



## ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to study the prevalence and the variables contributing to protein energy malnutrition of the pre-school children among the working population of the estates in the Galle Region. This population comprised of two groups of children one group living on the estate and the other group living in the village. There were significant differences between the two groups, the former group having mothers with significantly low level of education, literacy and knowledge on nutrition and higher rate of employment status. Higher percentage of children having siblings with a short birth interval and a higher prevalence of low birth weight.

Anthropometric measurements were carried out and they were analysed using the two indices of height for age and weight for height. PEM was found to be 17.3% stunting, 19.3% wasting and 10.2% concurrent stunting and wasting.

The data were analysed according to the waterlow classification.

Association between different variables and PEM were made. Stunting was found to be associated with a short birth interval low level of maternal education literacy, and nutritional knowledge.

Wasting was associated with overcrowding and having reported Acute Respiratory Tract Infection within 2 weeks preceding the day of interview.

More than five children per family, level of education and literacy of the mothers, and overcrowding were associated with concurrent stunting and wasting.

These results have important implications on the economy of the country since a large proportion of pre-school children among the working population of the estate in the Galle Region are suffering from protein energy malnutrition. The majority of these children, are likely to be the future workers on the plantations. Therefore if this malnutrition is not corrected it would result them becoming malnourished adults which will effect their output of work.