

## Improving Malnutrition and its Relationship with the Economic Class of the Community

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### Abstract.

Malnutrition is a problem often experienced by infants, toddlers and even adolescents. Many factors are associated with poor nutritional status. In addition to lack of knowledge, which is one of the impacts of poor family welfare, malnutrition is indirectly related to family economic factors. Some people whose economic status is low, their food needs will be less fulfilled so that they will have poor nutritional status. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between economic status and malnutrition and how to improve it. The method used was data collection and with a literature review of Journal Articles found on Google Scholar, Sinta, Health Journals, and DOAJ.

### Article History:

### Keywords:

Malnutrition, Nutritional status, economic status

## INTRODUCTION

The problem of malnutrition in Indonesia is an issue that is important to receive attention from various parties. If this condition is not addressed immediately, there will be problems in the future (Sudargo, 2017). Based on data from the World Health Organization (WHO), a country experiences a malnutrition crisis in toddlers if there are cases of stunting toddlers < 20% and physical condition that is thin < 5%. Based on the findings of the Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) conducted in 2022, it is estimated that 21.6% of Indonesians suffer from stunting, while 7.7% suffer from malnutrition (Kemenkes RI, 2023).

Children under five years old are susceptible to undernutrition due to a number of direct and indirect reasons. Infectious illnesses and insufficient dietary intake are two direct causes of malnutrition in children under five, both in quality and quantity. Indirect factors include too close birth spacing, low parental knowledge, and low family economic status (Sholikah et al, 2017).

According to Suryani (2017), The mother's lack of education and understanding is the primary cause of child malnutrition, and the family's financial situation has a significant impact on health. In addition, socioeconomic factors greatly influence the level of education and income itself to access health-related information for children and fulfillment of nutrition (Indrawati, 2015).

Families with low economic levels will prioritize their basic needs, such as the cost of food and buying other home needs. Therefore, the food they consume is not balanced with good nutrition and nutrients. Families with low economic conditions find it difficult to get adequate health services because they have difficulty paying (Fatmasari & Widodo, 2017). As a result, children in these families will experience conditions of malnutrition and nutrition, where they

lack food supplies, poor environmental conditions, and knowledge about balanced nutrition is also lacking.

The low economic status of families is the main cause of malnutrition for children in Indonesia. Many parents find it difficult to meet their children's nutritional needs due to lack of regular income and high food prices (Susanti, 2018). This indicates that there is a connection between children's nutritional sufficiency and the economic standing of the household. The higher the economic status or degree of a family, the more their children are protected from malnutrition and nutrition, but also vice versa.

### **Definition of Economic Status**

Economic status / level is a capacity that is regulated in social life and gives a person a special position in society, the acceptance of this special position is also accompanied by the existence of rights and obligations that must be balanced by the owner of the status (Pratiwi & Prasetya, 2019).

The term economy comes from Greek, namely from the word *Oikonomia*, *Oikos*, which means "household," and *Nomos*, which means "rules," are the roots of this term. Therefore, economics may be understood as a home rule. (Muslimin & Huda, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that "Economic status is the level or position of a person depending on the capacity to use the money received to cover daily expenses (Atika & Rasyid, 2018).

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Based on the explanation above, it can be said that "Economic status is a person's level or position based on the ability to meet the needs of daily life from the income earned (Atika & Rasyid, 2018).

#### **1. Classification of Economic Status**

##### **a. Upper Class**

These are wealthy groups such as multi-sectoral groups, management groups etc. Every necessity in life may be easily met in this area, and as children living there have ample room and facilities for learning as well as a high likelihood of completing their education, their education is given priority.

##### **b. Middle Class**

The middle class/category tends to consist of professionals and shopkeepers and small businesses. Most ordinary people live there. The status of parents in society is respected, their attention is paid to their children's schooling, and they no longer have any anxiety about the weakness of this class, although the income is not excessive, but they have sufficient opportunities to study and plenty of time to study.

##### **c. Lower Class**

Included in the lower class is a group of people who earn less than the basic needs in the family. People who belong to this group are deprived and have lost the ambition to achieve greater success. This group consists of housewives, scavengers and so on (Rahmawati, 2019).

#### **2. Definition of Nutritional Status**

The body is state of nutritional status is brought on by inadequate nutrient intake and absorption. Make a distinction between a person's nutritional state and that of others. The term "nutrition" traditionally only refers to the body's overall health, which includes energy generation, tissue growth and maintenance, and the control of bodily functions.

