

## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to describe the nutritional status of the children in grade I of the schools in the University Community Health Project Area and to compare the behaviour, educational achievement and intelligence in a group of children identified as having chronic malnutrition with a normal group matched for sex, age and class.

In the first stage of the study, some anthropometric measurements were carried out and they were analysed using the three indices of weight for age, height for age and weight for height. The prevalence of protein energy malnutrition (PEM) was found to be 11.7% - acute, 10.8% - chronic and 2% - concurrent acute and chronic malnutrition.

The data were analysed utilising the commonly used classifications. The relationship between these different methods were studied with special emphasis on the relevance of the extensively used indicator of weight for age.

Comparisons of basic socio-economic data between different categories of malnutrition were made. It was found that stunting was commoner among female children and was associated with a low occupational category of the father, low educational level of the mother and was commoner when the birth

order was three and above. The data was disaggregated to study the association between these factors and sex.

Comparison of behaviour problems between the normal and stunted children showed a higher prevalence among the stunted. Similar differences were found in educational achievement and in their performance in the test of "intelligence".

This study also shows that the development quotient and behaviour had the highest influence on the variability observed in the educational performance and these effects were independent of the influence of the socio-economic factors.

These results have important national implications since a large proportion of children at school entry are stunted.