

# Feeding Practice and Nutrition Status of Under-five Year's Children in Dalit Community in Darchula

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## Abstract

*This study aims to find out the feeding practices of under-five-year children, and to find out the relationship between socio-economic condition and nutritional status of less than five-year children in the study area . The study was conducted in Shailyshikhar Municipality-07 with the sample 98 mothers and 115 children as sample selected purposively using census method . The study reveals that most of the mothers were found unaware of how to feed, what to feed and when to feed with the appropriate skill of preparing colostrum feeding, frequency of feeding and bottle feeding . The frequency of feeding babies and nutritional food practices were found poor . Furthermore, the study showed that 28.89 per cent of boys were not gaining proper weight for their age properly, 22.22 per cent were not gaining proper weight as per their height; 22.64 per cent of girls had low weight as per their and 33.96 per cent of girls had low weight as their age . This study found that there was no proper feeding practice for children under five years old due to the lack of knowledge awareness and of the occupational composition of mothers . The nutritional status of the children depends on various factors such as breastfeeding, colostrum feeding, and duration of appropriate feeding, knowledge of the mother, proper feeding economic and social status and so on.*

*Keywords: Feeding practice; Nutritional status; Economic status; Children; Dalit Community; Colostrum*

## Background

Health is the valuable property of humans, so it is also one of the fundamental rights of every person . Most people should have a minimum facility for healthy in his/her life so they need sufficient food, clothes, shelter, health services education, entertainment and love . First of all most of the parents should know a child's needs . Who defined "health as the dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization, 2014) . Therefore, health is a multi-dimensional unit of being physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, sexual environment, etc . are the various dimensions of human health .

Nutrition is defined as "The science of food and its relationship to health." It plays a vital role in body growth, development and maintenance. Nutrition food means, "Maintaining a nutritional status that enables us to grow well development and enjoy good health" (Park, 2005) . In this regard, health is a valuable property of humans . Therefore, it is also one of the fundamental rights of every person . Most of the people should have a minimum facility for healthy living . Every child has also the right to be healthy in his/her life, so he/she needs sufficient food, clothes shelter, health services education entertainment and love . First of all, most of the parents should know what a child needs basically . Nutrition is the science of food used by the body . People can also define nutrition as the process children and adults take in food and digest absorb transport, use and excrete food substances . Nutrition is the basic component of health without which human health goes down from bad to worse and which ultimately leads a person to death . For the proper growth and development of the body, nutrition food is most important and it should be supplied to our body regularly the basic sources of nutrition are the food substances that we eat every day . The nutrition foods which are needed for our body can be obtained only through a balanced diet . A balanced diet consists of different nutrients required for the proper growth and development of our body . All the people are trying their best to make their food balanced so that they can be healthy and strong, but if we observe in this context the nutritional status of the average Nepalese people is found to be worse . Nepali people do not have adequate food required for the proper growth and development of their body so they are suffering from various diseases caused by malnutrition (Lamichhane et al., 2017).

The Nepalese population is nearly millions . Among them are children under five years old . It is considered to be one of the least developed countries in the world . Its per capita income is only 1381 dollars . Its annual growth rate of population is 0.92% . Nepal comes under 143 positions in the Human Development Index . Similarly, 28.6% of the population falls below the poverty level and 33.83% population lives in rural areas (Mishra & Sijapati, 2023) . Feeding practice is a very important component of the

nutritional status of children . NGOs/INGOs are also implementing several programs related to child health care.

Sound nutrition can change children's lives by improving their physical and mental development, protect from disease and making a firm foundation for future life activities . In contrast, poor child-feeding practice and their consequences hinder the social and economic development of the country . The natural and ideal way of feeding children is a unique biological and emotional basis for child development . Most of the women give birth to their babies having a lower grade of weight due to the lack of nutrition during pregnancy . As a result, the mental and physical growth of a child is hindered and some of the infant babies are suffering from different diseases at birth . Healthy people are the backbone of the national development of any country but the health of the people of a country at a given time doesn't depend on a single factor . It is influenced by a complex environment social and economic factors which are related to each other . The health of a majority of our population is largely the result of a low level of education, poor sanitation, poverty, joint family and malnutrition for substantial health improvement these constraints need to be removed .

