

PREDICTORS OF UNDERNUTRITION AMONG UNDER FIVE CHILDREN IN SOUTH ETHIOPIA: DOES PREGNANCY INTENTION MATTER? A COMMUNITY BASED CASE-CONTROL STUDY

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Background: Child undernutrition including stunting, underweight, and wasting contributes to nearly half of all childhood mortality and the survivors are also liable to impaired physical growth and intellectual development. Unintended pregnancy and unplanned birth can endanger the health of women and their families, and have negative impact on nutritional status of children.

Objectives: To determine the effect of unintended pregnancy on nutritional status of children among under five children in South Ethiopia

Methodology: Community based unmatched case-control study was conducted among children 6-59 months in Southern Ethiopia. The sample size was determined using two population proportion formula and the total sample size was 302 i.e. 151 cases and 151 controls. Different characteristics of respondents were descriptively compared using chi-square and multivariable logistic regression was used to assess the effect of unintended pregnancy on stunting after controlling for the other variables at p-value of 0.05.

Result: The result revealed that unintended pregnancy is found to be among predictors of stunting [AOR: 3.38, CI: (1.51, 7.55)] where children from unintended pregnancy were three times more likely to be stunted. The other predictors identified in this study were educational status of the father [AOR: 3.89, CI: (1.06, 14.36)], wealth index of the household [AOR: 2.42, CI: (1.16, 5.06)] and daily meal frequency [AOR: 4.17, CI: (1.09, 15.91)]. From the finding children from illiterate fathers, children from poorer household economic status and children whom their daily meal frequency is below the recommended were more stunted.

Conclusion & Recommendation: From the result of this study children delivered from unintended pregnancy were significantly at higher risk of stunting. The result implies that parental education, households' economic status and child feeding behaviour have significant effect on child nutritional status. Hence preventing unintended pregnancy have great role in decreasing the risk of stunting among children.

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