



Nutritional status among girl children in rural India: A case study of district Basti, Uttar Pradesh.

KEYWORDS

Basti, malnutrition, sex discrimination, poverty, female children.

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ABSTRACT

Child malnutrition is an enduring problem in India. The study was conducted to bring casual factors of malnutrition's in the district Basti U.P. The total 414 respondents were selected randomly for the purpose of this study. The researcher has taken interview by the structured questioner from the parents and children. The survey was conducted with the help of a structured questioner & personal observation. The data revealed that 62.9% of female children were taking under nutritious diet, while only 38.1% female children were taking nutritious diet. The major reasons behind the malnutrition and/or under nutrition among female children were lack of awareness (96.1%) and discrimination among male and female child (92.2%). Due to poverty 93.2% of girl children are not getting proper nutrition. The paper further discusses the policy implications to eradicate the malnutrition among the female children in district Basti.

Introduction

Malnutrition is widely recognized as a major health problem in developing countries (Anwar, Gupta, Prabha and Srivastava, 2013). It is a condition when a person is not able to get the right amount of nutrients, which lead to health problem. Everybody needs balanced diet, but special care needs to be taken for the diet of girl children. It is also a fact that healthy child turn to be a healthy adult. Adequate food is the prerequisite for growth and it is important throughout childhood. Malnutrition is India's silent emergency and among India's greatest human development challenges. Rate of malnutrition among India's children are almost five times more than in china and twice those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly half of all India's children- approximately 60 million are underweight, about 45% are stunted. (World Bank Report, 2013). According to another report, nearly 50% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 in India are underweight, with a body mass index of less than 18.5, and more than one quarter are underweight in 10 other countries, and where more than half of girls aged 15-19 are anaemic (UNICEF, 2012).

India is a country of villages and nearly 80% of the people live in them. The income level is low and near half the population live under the poverty line. Poverty is an important determining factor for buying enough food, the rampant malnutrition is not entirely due to impoverishment. There is widespread ignorance about the essentials of child care. (Ghosh, 1976). Malnutrition contributes to impaired motor, sensor, cognitive, social, mental development. Malnourished children are less and perform poorly in the school. (Ramachandran, 2008). The causes of child malnutrition are complete multidimensional and interrelated. Government of India has called for various steps time to time and accorded high priority to the malnutrition's problem. Government of India is implementing several programs and schemes through different ministries. The Integrated child Development service was launched in 1995 on the national level. It works for the early childhood care and development. It is one of the world's larger programs and more than 1340001 lakh anganwadi centers are operating. The department of integrated child Development services has focused on the 200 high malnutrition burden districts during 2012-13, 200 districts

during 2013-14 for the special category states and NER and much remaining districts in 2014-15. Mid day meal scheme was started in 1995 by the education ministry in India. As this scheme, launched with an objective to stop the children of school drop outs, it also helped to improve the nutrition's level of children by providing midday meal in schools for the children. Another "Sable Scheme" was initiated with the aim to improve the wellness and nutrition status of the young ladies. Under this scheme regular health checkup, referral services and health education programmes are also run. The information, education and communication campaign have raised awareness against malnutrition since 28th December 2012 and the National Food Security Act 2013 is a step to contributing household food security.

My study aims to bring casual factors of malnutrition's in the district Basti U.P. It is situated in the eastern U.P. economically and socially it is a very backward district. 94.39% population of Basti district live in rural areas of village. Agriculture and labour works are the main occupation of this district. The total population of district Basti was around 2463.94 in which 1254.88 male 1209.06 female and 27.55% female children. The education level is very low, especially in women. Female literacy rate is only 46.33 percent respectively. (Census of India, 2011).

Study Period

The study was conducted for a period of eleven months (April 2008 to February 2009). The total 414 respondents were selected randomly for the purpose of this study.

Methodology

This research work is founded on the quantitative data obtained with the support of structured questionnaire & personal observation from the parents and female minors (between 7 to 12 years age group) from district Basti, U.P.

Findings

The study has revealed that 62.9% of female children are taking under nutritious diet and only 38.1% of female children were having a nutritious diet intake in district Basti, U.P. The diet chart of under nutritious children shows their poor intake of nutrition (Table 1)

Table 1. Under nourished diet intake by Girl Children in District Basti U.P.

