

Research Paper :

Assessment of food consumption pattern and nutritional status of pre-school children

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ABSTRACT

The investigation was conducted to study the socio-economic profile and food consumption pattern of pre-school children of 3-5 years of age from rural areas of Yamunanagar district of Haryana State (India). Three hundred pre-school children were selected randomly. Information was collected on socio-economic profile, food frequency, mean daily food intake, nutrient intake and adequacy of food and nutrient intake of pre-school children. The data revealed that wheat, a staple food was consumed daily. Milk and milk products were found to be essential part of diet. The mean daily food and nutrient intake of preschool children were lower than RDA. Intake of cereals, green leafy vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products was found to be significantly higher ($P < 0.05$) in boys than girls. Intake of energy, iron, riboflavin and niacin was marginally inadequate in majority of preschool children. The adequacy of food and nutrient intake was also lower than the recommended values.

Key words : Food intake, Nutrient intake, Food adequacy, Nutrient adequacy.

Pre-school children form an important segment of population. This age is a dynamic period of physical growth and development along with mental, emotional and social changes. Since children play an important role in the development of nation, any investment for their development, therefore, is of national importance. Pre-school stage is the most critical period as it involves drastic changes among children and also because the foundation for life time health, strength and intellectual vitality is laid during this period. Pre-school age is one of the most vulnerable periods in the life of children due to easy susceptibility to malnutrition and infection (George *et al.*, 2000).

Preschoolers have very special nutritional needs because of their fast growth and development, which is dependent on the adequacy of diet consumed. Adequate food is the most important requisite for growth, while it is important throughout childhood, it is more crucial during first five years of life when rapid growth is occurring (Rana and Hussain, 2001). The stubborn persistence of child malnutrition in India is one of the tragedies of present time. One third of babies in India are born with low birth weight. This is heart breaking given the dramatic development in our agriculture, advances in literacy and great strides in economic growth (Das, 2002). The nutrition surveys conducted by the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (1994-96) and the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) in 12 states of the country indicated that rural population was consuming inadequate diets, deficient in

most of the nutrients. It was further indicated that there was widespread energy deficiency in rural households. About 60 per cent of the preschool children were underweight and 62 per cent were stunted and about 15 per cent of children of 1-5 years of age suffered from short duration malnutrition (Vijayraghavan and Rao, 1998). The problem of malnutrition was more common in rural areas as compared to urban areas and undernutrition was more severe among female children than male children. Dietary intake of preschool children continues to be affected by economic and social factors. Even caste differential in nutritional status among preschoolers in rural Haryana has been reported. The present investigation was conducted to study the socio-economic profile and food consumption pattern of pre-school children of 3-5 years of age from rural areas of Yamunanagar district of Haryana State (India).

METHODOLOGY

For the present investigation, Yamunanagar district of Haryana State was selected purposively .

Selection of blocks and villages:

List of villages of Yamunanagar district was obtained from the Block Development Officers. Two blocks *viz.* Chachhroli and Bilaspur were taken randomly. Four villages namely, Bakarwala, Tibbi-Aryana, Sandhey and Kotda, were selected randomly from these blocks.