

**NUTRITIONAL ASSESSMENT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN
AT AVISSAWELLA AREA IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI
LANKA**



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2024**

ABSTRACT

The rising number of preschoolers, aged 3-5, who suffer from malnutrition. Due to the substantial health concerns associated with it, parents and preschoolers should educate their children about the problems associated with eating unhealthy foods. Therefore, the present study was carried out to assess the nutritional assessment of preschool children at Avissawella area in the Western province of Sri Lanka. A cross-sectional study was carried out by taking a total of 100 students according to the described formula and a random sampling technique was adopted. They were interviewed by administering a semi-structured questionnaire. The descriptive analysis was used to study the socio-demographic and practices related to dietary habits and Pearson's chi-square was applied to assess the association between variables. The majority of the participants were kids who are having 4-5 age. The majority of children live in joint families. A greater proportion of parents finish their A/L education. The income of the majority of the families ranges between Rs. 30,000-50,000 a month. Of the consumption of unhealthy food by children 36% were underweight, 2% were overweight, and 2% were obese. Lastly, 84% of parents limit their children's intake of sugary drinks, indicating a focus on maintaining healthier dietary practices. There were no significant differences ($p>0.05$) between stunting and the child's gender, type of family, education level of the mother, or household income. However, there was a significant difference ($p<0.05$) between stunting and the father's education level. Similarly, no significant differences ($p>0.05$) were found between wasting and the child's gender, type of family, education levels of the mother or father, or household income. For overweight/obesity, no significant differences ($p>0.05$) were observed concerning the type of family, education levels of the mother or father, or household income, however, a significant difference ($p>0.05$) was found between overweight/obesity and the child's gender. These findings underscore the need for health promotion programs to address unhealthy dietary habits. The study highlights the need for targeted nutrition education programs and policy intervention to mitigate the adverse health effects associated with preschool children. By addressing these factors, we can promote healthier dietary habits and reduce the malnutrition of children.

Keywords: Avissawella, Dietary habits, Malnutrition, Nutritional status, Preschool children

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