Nutritional status is determined by various factors operating at various levels . At the individual and household level, the availability of food items, their processing timing of intake and intra-household food distribution on regimes can impact nutritional status, access to productive resources, work and employment and income can also crucially impact household nutritional status . The mechanisms of redistribution and general prosperity among the kin and in the community can also affect nutritional status significantly . At the micro level, nutrition status remains crucially linked to overall food production, marketing and non-market support to food security provided by the state . The nutritional factor is vastly associated with the physical and mental growth and development of children especially children of growing age can be easily affected by malnutrition and is responsible not only for the hindrance of growth and development but also brings simple to serious health problems and ultimately lead to death (Backholer et al., 2023).

Nepal is a poor and rural country . Most of the people live in rural and remote areas . The people are deprived of the light of the education and health facilities . In the context of Nepal, women are especially deprived of educational opportunities and social justice . The area of working women is limited to kitchens, kitchen gardens, yards and fields . Due to ignorance, illiteracy and the lack of opportunity, many mothers lose their health and sometimes life also nutritional status and the health of children depends on the health status and health practices of the mother . If the mother is unable to protect even her health we cannot expect good health of her child . Therefore, there is a deep relationship between the nutrition status of children

and child healthcare practice . Hence, the mother's knowledge plays a strong role in the childcare system . Economic status, religion and cultural aspects are significant from the policy-making point of view (Bhandari & Chhetri, 2013) . The health status of Nepalese children is very poor . As in other less developing countries, most of the children die in infancy and early childhood due to the diseases caused by malnutrition." Nearly (0 to 2 months age) forty per cent of the deaths among children are caused due to protein energy malnutrition (PEM) whereas nearly 70 per cent of rural children under the age of six years are affected by various degrees of under nutrition.

The study area is the Dalit community in Shailyashikhar Municipality . Shailyashikhar is one of the municipalities of Darchula district out of seven rural municipalities and two municipalities . The boundary covered by Shailyshikhar is east Gokuleshwor, North Gwani, West Hunainath and Rithachaupata, South Gokuleshwor and Lekam Rural municipality . The total area of Darchula is 2322 sq . km . The total population of Darchula district is 133310 . The total population of Shailyshikhar municipality is 22060 (Mishra & Sijapati, 2023) . This municipality has 9 wards . Out of these 9 ward numbers I have observed ward no.07 for a study about the Dalit community . The total population of ward no . 7 is 1922 . In this study, many children under five have suffered from malnutrition problems and they belong to different Dalit castes such as Marasmus, and Kwashiorkor .

Therefore, this study was specially conducted in Shailyashikhar Municipality ward no.7 for feeding practice as well as the nutritional status of children under five years . More specifically, this study aims to find out the feeding practices of under five-year-old children and find the relationship between socioeconomic conditions and nutritional status.

## **Methods**

Research methodology determines the activities done by the investigator to achieve the main objectives of the study . This study was based on primary data and a descriptive type of research design . The information was shown as quantitative . Darchula is one of the attractive Himalayan districts in Sudurpascihm province . Darchula has 7 rural municipalities and 2 municipalities . I have observed the Dalit community in Shailyshikhar-07 . In this municipality, the total population is 1982 (male-921, female-1061) . The total households are 367 . Out of this 98 houses of the Dalit community . The total number of Dalits is 522 . Out of this 115 children are under five years old .

For data collection, the investigator used a questionnaire and anthropometric measurements since most of the respondents were illiterate in this study area . Which was prepared based on related books and study reports .

