

Relationships and Mediators between Food Insecurity and Nutritional Status In 2- To 5-Year-Old Children in Rural Areas

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Background and objectives: Food insecurity and children's nutritional status have complicated relationships through several variables ? nutritional, behavioral and psychological pathways. The objective of this study was to determine the contribution and association of various variables related to food insecurity and nutritional status (based on anthropometric indices) and the mediator variables in 2-5 years old children in rural areas.

Methods: In this cross-sectional study, including 578 children and their mothers selected by cluster random sampling, food insecurity, dietary intake, parenting, maternal depression, feeding practices and anthropometric indices were determined by standard methods; structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to find associations among the dependent and independent variables.

Main Results: Food insecurity at the household and child levels was, 52.5%, and 13.4% respectively, while the prevalence of wasting (low weight for height) was 13.7% and underweight 15.7% among the children. Parenting (authoritative) influenced the children's weight for height through feeding practices, and food insecurity effected child's weight for height, through maternal depression and dietary intake. In the final model, food insecurity had affected the children's weight for height through dietary intake, child feeding practices and maternal depression pathways.

Conclusion & Recommendations: Child-feeding practices (restriction) were the only full mediator between parenting (authoritative) and children's weight for height. Food insecurity, dietary intake, feeding practices and maternal depression were partial mediators in the relationships. Thus, it is recommended that in health and nutritional care of mothers and children, appropriate action for reducing maternal depression and improving child-feeding practices receive special attention.