Research Paper :

Impact of socio-economic factors on nutritional status of tribal pre-school children

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ABSTRACT

A study on three hundred pre-school children (one to six years old) belonging to '*paroja*' community of Koraput district, Orissa was undertaken to assess the prevalence of malnutrition. Information on socio-economic background of the children was collected and attempt was made to find out the possible influence of the socio-economic factors on the prevailing nutritional status. Nutritional anthropometric method was used for assessment of the nutritional status. Weight of the children was recorded with respect to their age and nutritional grading of the children was done by weight for age method of Indian Academy of Paediatrician using NCHS standard as reference. Sixty-nine per cent of the sampled children were observed to suffer from various degrees of malnutrition. Prevalence of malnutrition was more in the early ages and among the girl child. While increase in the parental education and family monthly income resulted in better nutritional status of the child; increase in the size of family was associated with the prevalence of malnutrition. Raising the economic standard of the population, educating the parents and creating awareness on the health and family care would help to improve the prevailing nutritional status in the community.

Key words : Malnutrition, Nutritional status, Pre-school children

Nutritional status is an important indicator for assessing the state of health of an individual as influenced by nutrient intake. The state of positive health implies the notion of perfect functioning of body and mind. This is an essential requirement at childhood, as the foundation of lifetime including health, strength and intellectual ability is laid at this stage.

Body measurements are simple but reliable and objective indices of nutritional status (Devdas *et al*., 1984). According to Walkhald (1972) nutritional anthropometry is one of the most important methods for assessment of growth and development, especially in the rapidly growing children.

Tribals are considered as one of the most backward fractions of the nation and are subjected to various levels of socio-economic exploitation. Particularly, tribal population of Orissa have been reported to lead a low standard of living (Reddy, 1986). They are forced to suffer from various forms of nutritional disorders resulting in malnutrition. Considering the ravaging effects of malnutrition, the present study was carried out to study on the nutritional status of pre-school children (1-6 yr.) of tribal community of Koraput district, one of the most backward districts of the country. Attempt was also made to assess the influence of different socio-economic factors on the prevailing nutritional status.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

Koraput district of Orissa, being one of the most backward districts of the country, was purposefully selected to study the prevailing nutritional status of one of the most backward tribal community 'the *paroja*'. Three heavily *paroja* dominated Community Development Blocks of the district namely, Koraput, Jeypore and Dasamantpur, were taken for the study and five villages from each block were selected at random. About one-third of the total tribal pre-school children (aged one to six years) available in these villages, totalling 300, formed the sample of the present study. Nutritional anthropometric methods was used for assessment of the nutritional status. Weight of the children was measured following the methods described by Jellife (1966) and recorded with respect to the age, sex and socio-economic background of the sample. The weight of the children was taken with the help of a modified steel yard to the nearest 100 gm. Age of the children was ascertained by the help of any documentary evidence, local calendar, harvesting season, important political occurrence, deciduous dental eruption or any such major event in the village. The socio-economic background of the family was