



Malnutrition and Cognitive Development in Early Childhood in Gambia: A Survey Research

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Abstract

Malnutrition remains a significant public health issue in Gambia, particularly affecting early childhood development. A cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data from a representative sample of children aged 0-5 years. The study utilised validated questionnaires for assessing dietary intake and anthropometric measurements alongside standardised cognitive assessments. The survey revealed that approximately 32% of the sampled population exhibited evidence of severe malnutrition, with significant correlations observed between undernutrition and lower scores in verbal memory tasks among children aged 0-3 years. The findings suggest a strong link between early childhood malnutrition and cognitive deficits, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to mitigate these effects. Public health initiatives should prioritise nutritional support programmes tailored towards pregnant women and young infants in Gambia, with particular emphasis on improving dietary diversity and ensuring adequate caloric intake.

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, Gambian, cross-sectional, nutrition, cognitive impairment, developmental lag, malnutrition, early childhood*

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