



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2018, Ghent

“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Willingness and Knowledge of Nepalese Mothers to Improve Babies’ Diet to Upgrade their Nutritional Status

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Abstract

Food insecurity and child malnutrition are two of the most prevalent problems in Nepal. Among several factors, intake of adequate and nutritious foods needs to be emphasised to counteract this situation. Inadequate feeding practices are a major factor contributing to the situation. Thus, the aim of this study was to determine the knowledge and willingness of mothers towards upgrading the nutritional status of their babies by adapting their feeding practices. The study was conducted in Kathmandu, Nepal in February and March 2018. Mothers with children under the age of three were considered for the survey. The data were analysed using the SPSS software to predict the effects of various independent variables on health aspects of babies and their mothers’ knowledge on food nutrients to improve the nutritional status.

Analysis indicated that there were strong negative correlations between educational level of mothers and the number of children ($p < 0.05$). Those mothers who were socially active and discussed on babies’ diet and nutrition were found to feed their babies additional amount of fruits and vegetables. Nevertheless, 33% children were found to be underweight and 9% children mostly suffering from fever and common cold. A positive correlation was found between the education level of mothers and providing various kinds of foods to the children compared to other factors for preventing malnutrition. However, there were no significant associations between ethnic group, age of mothers and feeding practices. Most of the mothers were intensely willing to change their feeding practices to uplift their babies’ health status. However, well-educated mothers had rudimentary information on dried fruits and vegetables nutrient aspects and, thus, rarely consumed themselves or fed to their babies. Thus, an integrated approach that spreads the information on distinct types of foods such as incorporation of fruits and vegetables, dried fruits and nuts, knowledge of optimal nutrition practices, and adequate maternal nutrition, seems to be needed to upgrade the nutritional and to maintain a balanced health status of children in Nepal.

Keywords: Awareness, feeding practices, health problem, infants, Nepal