The researcher visited the municipality secretary with an authorization letter from the Health Physical and Population Department . Then the researcher explained the purpose of the visit and requested /her help to provide information about the population according to the target . Then, the researcher visited ward no . 7 prepare a list . Before the preparation of the list of respondents, the researcher visited their household with tools and instruments . Before starting the interview the researcher explained the purpose of the study . A set of interview schedules was used for mothers to obtain information on the socio-economic status and breastfeeding of the selected sample group and the data was gathered through the response of the subject.

Collected data and information were prepared in a master table . The existing situation was classified, tabulated and described based on the data, gathered and compared the anthropometrics measurement of the nutritional status of the children under five years of age in Shailyshikhar municipality Darchula with national norms and showed the relation of feeding practice and nutritional status of children under five years.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study first deals with food habits and nutritional status under five years children . For it, different socio-economic status of mothers was analyzed followed by feeding practice of this study . After collecting the data, it was tabulated and kept in sequential order according to the needs of the collected data . Data were analyzed and interpreted in tables to make the information more clear . The analysis and interpretation were presented in the following sub-topics.

### **Breast Feeding Practice**

The most natural, safe and cheap method of nourishing infants is by breastfeeding . The absence of required breastfeeding practice hampers children to gain appropriate growth . According to NMIS, approximately 90 percent of Nepalese women breastfeed till 18 months and at least half of the women in Nepal continue to breastfeed to the child up to 3 years.

### **Colostrum Feeding Practice**

The first secretion from the mother's breast after the child is born which is rich in antibodies is called colostrum's . This is considered as a good diet for a child . Colostrum provide the entire nutrient in sufficient amounts and give good immunity to the children . It is evident from various studies that this valuable substance is discarded by the mothers because of the lack of knowledge and its importance . The Colostrum feeding practice in Shailyshilhar-07, Darchula district is presented in the table below:

**Table 1***Respondents of Colostrum Feeding Practice*

S.N	Women Feeding Colostrum	No . of mothers	Percent
1	Yes	80	81.63
2	No	18	18.36
	Total	98	100

According to the data mentioned in the above table, the percentage of mothers feeding Colostrum is 81.63 per cent and not feeding Colostrum is 18.36 per cent because of the lack of knowledge and importance of it . Even the mothers feeding Colostrum to the children were not feeding by knowing the value of it . They were feeding unknowingly.

**Frequency of Feeding**

Frequency of feeding is very important to the growing child for appropriate growth . A child below four to six months of age needs to be breastfed more than five or six times a day . A baby who only breastfeeds (without water also) and urinates six times or more in 24 hours, is getting enough breast milk . An infant of 1 to 2 months must be breastfed six to seven times a day I.e., approximately 70 to 100 ml . Similarly, an infant of 4 to 6 months must be fed five times a day . i.e . approximately 150 to 175 ml . and the infant of 6 months or more should be fed 175 to 200ml of milk four to five times a day . The feeding frequency per day of the selected mother has been shown in the following table .

**Table 2***Frequency of Breast Feeding*

S.N	Frequency of Feeding	No . of Respondents	Percent
1	1-2 times a day	5	5.10
2	2-3 times a day	15	15.30
3	3-4 times a day	38	38.77
4	More than four times	40	40.81
	Total	98	100.00

According to the above data, out of 98 mothers, only 5.10 per cent of mothers were found to be feeding frequently the children 1 to 2 times per day, 15.30 per cent of mothers were found to feed children frequently the children 2 to 3 times a day, 38.77

per cent was found to feed 3 to 4 times a day and rest of 40.81 per cent mothers were found to feed frequently the children more than 4 times.

### **Bottle Feeding Practice**

Any liquid food such as cow milk, buffalo goat milk etc . fed to the children by the bottle is called bottle feeding . As they lack the proper cleaning knowledge it has increased infant sickness and death . The bottle-feeding practice of Shailshikhar-07 in the Darchula district has been cited in the table below.

Table 3

*Bottle Feeding Practice among Mothers*

S.N	Women Feeding Bottle	No . of Mother	Percent
1	Feeding	24	24.49
2	Not Feeding	74	75.51
	Total	98	100.00

According to the above data, only 24.49 per cent of mothers were found using bottles and 75.49 per cent of mothers were not found feeding bottles.

