DETERMINANTS OF STUNTING AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH FEEDING PRACTICES AMONG CHILDREN 6-23 MONTHS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Background:
Stunting in early life is associated with adverse functional consequences, loss of productivity and risk of chronic non-communicable diseases in later life.

Objectives:
The study aimed to identify the determinants of stunting among children 6-23 months.

Materials and Methods:
This cross-sectional study used the 2015 Updating of the Nutritional Status of Filipino Children and Other Population Groups Survey data and adopted the WHO-CGS definition of stunting. All children 6-23 months from the sample households were included in the study (n=2,275). Chi-square test and multivariate logistic regression analyses were done to determine potential risk factors associated with stunting and severe stunting.

Results and Findings:
Results of logistic regression analyses revealed that older age child (12-23 months), being male and being born with low birth weight increased the likelihood of stunting and severe stunting. Mothers’ characteristics such as being aged 20-29 years old (AOR=1.57), height less than 151 cm (AOR=2.41), and parity of more than 4 (AOR=2.24) showed increased likelihood of severe stunting among children. However, non-working status (AOR=0.63) of mothers decreased likelihood of severe stunting among children. Infant feeding indicators such as untimely introduction of complementary foods and not meeting the minimum meal frequency increased the likelihood of stunting and severe stunting among children 6-23 months. Being poor (AOR=2.53) also resulted to higher odds of being severe stunted.

Maternal health practices that were found to be associated with severe stunting include prenatal check-up of less than 4 times, deliveries at home and deliveries assisted by traditional birth attendants. Household characteristics that were associated with stunting and severe stunting were being food insecure, from rural areas and with no toilet and not water-sealed toilet.

Conclusion and Recommendations:
The study revealed the multi-factorial causes of stunting and severe stunting and the importance of appropriate infant and young child feeding practices to combat the worldwide problem of stunting especially among developing countries. The study recommends strengthening the nutrition and health services among mothers and children as well as water, sanitation and hygiene program (WASH) and food security interventions especially among the marginalized households and communities.