

FACTORS INFLUENCING MALNUTRITION AMONG CHILDREN AGED FIVE YEARS AND BELOW IN SERIAN DISTRICT UNDER SAMARAHAN DIVISION IN SARAWAK

ABSTRACT

Malaysia has been progressing well in both socioeconomic status and health care services; however, malnutrition is still prevalent in rural areas among the poor households. The aetiology of childhood malnutrition is complex involving interactions of multiple factors at individual, family and community levels. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of malnutrition and factors influencing malnutrition among children aged five years and below in Serian District in Sarawak. It was a cross sectional study. The children's weights and heights/lengths were measured. Socio-demographic information, factors influencing malnutrition, 24-hour diet recall and food security was gathered through a structured interview with the mothers/caretakers of the children. A total of 177 children and their mothers/caregivers were recruited from all the health clinics in Serian District. There were 20.9% of underweight, 11.9% of stunting and 10.2% of wasting. Using logistic regression, the significant factors found to be contributing to underweight were birth weight, frequency of child visit to the clinic, child's appetite and individual insecure; for stunting, duration of breast feeding, age when complementary diet were introduced, type of house and duration of family planning; and for wasting were individual insecure and duration of family planning. In conclusion, malnutrition is still prevalent in Serian district. The findings indicate the need for appropriate public health promotion and socio-economic improvement interventions towards improving the nutritional status and health of children in Serian District.