ABSTRACT

A cross-sectional study was conducted to identify the nutritional status of children (1-5 years old) living in a Bangkok congested area and its related factors. The data was collected from 233 pairs of mothers and children. The interviews with the mothers were done using structured questionnaires and anthropometric measurements were performed on their children to assess their nutritional status.

The prevalence of malnutrition among the study sample was 25.4% (first degree: 23.3%, second degree: 2.2%) by weight-for-age, 18.1% (first degree: 15.9%, second degree: 1.7%, third degree: 0.4%) by height-for-age, and 6.9% (first degree: 6.5%, third degree: 0.4%) by weight-for-height.

As potential related factors, characteristics of the family (mothers' age, marital status, educational background, family size, family income, mothers' occupation), characteristics of the children (children's age, gender, birth order, immunisation status, history of illness), mothers' knowledge and perception on nutrition, and mothers' food practice were examined.

Among these potential related factors, only mothers' food practice was found to be related to the nutritional status of children by weight-for-age ($z=-2.509$, $p$-value=0.012). With respect to height-for-age, from the results of bivariate analysis, it was found that family income ($z=-3.140$, $p$-value=0.002), mothers' educational level ($\chi^2=6.782$, $p$-value=0.034), mothers' occupation ($\chi^2=8.811$, $p$-value=0.003), and mothers' food practice ($z=-2.184$, $p$-value=0.029) had a relationship with the nutritional status of children. After controlling for the other factors by using multiple logistic regression analysis, it was found that family income (adjusted OR=0.9998, 95%CI:0.9997-1.0000, $p$-value=0.014), mothers' occupation (p-value=0.009), and food practice (adjusted OR=0.7123, 95%CI:0.5390-0.9414, p-value=0.017) still had significant association with children's nutritional status. Finally, family income (adjusted OR=0.9998, 95%CI:0.9997-1.0000), mothers' occupation of unemployed or a housewife (adjusted OR=6.5, 95%CI:1.74-24.3, p-value=0.005), food practice (adjusted OR=0.7123, 95%CI:0.5390-0.9414, p-value=0.017), and mothers' educational level lower than primary school (adjusted OR=10.1, 95%CI:1.13-91.9, p-value=0.038) were identified as associated factors with malnutrition by height-for-age. Regarding weight-for-height, no factors were found to have a significant association with the nutritional status of children.
It was found that among the urban poor in the Bangkok congested area, the problem of malnutrition still remained. This problem should not be overlooked and countermeasures are expected to be developed.