

Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Nutrition among Primary School Children in Darjeeling Hills, West Bengal: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

In hills areas, students studying in charitable societies or government-funded schools hardly meet proper education, nutrition, and total health care. There is a question of food security and overall health assessments for the poor or middle-class children located in the hilly regions where people usually visit as tourist places. This study sought to find the relationship between socioeconomic status and nutrition by assessing primary health screening in hill-areas children studying in a primary school. A case study was planned with a request letter to the school authority located in the Darjeeling hills under West Bengal state. The school survey was conducted on primary health screening and nutritional assessment for 125 primary-school children through semi-structured questionnaires. Socioeconomic status and anthropometric measurements, in addition to preliminary health screening, were incorporated as primary data. The study found that 71 boys & 54 girls have health issues due to the poor economy. As per BMI, 67% were suffering from malnutrition, out of which 44.6% underweight and 22% obese. As per screening, 46% of children had dental caries, 9.6% skin rashes, and 12.3% worm issues. Further, 22% of students were found with partly nail-damaged and 10% cleft lip issues. There was a lack of proper nutrition because of poor economic conditions. In the study area, due to the cold weather and transportation problem, fresh foods were not available. Still, children could be well-nourished, consuming functional foods by parents' awareness. Low- cost staple meals duly fortified with enough protein was highly recommended.

Keywords: pediatric nutrition, health screening, Darjeeling hills, economy, awareness