health Survey, this pattern has been found in every state of India, only the extent varies. This is surely not due to paucity of resources, because the additional requirements of the young child are very little, but due to a lack of knowledge and awareness about the child's food and nutrition requirements. A lack of only 200 to 300 Kcal in a young child's daily diet starts the descent towards malnutrition, illness and death (Ghosh, 1997).

In the present context an attempt has been made to

identify crucial socio-economic variables, which have a profound effect on the child's health and nutritional profile. The present study has been carried out with keeping in view the following objectives to find out correlation between socio-economic variables and weight profile of the pre-school children, to analyze association between food and nutrient intake and weight profile of children, to find out association between mother's washing hands before feeding the child and diarrhoea among children and to analyze association between the age of the child and prevalence of malnutrition among the pre-school children.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in a village named Pansalwa under Beldour block of Khagaria district of Bihar, which was purposively selected as a locale of the present study. A sample of 100 pre-school children was selected at random from the selected locale. An interview schedule was designed to elicit information regarding socio-economic profile of children as well as their weight measurements were also recorded. 24- Hour recall method of dietary survey was used to assess the food and nutrient intake of children through habitual diet.

Statistical analyses namely, test of associations' viz., correlation and chi-square were used to examine