### **Occupation Status of Respondent's Mother**

Occupation is the source of income, but it affects directly and indirectly to their (mother) under five years children's health . Occupied mother did not care for their children . Respondent's occupation was categorized into the following groups agriculture service and others which were shown in the table.

Table 4

*Distribution of Mother by Occupation*

S.N	Types of Occupation	No . of Respondents	Percentage
1	Agriculture	38	38.77
2	Business	3	3.06
3	Service	2	2.04
4	Labor	9	9.18
5	Housewife	46	46.96
	Total	98	100.00

The above table shows that 38.77 per cent of mothers were engaged in agriculture . 3.06 per cent in business and 2.04 per cent involved in service, likewise, 9.18 per cent of the mothers were involved in labour and 46.94 per cent were housewives.

**Table 5***Socio-economic Condition*

S.N	Description	Number	Percent
1	Poor	68	69.38
2	Rich	30	30.61
	Total	98	100

The above table show that 69.38 Percent of the respondents are from poor economic status and remaining 30.61 percent of the respondents are in sound socio-economic condition . From the analysis it seems that majority (69.38%) of the respondents have poor economic status and on the basis of the fact it can be said that the nutritional status of the Dalit children is being week because there is reciprocal relation between economic status and the nutritional status .

**Table 6***Feeding Practice*

S.N	Description	Number	Percent
1	Colostrum feeding	80	81.63
2	Not feeding	18	18.36
	Total	98	100

According to the data mentioned in the above Table, the percentage of Colostrum feeding is 81.63 per cent and not feeding colostrum's is 18.36 per cent because of the lack of knowledge and importance of it . Even the feeding colostrum's to the children were not feeding by knowing the value of it . They were feeding unknowingly.

I have conducted research in Shailyshikhar Municipality ward no.7 of Darchula district to find out the condition of Dalit children to get their situation on nutrition . The study found that for those Dalit children who were from educated families and good social, and economic backgrounds their nutrition condition was satisfactory but for children who were from uneducated low economic backgrounds and low social status their condition on nutrition was not satisfactory from this research . It was seen that to keep people's bodies healthy physically fit and well-balanced their family background, social status and economic background were needed along with their educational background . It was also found that for good careers and nurturing parents should be educated because those parents who were educated their children's condition was also seen as well . However Dalit children's condition was going to improve day by day because of different provisions which are made by the government and some INGOs . Their life expectancy has also increased in past .



## Conclusion

Health is an indispensable and dynamic quality of life . It depends on various factors . Among various factors, nutritional facto is the major one . Especially nutritional status of the children depends on feeding practices . The study found the children suffered from malnutrition and poor feeding practices in Shailyshikhar-07, Darchula . While comparing the feeding practice with the nutritional status of the children the adverse average effect of poor feeding practice and the nutritional status of children has been found clearly . The reports showed that nearly 40-50 percent of total children were below than normal nutritional status . The nutritional status of the children depends on various factors such as the health of the mother, infecting diseases immunization, health knowledge, economics and social status and so on . Among various factors feeding practices and nutritional status of children below five years of age were not so good in Shailyshikhar -07, Darchula.

The data showed that due to the knowledge of feeding practice and occupational composition of the mother was not so proper feeding to the children below five years of age in Shailyshikhar-7 Darchula . On the other hand, the mothers didn't feed supplementary food at the appropriate time to the children as well as breastfeeding was also needed . We know that the duration of breastfeeding frequency of nutrient feed, and timing of wearing immunization are directly associated with infectious diseases and such infectious diseases were one of the factors leading children to malnutrition.

Those children who were not fed properly as well as immunized were found to suffer from many infections and diseases with poor nutritional status . Therefore, it was clear that there was a great dependency on feeding practices and the nutritional status of children under five years old among the Dalit community in Shailyshikhar-07, Darchula district.

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