

# DISPARITIES IN FOOD AND NUTRIENT INTAKE AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF 0-10 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN IN MALE- AND FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The household head is responsible for the organization and care of the family addressing him/her a significant role in decision-making and channeling of resources to ensure the well-being of family members, especially the vulnerable children. Although, numerous studies have documented the causes of malnutrition in children, disaggregated data on the effect of gender of household heads (male or female) on malnutrition are limited. **Objectives:** To examine the equity in food and nutrition, specifically (1) the disparities in household food intake and nutrient adequacy, and the nutritional status of children between male- and female-headed households, and (2) the gaps in the household food intake and nutrient adequacy, and the nutritional status of children between the lowest and the highest classes in terms of gender of household heads. **Methods:** The study used secondary data from the 6<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Survey. Only one child per age group 0–5 years (preschool-age) and 6–10 years (school-age) was included in the analysis. Selection criteria were: (1) youngest child, aged 0–10 years, from each household, and (2) with complete data on dietary, anthropometric and biochemical components (iron, Vitamin A and iodine status) for the 6–10 year-old children. A total of 1,117 preschool-age children, and 1,162 school-age children were included in the study. Household level data such as the household head's profile, household characteristics, and household food and nutrient intakes were merged with individual level data of the children. Descriptive statistics were employed for households' profile by gender, and chi-square test of independence was applied for bivariate associations. Binary logistic regressions were used to model and identify the factors related to the nutritional status of children. **Results:** Among preschoolers, only underheight was associated with the gender of the household head. The odds of being underheight is 52 percent lower if the head is female than male. Among school-age children, only anemia was found to be associated with the sex of the household head. Children, 6–10 years old, in the female-headed households are less likely to be anemic than in male-headed households. In general, regardless of the gender of the household head, factors that are associated with the nutritional status of children, 0–10 years old are level of education of the household head, household size, and number of household earners. Households that own a refrigerator, cooking range, or television have with children, 0–10 years old better nutritional status. **Conclusion and Recommendations:** The gender of household head has a significant role in the nutritional status of 0–5 year-old children and Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA) in children, 6–10 years old. Since children in male-headed households are more at-risk to become underheight and anemic, nutrition intervention strategies should specifically target these vulnerable households.

