



“Malnutrition Among Children and Its Effect on Child Mortality in Developing Nations”

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Abstract

Child mortality rates in developing nations can significantly rise due to Child malnutrition. While child malnutrition itself may not directly cause death, it weakens children's immune systems, rendering them susceptible to fatal diseases and infections. This paper aims to scrutinize the effect of child malnutrition on child mortality in developing nations. To substantiate the study, relevant secondary qualitative data from credible websites and journals has been collected. The study's findings reveal that malnourished children face heightened risks of succumbing to common ailments like diarrhea and pneumonia. Especially in Developing nations, in particular, exhibit a high incidence of child mortality associated with malnutrition. It is imperative for governments to implement necessary, preventive, and effective interventions to eliminate child mortality stemming from malnutrition.

Keywords: Child Malnutrition, Child Mortality, Developing Nations.

Introduction:

Malnutrition is the circumstances characterized by a deficiency of nutrition in individuals, often stemming from insufficient food intake, inadequate absorption of nutrients, or an absence of the right foods for proper physical development. Children affected by malnutrition are prone to developing various illnesses due to the lack of essential nutrients in their systems, presenting a serious health concern. Malnutrition can contribute to child mortality, occurring either during infancy or later in life due to compromised immune systems. Developing nations, unfortunately, bear the brunt of child mortality cases linked to malnutrition, with numerous instances noted in various African and Asian countries grappling with extensive poverty.

The prevalence of malnutrition not only poses a significant health risk to the overall population but also hinders the potential for economic growth in affected countries. Given that children represent the future of a nation, compromised child health, particularly due to malnutrition-related child mortality, obstructs a country

from realizing its full potential. Recognizing the pivotal role children play in a nation's progress, it becomes imperative to analyze the causes and consequences of malnutrition among children in developing countries. This article aims to critically discuss and analyse the broader impact of malnutrition on child mortality, focusing specifically on developing nations.

Objectives:

As malnutrition remains a widespread global challenge, persisting even with advancements in economic and technological spheres, it becomes essential to delve into the reasons and consequences of this issue for a comprehensive understanding. This study seeks to scrutinize and assess the impact of malnutrition on the overall child mortality rate in developing countries. The specific objectives are:

- To examine the factors and circumstances contributing to Child Malnutrition in developing nations.
- To assess the adverse effects of Child malnutrition on the child mortality rate in developing nations.

Methodology:

For the study, secondary sources of data were used. Despite societal advancements in various domains, complete eradication of child mortality remains elusive, particularly in developing nations. This study has compiled essential qualitative data from secondary sources to form a comprehensive understanding of the paper. Analysing secondary qualitative data necessitates a profound comprehension of the collected datasets to effectively establish findings. Qualitative data from reputable sources such as the Global Hunger Index, WHO, DHS, and various journals have been employed to assess the impact of malnutrition on child mortality, particularly in developing nations. Microsoft Excel and descriptive statistics were utilized for data analysis, focusing on the influence of malnutrition on child mortality in the chosen developing countries. The outcomes of the study would help the policy-making bodies to improve the Child malnutrition in Developing Nations.

Discussion and Analysis:

Child malnutrition has emerged as a significant global concern, profoundly effecting a country's economic growth and hindering its potential for comprehensive development. Despite technological and economic progress, the prevalence of malnutrition in developing nations remains a persistent challenge, impeding efforts to secure the well-being of children. Recent studies indicate a widespread issue, with 1 in 5 children unable to achieve their growth potential in 2017. South Asia, in particular, grapples with a substantial malnutrition burden, affecting 40 per cent of children with stunting and 1 in 14 children experiencing wasting (Adepoju and Allen, 2019).

