

Nutritional status, academic performance and parental feeding practices of primary school children in a rural district in Kelantan, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The increasing burden of undernutrition and overnutrition at both ends of the nutrition spectrum in children are often accompanied by adverse consequences in school performance. Children with poor nutritional status had lower scores on tests of cognitive functioning, lower activity levels, and poorer psychomotor development, whereas severe malnutrition often leads to impaired psychological and intellectual development.

Purpose: To investigate the relationship between children's nutritional status, their socioeconomic background as well as their parents's beliefs, attitudes and practices in child feeding with their academic achievement in school.

Materials and methods: Anthropometric measurements and socioeconomic background information were collected from systematically selected school

children aged 10 to 12 years old (n=309), while information regarding parental child feeding practices were obtained via a set of self-administered questionnaire.

Results: Based on the World Health Organization (WHO) growth charts, 10.7% and 18.1% of the children were thin and overweight or obese, respectively. Results also showed that children's nutritional status, household socioeconomic background and parental child feeding beliefs and practices were interrelated with the children's academic achievement.

Conclusion: These findings justified the need for relevant health and nutrition interventions in schools, especially the children of bottom billion community living in the rural areas.

Key words: Nutritional status; school children; child feeding practices; academic achievement.
