

Undernutrition Prevalence and Its Determinants among Children below Five Years of Age in a Pastoralist Community of Somali Region, Eastern Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Objectives/Research Problem: Malnutrition is a major public health problem among children below five years of age worldwide. More than half of under five child deaths are due to undernutrition, the majority is in the developing countries, including Ethiopia. This study aims to assess the prevalence and determinant factors of undernutrition among children below five years of age living in Somali region.

Materials and Method: A cross sectional study was conducted in August, 2014 among 415 caregivers-child pairs. Caregivers were asked about socio-demographic, and nutrition related questions and nutritional status of the child were assessed. Multistage sampling technique was implemented to select the participants, weighing scale and stadiometer measurements of children such as weight and height were taken by trained health professionals. Bivariate analysis using chi-square and t-test to identify candidate variable for multivariable analysis were done. Multiple linear regressions were used to determine the predictors for undernutrition.

Results and Discussion: Out of 415 children in the study, 30.4% were stunted, 21% underweight, and 20.2% wasted. Regarding the severity 17.3%, 9.9% and 8% were severely stunted, wasted, and underweight, respectively. As the age of the child increases, the prevalence of all types of malnutrition are significantly increased ($P<0.008$), where male babies ($P=0.016$) were chronically malnourished. Time to initiation of breastfeeding were inversely associated with stunting, children started breastfeeding within one hour after delivery were less wasted ($P<0.001$). Insecticide treated nets (ITNs) user are less stunted and less underweight ($P=0.010$ and $P=0.049$) respectively. The number of children below five years in the family, age of the child, and type residence were the main predictors of under nutrition.

Conclusion: Undernutrition was common in the study area. The main predictors of under nutrition were age, sex of the children, initiation of breastfeeding, and ITNs uses. Nutrition education programme focusing on awareness creation using behaviour change communication (BCC) strategy to the parents, elders, religious leaders, teachers, youths, and school children, and also refresher trainings and capacity building for the health professionals and health extension workers are necessary.

KEYWORDS: Malnutrition, Stunting, Wasting, Underweight, Undernutrition

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