Because nutrition is linked to brain development, cognitive capacity, and job productivity, it now has a wider significance than just health. It also has an impact on a person's economic potential.

### 3. Classification of Nutritional Status

#### a. Overnutrition

It can be called overnutrition if the body gets nutrients in excessive quantities that have a toxic effect and can be life threatening. Being overweight in children / toddlers can arise due to intake / intake that is not proportional to what comes out.

#### b. Good Nutrition

Good nutrition, or ideal nutrition, occurs when the human body receives ideal nutrients that are used in moderation and in a balanced manner so that brain development, performance, physical growth, and overall health can be achieved.

#### c. Undernutrition

Malnutrition occurs when a person does not consume a varied diet with balanced nutritional value, causing the person to lack the necessary nutrients.

#### d. Malnutrition

Malnutrition is a condition where a person is found to be malnourished, or it is defined that the nutritional value is at an average level. These nutrients can be in the form of carbohydrate calories and protein (Saleh et al., 2019).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The method in writing this article uses a literature review based on research approach. Literature review is a task centered on a particular subject of interest studied should be examined in a comprehensive manner. Conducting it by referring to academic publications, papers, journals and articles on malnutrition, nutritional status and its relationship with the economic class of society. This approach allows researchers to explore informants' perspectives on stunting toddlers. Considering that not all mothers of stunted children were willing to be interviewed, informants were selected by sampling with the snowball sampling method targeting those who have stunted children under five.

Articles were obtained through Google Scholar, DOAJ, ScienceDirect, PubMed, and ELSEVIER databases. The terms “improving nutrition and its relationship with the economic class of the community” and “nutritional status” were used in the article selection criteria. Using narrative rules, this literature review was integrated by comparatively organizing the retrieved data into groups based on the outcomes measured to answer the question. After that, research journals corresponding to the subject were collected, and a journal overview was made that included the name of the journal or article, year of publication, title of the study, methodology, measured dependent variability, and an overview of the findings.

Research instruments are tools used to measure social and natural phenomena that have been observed, claims Sugiyono (2019). Research tools are written protocols for observations, interviews, or lists of questions created in order to gather data. So that in this study, the research instruments used were the researcher himself, observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentary guidelines to respondents to obtain data related to efforts to improve malnutrition and its relationship with the economic class level of the community.

Table 1. Literature Review on Malnutrition Improvement and its Relationship with the Economic Class of the Community

No.	Author	Year	Title	Results
1.	Siddiqui, F., Salam, R. A., et al	2020	The Intertwined relationship between malnutrition and poverty.	Poverty perpetuates malnutrition by raising the likelihood of food insecurity
2.	Master, W. A., Finaret, A.B., & Block, S. A	2022	The economics of malnutrition: Dietary transition and food system transformation.	Many diet-related illnesses, including diabetes, hypertension, and other cardiometabolic disorders, are caused by the combined burden of obesity, undernutrition, and micronutrient imbalance.
3.	Indrawati, A., & Abdullah, A. M.	2023	Dampak Status Ekonomi Keluarga pada Status Gizi Balita.	Low birth weight newborns (21.7%), underweight babies (15.2%), and stunted babies (52.2%) were shown to be associated with lower family economic status.
4.	Mada, R., Nova, H. K., & Maureen, I. P.	2018	Hubungan Antara Status Sosial Ekonomi dengan Status Gizi pada Anak Usia 24 – 59 Bulan di Kecamatan Tombatu Utara Kabupaten Minahasa Tenggara.	Poverty is the leading source of undernutrition, and family income is one of the variables that contribute to nutrition issues.
5.	Myrnawati, & Anita.	2015	Pengaruh Pengetahuan Gizi, Status Sosial Ekonomi, Gaya Hidup dan Pola Makan terhadap Status Gizi Anak (Studi Kausal di Pos PAUD Kota Semarang Tahun 2015).	Low parental education frequently results in children with poor nutritional status.
6.	Nugent, R., Levin, C., Hale, J., & Hutchinson, B	2020	Economic status effects of the double burden of malnutrition.	As an alternative to separate programming for overweight and stunting, economic analysis when population needs suggest that dietary treatments take the DBM into account, this can help direct the choice of so-called double-duty approaches.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Poverty as Economic Class

The socioeconomic status of the family, such as the low family income for the head of the household and low knowledge of nutrition, coupled with the culture in the family, including

eating habits and customs, will affect the process of selecting and processing food by the mother, because good food processing will affect the nutritional status of a child.

