

## Engendering epidemiology of malnutrition among preschool children in rural Bangalore, India

**Introduction:** Social inequality between the genders often results in inequality in their nutritional status. This may begin from the time of conception and continue till death. This study is an attempt to understand the epidemiological factors leading to malnutrition among preschool children from the gender perspective in rural area in India.

**Methodology:** The data regarding prevalence of malnutrition was obtained from the records of Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka. Each of these families having malnourished child was visited and an interviewer administered, pre-tested questionnaire was used for collecting the data. Nelamangala taluk of Bangalore Rural District was selected to know whether the geographical proximity of technologically advanced city, Bangalore has influenced the epidemiological factors of malnutrition. Data was collected in July-August 2016.

**Results:** According to the official data of Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Karnataka, there were 34 grade III and IV malnourished preschool children in the taluk. Out of these 34 children, only 30 could be contacted. Out of 30 malnourished children, 10 were males and 20 were females. So the number of female malnourished children was double than that of male children. 7 male children and 11 female children belonged to nuclear families and 3 male children and 9 female children belonged to joint family. So, majority of malnourished male children belonged to nuclear families and in case of female children, nearly half of them belonged to nuclear families. Physical activity and sleep pattern of all male children was found to be normal whereas in case of females 4 children were physically inactive and one female child had abnormal sleep pattern. Age till which the children were continued to breast feed ranged from 6 months to 4.8 years in case of males and 1 month to 2.4 years in case of females. Mothers of 5 male children were malnourished and 5 others were normal whereas in case of female children 7 mothers were malnourished and 13 were normal. Only one male child had significant incident of infection whereas in case of females two children suffered from some significant incident of infection. Majority of the malnourished children irrespective of the gender were given nutritious supplements. 6 malnourished male children and 12 female children received and regularly consumed the nutritious supplements given by the government. Personal grooming of the child was satisfactory in case of 7 out of 10 male children and 11 out of 20 female children. Hygiene of the house was not good in case of 5 out of 10 male children and 8 out of 20 female children. 7 mothers of male children and 6 mothers of female children did not have any awareness on malnutrition.

**Conclusion:** The number of malnourished children among females is double than that of males among the subjects studied. The gender differences in the epidemiological factors have been analysed. The study has to be carried out on a larger scale for a better understanding.

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