



Evaluating the Efficacy of Malnutrition Interventions: Enhancing Mothers' Compliance and Assessing Impact

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ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes the importance of good nutrition, especially for children, as it directly affects their growth, development, and overall well-being. Malnutrition, a condition resulting from inadequate nutrition, can have profound effects on children's health and abilities. The research aims to contribute guidelines for promoting nutritional health and preventing malnutrition among children, with a particular focus on encouraging parents, especially mothers, to actively participate in their children's health management.

Using a descriptive-correlational research method, the study explores the relationship between mothers' compliance with malnutrition interventions and its impact. The findings reveal that mothers consistently comply with certain interventions, such as immunization, environmental sanitation, and breastfeeding. However, they show varying levels of compliance with other interventions like micronutrient supplementation and nutrition education.

Significant improvements in children's nutritional status were observed following mothers' compliance with malnutrition interventions, resulting in a reduction in the number of malnourished children. This study establishes a significant correlation between mothers' compliance with interventions and their impact on children's nutritional well-being.

In conclusion, this research underscores the significance of parental involvement in managing children's nutrition and highlights the positive impact of mothers' compliance with malnutrition interventions in preventing and addressing malnutrition. The findings can inform targeted interventions and programs to improve nutritional health outcomes for children, ultimately contributing to the reduction of malnutrition rates in the local community.

Keywords: malnutrition, nutrition, growth, development, well-being

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition plays a vital role in fostering a healthy lifestyle, particularly during childhood, where it directly influences all aspects of growth and development. Research by the World Bank on Early Child Development (2011) emphasizes that the first two years of life are critical, as they significantly impact children's health status, learning abilities, communication skills, cognitive development, socialization, and adaptability to new environments and people.

Malnutrition occurs when children do not receive adequate nutrition, leading to deficiencies, excesses, or imbalances in energy, protein, and other essential nutrients. Various factors contribute to malnutrition, including absent parents, lack of education and information about proper nutrition, failure to exclusively breastfeed from birth to six months, poor hygiene and sanitation, limited food availability and quality, prevailing social practices, and the presence of illnesses such as digestion problems, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections (Acevedo, 2006). Malnutrition compromises children's immunity, making them more susceptible to infections and increasing both mortality and morbidity rates.

Malnutrition is a significant contributor to diseases worldwide, accounting for a substantial portion of child mortality. The United Nations' Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) highlights its far-reaching consequences, present in approximately 45 percent of all child mortality cases. Underweight births and inter-uterine growth restrictions alone lead to around 2.2 million child deaths annually. Deficiencies in essential nutrients like vitamin A or zinc are responsible for 1 million deaths each year (WHO, 2014).

The nutritional status of children can be assessed through various modifiable factors, including food access, distribution within households, quantity and quality of food intake, and food expenditure. As primary caregivers, mothers play a pivotal role in managing these factors, significantly impacting the level of malnutrition experienced by their children (Ekanayake, Weerahewa, Ariyawardana, 2003).

In the Philippines, malnutrition remains a pressing concern, with the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (2011) reporting its prevalence in Filipino children. Failure to address malnutrition during the early years can lead to long-term consequences, such as delayed mental development, poor academic performance, and reduced intellectual capacity.

Studies by UNICEF demonstrate the correlation between maternal education and child nutrition. Children of mothers with primary education have a significantly lower risk of growth stunting due to malnutrition. Educated mothers are more likely to be aware of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for six months and the significance of providing a clean environment for their children to prevent diseases that exacerbate malnutrition (Nganda, 2014).

In Bohol, the management of child malnutrition has been a challenge, especially in the aftermath of the 2013 earthquake. A follow-up nutrition assessment revealed alarming rates of acute malnutrition, with the Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate reaching an emergency threshold level (Humanitarian Bulletin, 2014).

Based on the compelling circumstances and the researcher's background as a nurse, this study was initiated to address the high rates of undernourished children and prevent the escalation of malnutrition in the locality. The study aims to empower parents with proper knowledge and skills to effectively manage their children's health, with the hope of reducing undernutrition and improving the overall well-being of the community's children.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to provide guidelines for promoting nutritional health and preventing malnutrition in children, emphasizing active parental involvement, particularly by mothers. It also seeks to identify early detection measures for malnutrition and implement timely preventive interventions to safeguard the health of both expectant and nursing mothers and foster the birth of healthy children. The study aligns with principles of maternal and child health nursing, striving to create a nurturing environment characterized by love, security, and healthy surroundings. Through adequate nourishment, comprehensive health

supervision, and education on healthy living, the study aims to improve overall maternal and child health outcomes.

METHODS

The research methodology employed in this study is a descriptive-correlational approach, aimed at describing an existing condition and exploring the factors that influence this condition. By correlating the variables under study, the research seeks to measure the relationship between two or more variables and determine if one variable can predict another. However, it is essential to note that correlation does not imply causation. In other words, just because two events are correlated or related does not necessarily mean that one event causes the other. The study carefully examines the associations between the variables while acknowledging the need for further research to establish any causal relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed high levels of maternal compliance with specific interventions related to child nutrition. Mothers consistently complied with immunization intervention (2.93), environmental sanitation encompassing food, water, and housing (2.69), and breastfeeding (2.48). However, there were instances of partial compliance with micronutrient supplementation (2.31) and regular monitoring and attending nutrition education sessions (2.18).

Of note, two interventions showed relatively lower compliance levels among mothers: providing the child with food products bearing a "Sangkap Pinoy Seal" and attending Pabasa sa Nutrisyon sessions (lecture & counseling about nutrition), both of which were complied with only occasionally.

The impact of mothers' compliance with these interventions was evident through a significant improvement in the children's nutritional status. A notable reduction in the number of malnourished children was observed, decreasing from 55 to 33 after mothers' active participation in the malnutrition management interventions.

Importantly, this study established a meaningful correlation between mothers' compliance with malnutrition interventions and their positive impact on children's nutritional well-being. However, it is essential to recognize that correlation does not imply causation, and further research is warranted to establish any causal relationships between the variables under study.

Overall, the findings highlight the critical role of maternal compliance in the successful management of malnutrition and improving children's nutritional status. The study underscores the importance of targeted interventions and ongoing efforts to encourage mothers' active involvement in promoting their children's nutritional health, thus contributing to the reduction of malnutrition rates in the community.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that mothers' compliance with malnutrition interventions significantly reduced the number of malnourished children, supporting Nola Pender's theory that active participation improves health outcomes. Parental involvement, particularly by mothers, plays a crucial role in effectively managing malnutrition and promoting children's well-being. Targeted efforts should encourage and support mothers' active participation in their children's nutritional health to reduce malnutrition rates. Further research is needed to establish causation. These findings emphasize the importance of individual involvement in promoting health outcomes, guiding interventions for better nutritional health and overall well-being in the community.

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