According to Statistics Indonesia 9.36% of people were living below the poverty level as of March 2023, which was a decrease of 0.21% points from September 2022 and 0.18% points from March 2022. In March 2023, there were 25.90 million people living in poverty, which is a 0.46 million reduction from September 2022 and a 0.26 million decrease from March 2022. In March 2023, 7.29% of people lived in urban poverty, a decrease from 7.53% in September 2022. In contrast, the proportion of rural residents living in poverty fell from 12.36% in September 2022 to 12.22% in March 2023. There were 0.24 million fewer urban poor persons in March 2023 than there were in September 2022 (from 11.98 million in September 2022 to 11.74 million in March 2023). Meanwhile, the number of rural residents living in poverty decreased by 0.22 million during that period (from 14.38 million in September 2022 to 14.16 million in March 2023). IDR 408,522 (74.21%) for the Food Poverty Line and IDR 141,936 (25.79%) for the Non-Food Poverty Line made up the March 2023 Poverty Line, which was IDR 550,458 per capita per month. In Indonesia, the average impoverished home has 4.71 people living there as of March 2023. The Poverty Line for the average family was therefore IDR 2,592,657/poor/household/month.

Therefore, a household is deemed impoverished if its per capita income or costs are less than the traditional poverty threshold. Income level is therefore the main indicator of poverty; nevertheless, as time goes on, it becomes increasingly clear that poverty has to be rethought since it is so intricate and multidimensional. As such, the idea of poverty should include a variety of different deprivations that individuals in poverty frequently face rather than just average income and wealth. A lack of basic amenities that keeps individuals from leading fulfilling lives is what this index identifies as poverty (Faareha, 2020). The concept of poverty has been broadened to encompass not only material deprivation but also a wide range of deprivations, such as those that deal with resources, quality of life, education, health, nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation, in addition to accounting for structural disparities within a nation.

Research demonstrating the substantial influence of social determinants of health—the surroundings in which an individual lives, learns, works, and even plays—on health outcomes, including malnutrition, is necessary to comprehend the strong correlation between poverty and malnutrition. The connection between their conditions and public health can be explained by the concepts of poverty and food insecurity. "Food insecurity" is a word that describes a circumstance when an individual lacks sufficient financial, social, or physical access to calorie-dense meals. When assessing food insecurity, four criteria are frequently used: availability, accessibility, and stability of the food supply, as well as the consumption of safe and healthful food. Individual, family, regional, and national food insecurity are all possible. Food insecurity and poverty are strongly linked since poverty may have a severe influence on health, social factors, and adverse conditions that can result in uncertain food sources. For low-income households, food is a major household expense.

Food insecurity persists in many underprivileged homes even when a large portion of their family budget is spent on food because of their insufficient, irregular, and unpredictable income.

### **Food Insecurity, Poverty, and the Double Burden of Malnutrition**

Malnutrition and poverty are closely related. Poverty's uncertain and unfavorable conditions can make malnutrition worse. Due to their sometimes restricted finances, people in poverty find it challenging to obtain wholesome meals. People's capacity to obtain enough food to satisfy their body's caloric requirements is impacted by food insecurity. (Pena, 2002; Fareha, 2020). Insufficient nutrition can hinder an individual's ability to get the energy or strength

needed to do daily tasks, which also impacts their ability and productivity to earn a living. Consuming a nutritious diet and consuming high-quality food are equally important, even if those living in poverty may need more food than they now have. Because poverty reduces the quality of food consumed and causes hidden hunger—a deficiency in vital vitamins and minerals—it can exacerbate malnutrition. Not only has obesity increased in wealthier industrialized nations, but it has also become an issue in less developed nations. Due to financial constraints brought on by poverty, people choose low-cost, high-energy staple meals—especially fats and carbohydrates—over foods that are high in nutrients.

Consuming fats and carbohydrates increases energy levels but degrades nutritional quality. Nutrient shortages and decreased nutritional quality are the results of this. Food availability and preference are significantly influenced by poverty, as demonstrated by studies that indicate people in poverty often pick better-tasting food over high-quality food when they have the alternative of spending a relatively higher amount on food. (Banarjee, 2011).

