



## Malnutrition among pre-school children and the associated factors

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### ABSTRACT

The present investigation was conducted on the sample of 450 pre-school children of rural Haryana. A multi-staged random sampling techniques was adopted for collection of data. Data were collected with the help of self-prepared interview schedule by paying repeated visit to the study area. Mother of the children were the main respondent for gathering the information for the selected children. The study reported the significant association between the nutritional status of the subjects with their caste, mother's education, family occupation and family income, as the undernourishment was reported more from scheduled castes and amongst children whose mothers were illiterate, having parents with caste occupation and families who possessed income below the poverty line.

## INTRODUCTION

India contributes its 50 per cent of the child population toward under nourishment. Due to under nourishment, the development of 188 million children in the villages of India remain stunted from the moment of their birth (Budhiraja, 1999). National level data on child malnutrition in India have, however, been scarce. Recognizing this gap, India's National Family Health Survey collected anthropometric data on the height and weight of children below four years of age. As the survey is based on a large, nationally representative sample and therefore, offers a unique opportunity to study the level and determinants of child malnutrition in the country. The study indicated high levels of both chronic and acute malnutrition among Indian children. Fifty two per cent of all children below age four were stunted (as measured by weight for age) and 17 per cent were wasted (as measured by weight for height). Further it was stated that there was a considerable variation in the prevalence of malnutrition by state. Among the states, Bihar and Kerala had the highest and lowest prevalence of

malnutrition, respectively (Mishra *et al.*, 1999). Malnutrition during critical phases of early growth can lead not only to the stunting of physical growth, but also to sub-optimal intellectual development and poor neuro-integrative competence in children. Socio-economic factors associated with malnutrition among pre-school children revealed that children from parents with higher academic qualification had higher intake of nutrients than those from less educated parents (Bala, 1980). A higher educational attainment of the mother improves the productivity of household activities such as child care and choosing food. (Sahn, 1994). A study conducted by (Kumar and Sharda, 1996) showed that there was a positive impact of vegetable farming on the food and nutrient intake of vegetable growers. The children were examined for sign of deficiency and grouped in accordance to family income. The deficiency was apparent in 41 per cent of the children, the majority from the low income group. Deficiencies present were PEM, vitamin B complex, Ca and vitamin D. It is concluded that PEM was predominantly present among pre- school children and as family income increased the deficiencies among children decreased.