

Short Communication*KAMEL OMAR AREF OMAR***MEAL PLANNING AND ITS RELATION TO THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN (2–4 YEARS OLD) IN EGYPT****PLANOWANIE POSIŁKÓW I JEGO ZWIĄZEK ZE STANEM ODŻYWIENIA DZIECI W WIEKU PRZEDSZKOLNYM (2–4 LAT) W EGIPCIE**

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INTRODUCTION

The nutrition of infants in Egypt, similar to other countries, plays an important role in the general strategy of public health.

The nutritional status of children depends to a great extent on the type of food they eat. The most important reasons that lead to under nutrition is unbalanced diet in both quality and quantity. There is no doubt that the children's health and nutritional status are affected by a percent of a budget spent on food, family size, and level of education including cultural habits [1].

Meal planning in the family is affected by many factors especially the social, environment and food habits and the availability of food [6].

As the housewife is responsible for food choice and meal planning, thus the level of her education, social status and employment play a crucial role in the nutrition status of the family [4].

Moreover, the choice of food for family meals is influenced by many factors such as food prices and it's relevance to food habits traditions, feasts, social status and religious practices. Meals affect the health status of children in all stages of their life especially during their early development. Accordingly, children need balanced diets particularly during a weaning period to order to supplement them with the nutrients essential for their growth [2].

This study was aimed at:

- assessing the relationship between meals planning and nutritional status of children 2–4 years old,
- assessing the statistical difference in meal planning according to family income, family size and education level of housewife
- the statistical analysis of the quality of meals planned by working and non-working mothers.

Therefore this study was designed to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is there a relationship between the meal planning and the nutrition status of children?
- 2) Does the social-economic level of the family affect the children's nutrition status?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study designed to answer the above questions involved several steps. Basing on the previous researches concerning nutrition in Egypt four types of questionnaires (forms) were developed:

- family meal planning,
- child anthropometric data,
- social-economic data,
- 24 hours recall method

The main study was followed by a pilot feasibility trial where the suitability of questionnaires was tested on a small pilot subsample of mothers. Moreover the questionnaires were reviewed by the recognised specialists.

The main study involved a sample of 200 children of 2-4 years old and their mothers. The investigated population was divided into three groups according to social-economic status (income, family size, educational level) and occupation.

The results were statistically analysed and following findings and recommendation were presented as resulting from the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Food is considered the first support for children's health and growth. Many house wives do not follow the correct methods of planning in preparing the daily meals for the family. This may be due to many reasons such as: low income, family size and social factors, food habits and religious believes. Accordingly, the children will be undernourished or mal-nourished especially at the first stage of childhood.

Nawars [5] reported in a study conducted on the pre-school that the children in Cairo growth during the first month of birth was satisfying because of the breast feeding. She added that malnutrition appeared in 81.6% of children the second year of their age, and decreased to 55.6% at the fourth year age.

There is no doubt that growth of children is considered a good indicator of their health and nutritional status. *Sime* [7] indicated that social rapid changes of families forced women to work showed a negative effect on the care of their children and neglect their with needs at this critical early period of life. It is important to educate mothers on the importance of food items selection, its preparation particularly for infant and children and sanitation of equipment's and used utensils.

Factors influenced meal planning for children, is also one of the points need to be drawn by mothers.

Children need small concentrated meals and should be repeated at short intervals of time. This meals should include not only all nutrients (proteins, fat, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals) but also the needed amount of them. This meal which presented by family is the only way to evaluate the nutritional values [3]. Health status of the child depends completely on meeting requirements or achieved during feeding period.

In this study the significant relationship between meal planning and the nutritional status of children (2-4 years old) was observed. The results are showed in the figure 1.

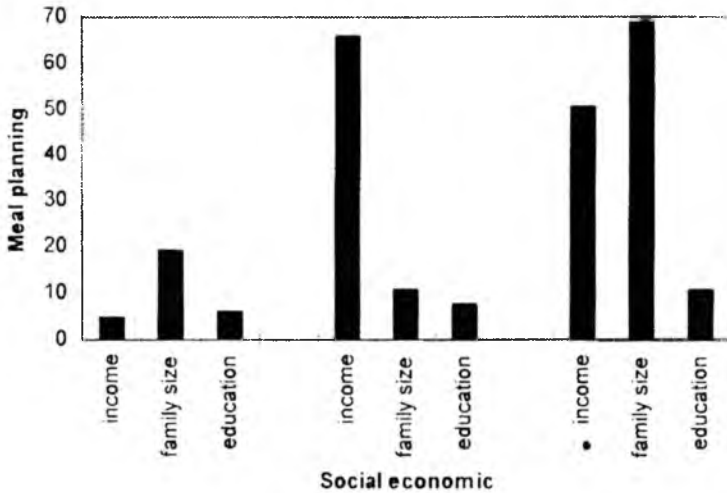


Fig. 1. Meal planning and social economic relationship

There were significant differences (at $p < 0.01$) in meal planning between high income level and medium income level, between high income level and low income level, between moderate income level and low income level.

There were significant differences (at $p < 0.01$) in meal planning between large family size and medium family size, between large family size and small family size, between moderate family size and small family size.

There were significant differences (at $p < 0.001$) in meal planning between high education level and low education level, between high education level and middle education level, between middle education level and low education level.

There were no significant differences in meal planning between working and non working mothers.

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MEAL PLANNING AND ITS RELATION TO THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN (2-4 YEARS OLD) IN EGYPT

Summary

The nutritional status of children (2-4 years old) depends to great extent on the type of food they eat. The meal planning in the family is affected by many factors especially nutritional habits, social-economic status of the family and the availability of food. This paper presents the results of the questionnaire studies of nutrition of pre-school children in Egypt with the special emphasis given to social-economic status and education level in the families. The results show the relationship between education, availability, size of family and nutritional quality of meals planning by housewife.

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PLANOWANIE POSIŁKÓW I JEGO ZWIĄZEK ZE STANEM ODŻYWIENIA DZIECI
W WIEKU PRZEDSZKOLNYM (2-4 LAT) W EGIPCIE

Streszczenie

Poziom odżywienia dzieci zależy w znacznym stopniu od rodzaju spożywanej przez nie żywności.

W niniejszej pracy przedstawiono wyniki badań ankietowych dotyczących żywienia dzieci w wieku przedszkolnym (2-4 lat) w Egipcie, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem statusu społeczno-ekonomicznego i poziomu wykształcenia rodzin. W badaniach wykazano zależność między wykształceniem, dostępnością żywności, wielkością rodziny a jakością żywieniową posiłków przygotowywanych przez matki.

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