One significant aspect of malnutrition is "hidden hunger," or a lack of certain micronutrients (Tanumihardjo, 2007). Deficits in micronutrients can occur in any age group and socioeconomic status. In nations with low and middling incomes, among women and children, the most common and widespread micronutrient deficiencies are those in the minerals folate, iron, vitamin A, iodine, and zinc and many of these deficiencies coexist. When assessing how poverty and malnutrition are related, micronutrient deficiencies should be considered. Macronutrient deficits can result in unsatisfactory mental and physical development, frequent illnesses, and stunted growth, whereas micronutrient deficiencies can cause poor birth outcomes, such as low birth weight newborns. Twenty million kids are born underweight every year, and there is strong evidence that difficulties with health and subsequent academic and economic success are related to delayed height development in early life. Since maternal nutritional quality, especially mother height, has been shown to be adversely correlated with low birth weight in neonates, underweight, stunting in infancy and childhood, and infant mortality might all be factors in a famine cycle. The fact that children of mothers who drank adequate amounts of iodine during pregnancy tended to finish school a third or half a year later than children of mothers who drank insufficient amounts of iodine during pregnancy further highlights the importance of consuming adequate micronutrients. (Victoria, 2013).

In short, The dual burden of malnutrition and the significance of micronutrients must be recognized while analyzing the malnutrition-poverty cycle. The concept of malnutrition and development has to be rethought in order to build nutrition policies that are both successful and long-lasting. Policymakers and experts need to take action to take into account the challenges that these concepts provide..

### **Malnutrition is the Cause of Class Poverty**

Nutritional status has a major influence on human capital. The reasoning is simple: since economic growth, higher productivity, and improved national welfare all depend on good health, improving nutritional status is crucial to overcoming poverty. Without enough nutrition, human capital starts to degrade. (Vorster HH, 2011). This is a result of the negative impact that malnutrition has on an individual's economic potential, productivity, physical and mental development, and intellectual aptitude. Because of the threat to economic stability, A nation's susceptibility to poverty increases. The issue of food insecurity, often known as a "resourced-constrained" or "poverty related" ailment, is made worse by poverty. Though the people affected by both categories overlap, it is important to keep in mind that not everyone in poverty experiences food insecurity, and that this problem also impacts individuals who are above the poverty line. Furthermore, The emergence of micronutrient deficiencies and hidden hunger is influenced by poverty. These factors increase the risk of developing a number of illnesses and

exacerbate the nutritional issue. A erratic and unpredictable food supply coupled with poor-quality Food that is consumed insufficiently or inadequately might weaken immunity and increase susceptibility to illness. Furthermore, things usually go worse if you are ill since diseases may worsen malnutrition and associated cycle of poverty by further lowering nutritional and health condition.

According to studies Sitti Rukmana (2019), families have low incomes, low levels of education, and a poor understanding of nutrition, making it difficult for them to satisfy their optimal nutritional needs. Local customs and cultural influences have a big impact on how individuals feel about meeting their daily requirements. For example, many think that eating fish and eggs as toddlers will harm their skin and overall health. Furthermore, there is still a belief that the father must always come first, even when it comes to eating in relation to other family members. According to the study, they seem to live in a filthy environment with inadequate sanitation, and finding clean water sources is a challenge. Social workers and other community facilitators continue to play a mostly insufficient role, it was also discovered. The main barriers to addressing malnutrition issues in children under five in households are financial considerations, accessibility, and nutritional expertise, as well as the families' ignorance of the issue.