S.No	Timing	Food Item	Food Quantity	Ingredient
1	Morning Breakfast	Black tea and Chapatti ¹	One cup and two chapatti	Sugar, tea leave and flour
2	Lunch	Daal Rice,	According to need	Salt, chilly, turmeric
3	Evening snack	Only tea (seldom)	One cup	Sugar, Tea leave
4	Dinner	One type of vegetable, chapatti	According to need	Salt, chilly and spices

¹Whole grain bread made from flour

Source: Based on primary survey

The researcher has included morning breakfast, Lunch, evening snack and dinner in diet survey chart. The complete information about food items, food quantity and ingredients mixed in food taken by the girl children. Most of the girl children were taking only black tea and two *chapattis* in the morning breakfast. During lunch time they were eating rice and daal without any green vegetable. In evening seldom they drank tea while at dinner they were eating *chapattis* and one vegetable without *daal* and rice. By following this diet, the girl children are getting only 1100 calories and 20-gram protein in district Basti U.P. While according to dietary standard quantity every female child between 7-9 years should take generally 1950 calories and 41 gram protein, and 10-12 years female child should take 1970 calories and 57 gram protein per day (Gopalan et. al. 1991).

The table 2 of nutritious diet plan of 38.1 % girl children shows that they were taking proper breakfast which included one glass of milk, one fruit, one vegetable or egg and *puri* or *chapattis* in morning breakfast. At lunch, they were having one bowl of *daal*, rice, chapatti, one vegetable or no veg. in evening they are taking healthy snacks like biscuits or *halwa* with tea while in dinner they were having one bowl of *daal*, rice, chapatti salad, one vegetable or non vegetarian food.

Table 2. Nutritive Diet intake by Girls Children in district Basti U.P

S.No	Timing	Food Item	Food Quantity	Ingredient
1	Morning Breakfast	Milk,Puri/Parathe, Vegetable/Egg,One fruit	According to need	Bornvita/ Horlicks in Milk
2	Lunch	Daal,Chawal,Chapatti, Veg/Non Veg	According to need	Salt, chilly, Turmeric
3	Evening Snack	Tea,Biscuits/Halwa ¹	One cup	Sugar,Tea leaves/ Suji,Sugar
4	Dinner	Daal,Chawal,Veg/Non Veg,Chapatti,Salad	According to need	Salt, Chilly and Spices

Source: Based on primary survey

¹Dense, sweet confections made from flour.

Hence it can be conducted that most of the girl children are taking insufficient nutrition food and therefore they are suffering from malnutrition or nutritional deficiency. The table no.3 shows reason behind the under nutrition of a female children. According to the table 3. 96.1% female children are not getting nutritious food due to lack of awareness and 96.1% lack of skill.

S.No	Reason	Number of Girl Children	Number of Percentage
1	Economic	386	93.2%
2	Lack of awareness	398	96.1%
3	Lack of cooking skill	398	96.1%
4	Improper care	395	95.4%
5	Sex discrimination	382	92.2%
6	Total no of girls	414	100%

Table .3 Reason for the malnutrition of Girl Children in District Basti, Uttar Pradesh

Source: Based on primary survey

There is unawareness among parents required for a girl child to be strong and healthy. They do not provide balance diet to their children and are completely ignorant about the consequence from intake of under nourishment food. They also lack the skill required for preparing food in order to maintain its nutrition value. They prepare *daal* without adding other vegetable like tomato, green vegetable, onion, garlic, green coriander to enhance taste and nutrition value. They also lack in the preparation of supplementary food for toddlers. Hence, this leads to an intake of solid diet when a child requires a liquid or semi solid food. In spite of the easy availability of vegetable since majority of them earn their live hood through agriculture, they tend to ignore the inclusion of these vegetables into their children's diet. Therefore, instead of keeping a part for their household consumption, they sell it in the market 95.4% of girls children are not getting the proper care due to large family size, parents tend to ignore their children. They do not take proper care of their health and diet. The mothers do not have time to invest on her every child due to the pressure of household chores and large number of children future. The district of Basti, U.P is economically very poor because more than half of its population belong to lower income group. About 75% population of district Basti U.P are depended on farming. During the portion of agricultural land between the brothers, every brother gets small area of land for the farming, which do not fulfil their requirement. The people who do not have agricultural land, they are engage in labour work or running very small business like hawker, cobbler, barber etc. In this situation they are helpless to easily run their daily economic expenditure. So due to poverty 93.2% of girl children are not getting proper nutrition.

