ABSTRACT

This cross-sectional study aims to identify the factors related to the nutritional status in children between 2-5 years old in Tan Tru district, Long An province, Vietnam, between 1st and 31st January 2002.

Two hundred and ninety caretakers who had been taking care of children in the age range 2-5 years old were interviewed and 290 children between 2-5 years old were measured for their weight and height with the aims of finding the characteristics of caretaker factors, characteristics of children factors, caretakers’ psychosocial factors related to nutritional status of the children.

The result revealed that there was a high prevalence of malnutrition in children aged between 2-5 years old (44.1%) in this area. The results indicated that the education of caretakers was significant, related to children’s nutritional status ($p=0.025$). Another contributing factor was that as the child’s age ($p<0.001$), fat consumption in regular meals ($p=0.002$) and gender of children ($p=0.006$) were also a significant relationship to the nutritional status of children. The results also showed that traders had 50 % of children with malnutrition; parents who had more than 2 children had more than 50 % of children with malnutrition; mothers, who were living alone had more children with malnutrition (58.3%) and the children were incompletely immunized and had more chance to get malnutrition (64.7%); for food and nutrient consumption, malnutrition children get less good food than normal children.

Based on the results, it is suggested that intervention strategies must be planned to stop this catastrophe immediately and reduce the proportion of malnutrition as much as possible by strengthening a compulsory education system, improvement of good primary health care that reaches all the risk group of malnutrition cause by illness, lack of child caring and nutrient food and immunization. Furthermore, the problem solving should be focused on child’s age, discrimination between boy and girl, maternal education, occupation, marital status and nutritious food.