

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON NUTRITIONAL PROBLEMS IN PRESCHOOL AGED CHILDREN OF THE KASKI DISTRICT OF WESTERN DEVELOPMENT REGION OF NEPAL



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Poverty, household food insecurity and malnutrition are key problems in Nepal. Twenty-five percentage of the population are living on less than US\$ 0.50 per day and the country ranks 157 amongst 187 nations on the 2011 UNDP Human Development Index. Nepal has a GDP per capita of US\$1,049 (<http://www.wfp.org/countries/nepal/overview>). Agricultural production is not at pace with the population growth, 33 districts out of 75 have food deficits (Nepal Crop situation update 2012/13) and according to the FAO, 4.5 million Nepalese are undernourished (<http://www.wfp.org/countries/nepal>).

Main research aim: to measure the level of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about the nutritious food amongst rural and urban mothers

Objectives of this study

Individual study

- Establish the knowledge of food for children amongst rural and urban mothers.
- Find out attitudes/beliefs regarding food amongst rural and urban mothers.
- Assess health seeking behaviour for malnourished children in rural and urban communities and rationale for choices in health services
- Establish knowledge of, attitudes towards and beliefs on nutritious food
- Determine factors that affect availability of food (last six months), where they access good food at religious & cultural events
- Determine the challenges that exist for mothers giving their children food and how they attempt to overcome them
- Measure the level of knowledge of and attitudes towards food-related health promotion.

Epidemiological study

- Establish population-based problems using epidemiological data of nutritional status of preschool aged children (aged 3 to 5 years) in Kaski district.
- Identify higher risk groups for under nutrition: gender, age, caste/ethnic group, wealth ranking.

Research Method

Mixed method approach with quantitative (semi structured interview questionnaire) and qualitative (Focus group discussion).

Research Questions:

What is the level of knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about the food recommendation for preschool aged children amongst rural and urban mothers?

Study Location:

Kaski district, Nepal

Ethical consideration:

- Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC), Nepal

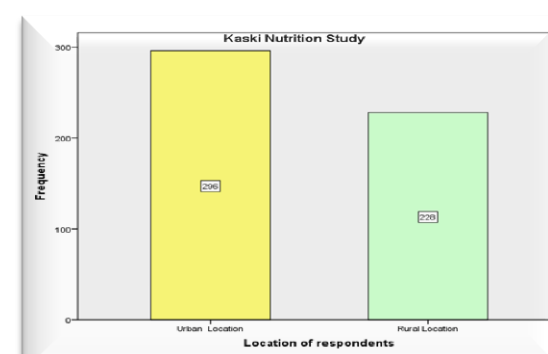
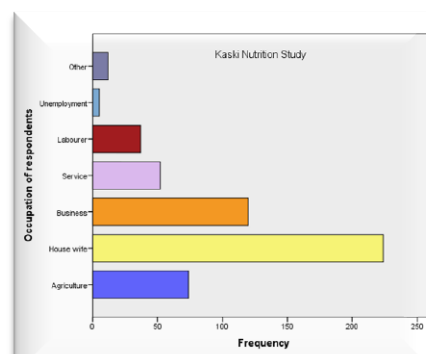
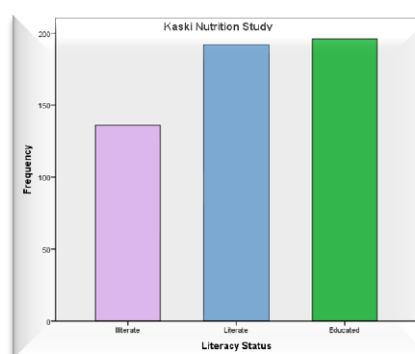
Exclusion criteria

- 0 – 35 month old children
- >5 years old children
- Breast feeding children

Sample size (estimated): 473



Main study area



Results:

- The study included more urban mothers (**56%**) than rural mothers (**44%**).
- Major barriers to recommending nutritious foods included: lack of knowledge (**15%**); high market prices (**19%**); and cultural influences or beliefs (**6%**).
- The study shows nearly **55%** children are providing fruits once in week. Similarly nearly **15%** of families never give salad to their children.
- Nearly **16%** of mothers cannot choose nutritious food from the grocery store.
- 12% respondents lacked food. Nearly **57%** children had been taken at least once to a spiritual healer and **16%** on multiple occasions for the treatment.
- Nearly **20%** of mother believed eating green leafy vegetables and fruits during illness affect child health.
- Nearly **8%** respondent feed meat, fish, egg and milk during times of illness to their children but **92%** do not.

Conclusion:

Knowledge and attitudes towards nutritious food of rural and urban mothers are still poor in both societies. Beliefs about food practice are still strongly embedded in Nepal. Urban mothers had better food recommendation, whereas rural mothers experienced huge barriers. Meat, fish, egg and dairy products are not provided to children due to cultural influences. Mothers from both communities have high faith in spiritual healers.

This research's recommendations, which were collated from the poor nutrition communities, will be a valuable asset for organisations, government, health professionals and researchers. The recommendation leads to harvest well-being, harmony and peace in the community. Thus the OSF has been supporting to students through its generous grant, mainly to create healthy and prosperous community globally and give relief from the problems.

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