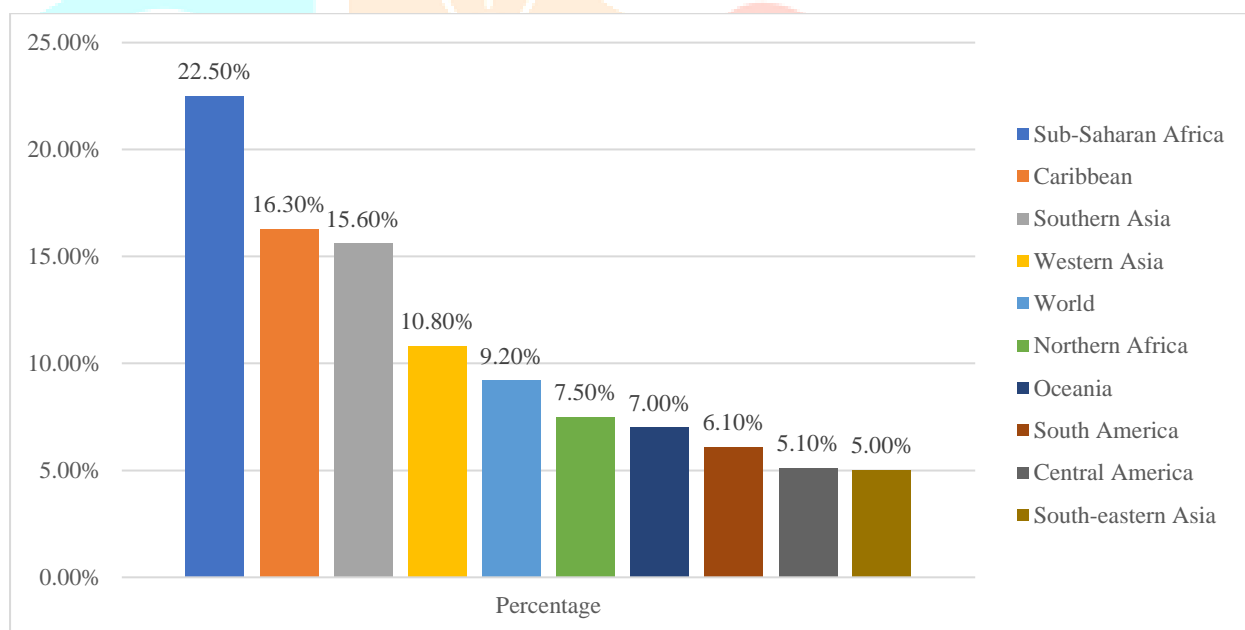
Despite the recognition of the fundamental right to a dignified life, including access to basic necessities like food and nutrition, many developing countries face resource constraints, lack motivation, and lack incentives to address malnutrition comprehensively. Although various measures exist to assess the scope of malnutrition in children, not all are consistently applied in treatment. For instance, malnourished children, especially those with severe acute malnutrition, are often evaluated solely based on a low weight-for-height

Z score, neglecting other crucial indicators such as mid-upper arm circumference, which are equally indicative of the risk of death (Schwinger et al., 2019).

Socio-economic factors, such as low household income, economically backward and social status, contribute significantly to malnutrition. In many developing countries, the majority of income is allocated to securing food, prioritizing satiety over obtaining the necessary nutrients for optimal growth. This pattern leads to stunting and wasting among under five children. UNICEF data from 2021 reveal alarming figures, with 2.3 million newborns and 2.1 million individuals aged 5 to 24 years, including 43 per cent adolescents, succumbing to malnutrition-related deaths globally. Preventable with proper nutrition, water, and sanitation, these deaths underscore the urgent need for comprehensive interventions.

Furthermore, the data highlight stark inequities, indicating that children born in low-income developing countries face a 14-fold higher likelihood of dying before the age of 5 compared to their counterparts in high-income developed countries. Persistent disparities among nations result in a tragic and premature demise for many newborns who could otherwise have a better chance at survival.

Figure 1: Number of Malnourished Children Worldwide (in Percentage):

