DETERMINANTS OF NORMAL NUTRITION AMONG 0 TO 59 MONTHS OLD FILIPINO CHILDREN LIVING IN LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

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Background:
An alternative concept in understanding malnutrition is looking at the positive side of the phenomenon – one that attempts to understand the factors contributing to good nutritional status, especially among 0 to 59 months old children from low income households. This concept was operationalized in an in-depth analysis of factors that could potentially contribute to normal nutrition among these children.

Objectives:
The study (1) compared the nutritional status of children across age groups in terms of weight-for-age, length/height-for-age, weight-for-length/height and body mass index (BMI)-for-age z scores; (2) determined and compared selected characteristics of children and mothers across age; and (3) identified factors affecting normal nutritional status of these children.

Materials and Methods:
Cross-sectional data from the 8th National Nutrition Survey (NNS) among 1,990 children 0 to 59 months old who had normal nutritional status living in low income households were used for this study. Differences in mean values were measured using analysis of variance. Chi-square test was used for assessing the significance of association between the children with normal nutritional status and across child and maternal characteristics. Multivariate logistic regression was used to compute adjusted odds ratio (AORs) and to identify the factors that contribute to normal nutrition of children.

Results and Findings:
Less than 20 percent of the children were 0 to 5 months old while 41.8 and 41.1 percent were 6 to 23 and 24 to 59 months old, respectively. Mean weight-for-age, length/height-for-age and weight-for-length/height z scores significantly decreased with increasing age. Younger (AOR=1.63 – 2.54), female children (AOR=1.20), mothers who were neither pregnant nor lactating (AOR=1.18), have high school, vocational (AOR=1.65) or college level education (AOR=2.02), household use of water-sealed toilet (AOR=1.26) and having nuclear family types (AOR=1.25) offered some indication of protection against the three forms of undernutrition for children 0 to 59 months old. Across age groups, behavior-related factors that significantly predict normal nutrition among the children were “acceptable” food consumption score among households (0 to 5 and 6 to 23 months old), place of delivery in health facilities compared to birthing at home (6 to 23 months old), and household use of water-sealed toilets (24 to 59 months).

Conclusion and Recommendations:
Based on the findings, activities and programs can be tailored around the behavior-related factors identified depending on the target age group and pursued in pushing for interventions to maintain normal nutrition among children living in low income households.