In this area 92.2% girls' children are facing discrimination with their diet due to lack of education and orthodox thinking, the girl child discrimination from their brothers. They are neglected and not given enough care since parents believed that girls belong to the house where she will get married. In addition, parents also have this rudimentary thoughts that in future male child has to work and earn money while female child has to take care of the family so male child necessitate more care and attention. This discrimination can be seen in their daily diet. Male child gets milk, egg, *paratha* in the morning breakfast. Chicken and *daal* in lunch time, tea *biscuits* or *halwa* in the evening snack and non vegetarian food, *salad*, *daal* in the dinner while female child is served with only black tea and *chapati* in breakfast and lesser quantity and quality food in lunch and dinner as compared to their male siblings.

The Policy Implication and Discussion

Many programmes and policies are run by the Government of India for the Development of District Basti U.P. 'Potion Kariyakram' has been started by the women and child development ministry of India. Under this scheme food is provided for the six months to the three years old children, pregnant women and lactating mothers. In the term of take home ratio 120 gram micro nutrient Fortified winning food per child per day has been provided for six months to three years old of children and in the term of take home ratio 140 gram micro nutrition fortified rich energy food has been provided to the pregnant and lactating women. By this meal they are getting 600 calories and 18 gram protein.

There are 2105 number of anganwadi run by the Government of India in district Basti U.P. Anganwadi centre provides micro nutrients in the morning breakfast and lunch like, *Khichdi Dalia, Tahri, Halwa* in the Noon time to the three years to six years of children. From this meal they get 500 calories and 15 gram protein.

'Vishesh potion Karyakram' was started in district Basti U.P to provide proper nutritious food to the children, pregnant women and lactating mother of backward area. Mid Day Meal Yojna has been also started to prohibit the school dropout children. Nutrition level is also improved in children by this scheme according to government. However girl children are still suffering from malnutrition in district Basti. There is an urgent need to strategies and check the proper implementation of the programmes. Majority of the population were unaware of the government programmes and policies running in there district Basti. Hence unawareness leads to the corruptions and depriving the actual needy population. Hence due to lack of awareness 96.1% of girls are not receiving nutritious food.

'Kishori Shakti Yojna' also has been started for 11 to 18 years girls. The main objective of this yojna is to solve their health problems like anaemia and to aware them about their rights. Policies are required to create awareness about the importance of health, nutrition, and education, to provide supplementary food in adolescent girls. They should be educated related to prenatal and post natal care. Awareness should be created among the adolescent girls as they are the future of our generation and directly reflects the growth and development of India. Due to improper care of female children in district Basti, there is approx 95.4% of girls who do not get nutritious food. Awareness should be created among the adolescent girls about the nutrition value of vegetables, fruits etc and hygiene required in preparation of food. Due to lack of skills in cooking food, 96.1% girls remain deprived of nutritious food. The improvement in cooking skills will help them to achieve desired level of nutrition.

'Dhan Laxmi Yojana' has been started by the government of India in this district, for the purpose to remove the discrimination with the girl children and give them equal rights. In spite of these efforts, there has not been established then also 92.2% of girl children are not getting proper nutrition due to discrimination. Programmes are required to make people aware of the importance of female children. These programmes will help to change the mindset of the peoples and significant improvement in female children's status. Girls plays vital role in development and growth of India. The girls education should be arranged by the government.

'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' has been started by the state government of India to provide job to the unemployed people. Other programmes like -National Rural Livelihood Mission, Ambedker Vishesh Rozgar Yojana, and Community Development Programmes are also run for the development and job providing purpose, but not much benefits have been received by the people of district Basti. Most of the families of population hold a small area of land and are engaged labour work and running very small business. They are not able to fulfil their basic need as they have limited service of income. Due to poverty 93.2% of children are not getting proper nutrition and so they are suffering from malnutrition. (The District Official Website, basti.nic.in).

Programmes are required to eradicate poverty. To provide monetary or financial help to needy people and also provide employment to women. These opportunities can help to contribute their income in the house expenses and will be able to improve their standard of living. Government should also focus on the girl education as it help in the development of the complete family. An educated woman knows how to maintain the complete nutrition balance of a growing baby. Efforts should be made to open schools in rural areas and create awareness among them about the importance of girls' education. Today's generation are tomorrow's future so we should try to make our tomorrow best. Programmes should be providing technical and vocational education to women, so that they can improve their skill and would be capable to become helping and earning hand for the family members. Awareness could be created with the pamphlets distributions, street shows, and announcement in rural and remote areas. Efforts should be made to make the process transparent and corruption free.

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