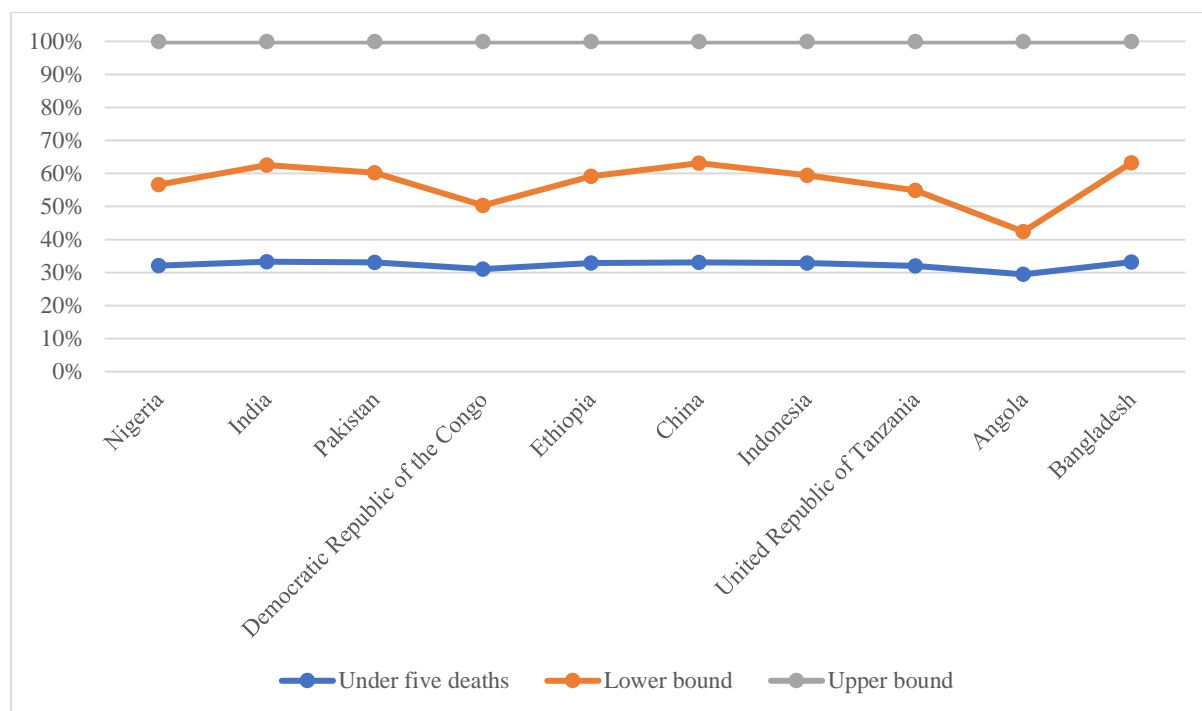


(Source: Global Hunger Index 2022)

The correlation between lack of education, social and economic poverty, and the prevalence of malnutrition among children has become evident. Developing countries, such as Nigeria, India, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia, exhibit the highest child mortality rates, reflecting resource limitations, societal inequality, and insufficient healthcare expenditures (WHO 2022). Malnourished children face increased vulnerability to infections, emphasizing the need for effective monitoring and intervention programs to reduce child mortality and morbidity in these nations. Government incentives, intervention programs, and public awareness campaigns are essential mitigating measures against childhood malnutrition.

Despite agricultural revolutions in developing nations, insufficient nutrient intake persists among children, leading to fatal outcomes. Government reports from various developing countries highlight that while malnutrition may not directly cause child deaths, it significantly elevates mortality and morbidity by reducing resistance to infections (Press Information Bureau, Government of India 2019). Limited parental knowledge about food nutritional value and inadequate resources contribute to malnutrition, with overpopulation aggravating the issue. Low public health expenditure in developing countries further increases child mortality rates due to malnutrition. Increased investments in healthcare can effectively prevent child morbidity and mortality, contributing to the eradication of malnutrition.

Figure 2: Developing Nations with Highest Child Mortality Rates.



(Source: WHO, 2022)

Malnutrition among children in developing nations is a key contributor to child mortality, as a significant portion of the population below the poverty line struggles to access adequate nutrition. Government interventions to alleviate poverty can enhance the likelihood of providing proper nutrition to future generations and reduce deaths from malnutrition-related causes. While malnutrition may not be the primary cause of death, malnourished children are more susceptible to common diseases like diarrhea, malaria, and pneumonia. Common childhood illnesses, especially in malnourished children, account for more than 45% of deaths among children under 5, with variations observed across localities and countries (WHO 2020), with Sub-Saharan Africa experiencing the highest child mortality rates.

Developing countries, despite government interventions, bear the brunt of child mortality due to malnutrition, with over half of such deaths occurring in nations like India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Nigeria and India alone contribute to one-third of all child deaths (WHO 2020). The severity and frequency of infections increase in malnourished children, particularly affecting middle and low-income countries. A study on the impact of common illnesses like pneumonia among

malnourished children underscores the substantial risk of death in such cases (Kirolos et al., 2021). Analyzing the root causes of malnutrition in developing countries is crucial to effectively minimize its augmentation to child mortality.

Conclusion:

The data gathered for this study effectively show that the contribution of malnutrition to child mortality, especially in developing countries is significantly high and necessary actions in this regard need to be taken by the government and private parties. Mostly African and Asian countries that are considered low-income and middle-income suffer from this phenomenon of malnutrition among children. Such malnourished children are more prone to infections and common illnesses such as diarrhoea, pneumonia and others often become fatal for these children. Since most people from lower and middle-income countries live below the poverty line and lack the necessary education, often do not possess enough knowledge regarding the necessary nutrients that are needed by children for efficient growth. Even with the necessary knowledge regarding the need for nutrients, people lack the financial resources to avail these nutrients. Since most developing nations cannot effectively deal with malnutrition among children, child mortality contributing to malnutrition becomes a quite common phenomenon in such lower-income countries.

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