

Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on the Nutritional Status of Elementary School's Children in Rural Areas of Karachi (Pakistan)

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ABSTRACT

This article determines children's nutritional status of (1-5) years in a rural setting in Karachi, i.e., Gadap. It also analyzes the impact of socioeconomic factors on nutritional status of children. Nutrition has a deep influence on well-being all the way through the individuals' lives, which is connected inextricably with their social as well as psychological development, especially in earlier childhood. In environments with inadequate social and material resources, they are unable to attain their optimal development. The higher level of fatalities as a consequence of malnutrition is undesirable. The present article examines whether the rural area's parents exhibit a positive and favorable attitude towards their children's nutritional status as a result of increasing awareness regarding nutritional foods through endeavors and macro level initiatives.

KEYWORDS

Children, Nutritional Status, Pakistan, Quantitative, Social Development, Socioeconomic Factors

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Food Programme Report 2017 - Fill the Nutrient Gap - Pakistan, the effects of malnutrition are globally recognized as being devastating and far reaching. Malnutrition is widespread across Pakistan. Forty four percent of children under 5 are stunted and unlikely to reach their full mental and physical potential.

In Pakistan, during the last 20 years, irrespective of an escalation in per capita food accessibility as well as a subsequent increase in per capita calorie coupled with protein consumption, the conditions encompassing malnutrition have not improved. Pakistan is on a dangerous downward trajectory with nearly 44 percent of children stunted (Bhutta, 2017).

Nutritional status could be dependent upon numerous aspects, a few of these aspects might be modified by nutrition education. Nevertheless, a couple of essential as well as fundamental reasons behind malnutrition simply cannot be altered exclusively by it, because these require more substantial interventions of socioeconomic nature. Nutrition education can improve nutritional knowledge as well as individuals' practices, thus enhancing the nutritional status (Murray & Callahan, 2003).

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Nutritional status of the children has been a major problem since few decades. Every community faces various serious problems like sanitation facilities, lack of awareness regarding health, lack of access to safe drinking water as well as an improper system for solid waste disposal. Contaminated habitat amplifies the possibility to suffer from water pollution as well as contagious water borne diseases, like diarrhea, malaria, hepatitis, influenza, dysentery as well as respiratory infections (Fayyaz, 2016).

In Gadap, the villages are facing nutritional problems for many years. They must fetch water from far away wells and water borings. Parents have no idea about their child's daily diet, physical activity and health. They prefer self-medicine during the illness of their children and it is very harmful for any child to take medicine without proper diagnosis (Kaleem et al., 2014).

For pre-school and post-school children it thus becomes necessary to maintain their health. Lack of education of the parents has such negative impact on their children's health. They do not think about their children's education and even don't have sufficient awareness regarding their health. This leads to illness and various diseases. Socioeconomic aspects also influence on children's nutritional status (Tariq, 2018). Income is one of the major problems of the parents in the treatment of their loving children. In developing countries like Pakistan, micronutrient malnutrition, like iron deficiency and vitamin A and is a big health issue.

Basic Causes of Malnutrition in Children

It includes control of organizational, human, political, economic, as well as ideological superstructure. Belief, tradition, religion, and culture play a vital role in children's caring and feeding patterns, which affects their nutritional status.

Women have less influence within the household, thus, it leads toward an unfair distribution of food within their household. Limited access to modern irrigating infrastructure, limited access to credit, limited knowledge about techniques of modern farming, poor roads and storage facilities, lack of rural infrastructure, leads to lack of investment and low food productivity.

1. Malnutrition (Health, Economic, and Social issue)

Anemia hampers daily activities in a woman's life, multiple pregnancies can make it even worse. Low levels of maternal hemoglobin are associated with preterm delivery, low birthweight babies, increased risk of abortion, as well as deaths. Anemia occurs when the red blood cells level becomes less in the body. It causes various health impediments as RBCs possess hemoglobin molecules. It holds as well as passes oxygen to tissues and different body organs. Low RBC level causes mental confusion, fatigue, strain on body organs, as well as weakness. The reasons behind it are production of less RBCs due to disorders, heavy blood loss as well as lack of dietary iron (National Women's Health Information Center, 2006).

Mothers are mostly malnourished, and it starts from the womb of their mothers. Different studies have shown the significance of maternity and nutrition status in preventing low birth weight as well as pre-term babies (Feresu et al., 2004).

According to Prakash V. Kotecha (2011) health of a fetus is directly linked with mothers' health as well as nutrition during pregnancy. Mothers who smoke during their pregnancy may cause mental retardation of the newborn.

2. Communicable Diseases (Health and Social issue)

These are infectious diseases which transfer from one person to another. Major communicable diseases in Pakistan are:

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