

Proportion and factors associated with undernutrition among 6 months to 12 months old children in Kalutara MOH area

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Background - Undernutrition is a major concern in Sri Lanka that can have a significant impact on children's growth and development. Key contributing factors include poverty, food insecurity, and the recent economic crisis.

Objective - To determine the proportion of undernutrition and its associated factors among 6 months to 12 months old children in Kalutara MOH area.

Methods - A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using cluster sampling. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was given to parents/guardians after consent. Data collection was involved the interviewer-administered questionnaire and Child Health Development Records (CHDR) for weight and height measurements. Associations were tested using Chi-square test (df=1), with $p < 0.05$ considered significant.

Results - The study included 220 children with a 100% response rate. The main focus was on underweight as part of undernutrition. The prevalence of being at risk of underweight was 20.4%, and underweight was 9.6%. Significant associations: maternal age during childbirth ($p=0.029$), smoking status of any one of the parents ($p = 0.021$), alcoholism of any one of the parents ($p = 0.017$), attending child nutrition awareness programs ($p = 0.010$), household position of the child ($p = 0.022$), having dietary supplements provided by the government ($p = 0.013$). No significance was found in sex, birth weight of the child and maternal educational level.

Conclusions - A considerable burden of undernutrition exists among 6 months to 12 months old children in Kalutara MOH area. Ensuring approach to necessary healthcare, clean water and sanitation, and improving nutrition education are recommended.

Key words - Undernutrition, Underweight