

CHILDHOOD MALNUTRITION: BEFORE AND NOW

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Received date: 15 December 2021

Revised date: 05 January 2022

Accepted date: 25 January 2022

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Since 1980, Iraq had faced many life challenges, most of them were man – made disasters (i.e., wars, sanctions, chaos, corruption, and social strife).^[1] All life aspects were greatly affected by these crises mainly health. Children were the most affected population, being one of the most vulnerable groups in the society.^[2] This geopolitical instability took the interest of international organization to carry out nutritional surveys on Iraqi children before and after the implementation of Memorandum of Understanding in 1997 to demonstrate the effects of these man – made disasters on childhood nutritional status. Such surveys continued even after 2003 i.e., change in regime.

Hence, a comparison was done to show the differences between under 5 malnutrition indicators before and nowadays.

A review for the reported data from Multiple Indicators Clusters Surveys (MICS) 1996-2018^[3] and from Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis surveys (CFSVA) 2008-2016^[4] was done to predict values of malnutrition indicators. Besides, a cross

sectional study in Baghdad was conducted to get the observed values. The anthropometric measures were taken, and Z distribution was used to identify the prevalence rate of under 5 childhood malnutrition indicators.

The following table shows the predicted and observed values.

Table: Distribution of predicted and observed values of malnutrition indicators.

Indicators	Predicted value	Observed value
Stunting	17.2	2.8
Wasting	3.1	1.1
Underweight	1.1	1.1
Severe stunting	6	0.6
Severe wasting	2.3	0.4
Severe underweight	0	0

The study showed a huge difference between predicted and observed values for stunting and severe stunting (chronic irreversible condition). It resulted from inadequate food intake over a long time starting from time of conception till two years age. It is greatly related to maternal and child's nutritional status, both were affected tremendously by man-made crisis. Wasting and severe wasting are acute conditions greatly affected by seasonal variation. They resulted from starvation and/ or acute severe illness. Underweight and severe underweight (general malnutrition) reflect both acute and chronic malnutrition that can be managed easily.^[5]

After 2003 political change, wealth redistribution and trade exchange promoted the availability of many food staff with different prices. Health facilities and services were enhanced too. People are now able at access health facilities and get the proper management in time. In addition, social media had a big role in increasing awareness about proper nutrition for pregnant ladies and children that fit their age. Peace and economic growth are important determinants for proper growth and development.

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