

Factors Influencing Malnutrition among Under-Five Children in Karatu District, Tanzania

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Abstract

Malnutrition continues to be a major public health problem in developing countries. It is the most important risk factor for the burden of diseases among under-five in Tanzania. High malnutrition rates in the country pose a significant obstacle to achieving better child health outcomes. According to TDHS (2010) 42%, of under-five children were underweight, 17% stunted and 5% wasted respectively. A cross sectional study was conducted in Karatu district to determine factors influencing malnutrition among under-five children, using a structured questionnaire. Nutritional measurements of the children were taken through calculated three indices which are weight-for-age, height-for-age, and weight-for-height. A sample of 262 households and parent/ caretaker of the under-five children were interviewed through the questionnaires. The (SPSS) program was used in the whole process of data analysis. Two hundred and sixty-two respondents were visited and filled the questionnaire. The prevalence of malnutrition in Karatu was 85(32.4%) underweight while 47(17.9%) was stunted and 8(3.1%) wasted. The factors that found to be significantly associated with nutrition were birth interval ($p < 0.05$), type of family ($p < 0.05$), marital status ($p < 0.05$) and meals taken per day ($p < 0.05$). Factors which were not significantly associated with nutrition were source of food in the family ($p > 0.05$), duration of breastfeeding ($p > 0.05$), knowledge on balanced diet ($p > 0.05$), children immunization status ($p > 0.05$), education level of the parent ($p > 0.05$), family income ($p > 0.05$) and mothers health education ($p > 0.05$) It is concluded that mothers should be given health education on the importance of breastfeeding, immunization, and encouraged them to use the available food grown around their areas and different activities such agriculture in food and cash crops in order to reduce poverty.