

PREVALENCE OF MALNUTRITION AMONG SETTLED PASTORAL FULANI CHILDREN IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

Background: There is a dearth of information on the health of pastoral Fulani children living in southwestern Nigeria. These are fully settled pastoralists whose economy are centred on cattle and farming. In order to monitor and plan appropriate nutritional intervention for their children, a cross-sectional study was carried out to determine the prevalence of malnutrition of pastoral Fulani children.

Findings: Fulani's children aged 6 months to 15 years, living in 61 settlements in Kwara, Ogun and Oyo States in Southwestern Nigeria participated in the study. Heights and weights of 164 girls and 167 boys were measured. Their anthropometric indices, height-for-age (HA), weight-for-height (WH), and weight-for-age (WA) Z-scores determined. The prevalence of stunting ($HAZ < -2$), wasting ($WHZ < -2$) and underweight ($WAZ < -2$) was 38.7%, 13.6%, and 38.7%, respectively when compared to the reference NCHSIWHO standard used for defining stunting, wasting and underweight. Boys were more malnourished than the girls were, but this was not significant (stunting: $XI = 0.36$; $df = 1$; $P = 0.54$); (underweight: $XI = 1.10$; $df = 1$; $P = 0.29$); and (wasting: $XI = 0.00$; $df = 1$; $P = 0.98$) The mean of Z-scores of Height-for-age, Weight-for-age and Weight height in children were -1.502, -1.634 and -0.931 respectively. The SD was 1.52, 1.09 and 1.20 respectively. Using WHO Malnutrition Classification systems, 38.7% of the children were found to be malnourished.

Conclusion: These results indicate high prevalence of malnutrition among settled pastoral Fulani children, possibly due to changes in food habits and lifestyle occasion by the transition from nomadic to sedentary living. We suggest the inclusion of Fulani's settlements in nutritional intervention for these areas.