Mada Rumende et al. (2018) found that one of the factors contributing to nutritional issues in children between the ages of two and five is household income. The inability to purchase and select foods of high nutritional value and diversity is a result of low income. This implies that if a family has a high income, their kids are likewise in good nutritional condition. In contrast, poverty ranks first in general circumstances as a cause of undernutrition when family income is low. This economic position should be given careful consideration since it is relatively straightforward to evaluate and has a significant impact on food consumption. intake of food. Families who lack education due to poverty increase their children's chances of malnutrition. Based on the research findings Myrnawati, Anita (2015), it can be said that nutritional knowledge has a direct favorable impact on nutritional condition of young children. Early childhood nutrition will improve as a result of more nutritional awareness. According to Yabunci and Kaisac (2003), the findings of this study are consistent with the views of a number of experts, including the idea that a mother's nutritional education affects the nutritional status of her young children. Mothers who are well-versed in nutrition will prepare meals that meet the standards of a well balanced cuisine. High-nutrition mothers will make an effort to feed their family the proper foods, particularly for their children, from the time of pregnancy until the kid reaches a certain developmental stage. and the findings of a study at PAUD in Semarang city Myrnawati (2019) revealed that a large number of parents, especially mothers, did not give a damn about the food their children ate. This was because moms were not aware of the need of proper nutrition for children. acknowledge the importance of children's nutrition. They believe that their kids' desire to eat is what matters most. The questionnaire they were given revealed their lack of knowledge about nutrition. The child's nutritional state will eventually be impacted by the mother's ignorance. Youngsters only consume foods that their parents deem healthy, which includes limiting their diet to items that contain preservatives. foods that include quick meals, preservatives, and other harmful foods.

### **Next Steps to Improve Malnutrition**

Given the above-mentioned connections between poverty and malnutrition, Nutrition-sensitive therapies must be used in conjunction with nutrition-specific treatments help hasten the reduction of undernourishment. In addition to improving access to wholesome food, good water and sanitation, work and education, health care, and other resources, nutrition-sensitive initiatives also address the main and secondary causes of malnutrition. Large-scale nutrition

programs that prioritize evidence-based nutrition treatments must concurrently address important nutritional factors, such as poverty, in order to enhance the coverage and efficacy of specific nutrition therapy. These include initiatives pertaining to women's empowerment, education, early childhood development, social safety nets, and agriculture. Improving overall well-being and reducing malnutrition both depend on women's empowerment. Therefore, a concurrent emphasis on treatments that are particular to and sensitive to nutrition might significantly speed up advancements in nutrition as well as break the cycle of poverty and starvation that persists throughout generations. Bio-fortification and agricultural biodiversity may now be used to combat hunger and poverty at the same time. The goal of bio-fortification in developing nations should be to enhance the quality of coarse grains and animal feed while also utilizing community-based techniques to increase agricultural biodiversity. This strategy can lessen food insecurity and enhance sustainability in addition to lowering poverty and malnutrition.

The care of severe acute malnutrition in children, supplemental feeding education, supplemental food supplements, calcium supplementation, supplementing with minerals, zinc supplements, and energy-protein supplements, salt iodine, and other specialized nutritional therapies, and supplementation of various micronutrients, including iron. In order to make a difference, the results also indicate the employment of different community involvement and delivery techniques that can assist in reaching the most vulnerable impoverished sectors of the population. To put it another way, Interventions must focus on the poorest people in order to break the cycle of poverty and hunger. They should also include illness and infection prevention in their approach. A comprehensive, all-encompassing approach should be taken when designing nutritional therapies. Including a variety of stakeholders, such as those from the fields would be advantageous in the areas of gender, economy, water, sanitation and hygiene, agriculture, health, and education. In order to ensure sustainability, nutritional interventions should be both affordable and context-specific, as these issues impact both low- and middle-income countries.

The Indonesian government created a number of targeted nutrition initiatives, such as providing extra food for expectant mothers, encouraging IMD (early breastfeeding initiation) with colostrums or breast milk jolong, and educating mothers about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for their children and for malnourished toddlers receiving PMT (supplementary feeding) (Saputri, 2019). In order to support children's growth and development, the World Health Organization's recommendations should include supplementary meals that are high in calories, protein, and micronutrient content for children older than six months (Agize et al., 2017). Food variety is one of the four pillars of the concepts of balanced nutrition. According to the Ministry of Health (2014), food diversity refers to a variety of dietary types, such as fruits, vegetables, side dishes, basic meals, and water.

Some ways to alleviate malnutrition based on Tri Retno's research (2009).

1. Government policy: Government policy need to begin generating remedies and preventative actions as well. The answer is to address the growing issue of malnutrition right now, for instance by establishing Posyandu as the first line of defense for nutritional security. Anticipatory measures, on the other hand, are initiatives in every sector that are more conducive to Indonesia's independence from malnutrition, such as food research and equitable pay distribution across all societal strata.
2. Equitable Food Distribution, which necessitates auxiliary infrastructure like a robust trade system and sufficient transportation. Health experts are not the only ones responsible for this.



3. Fortification: Adding nutrients to food does not alter its fundamental qualities, such as color, taste, or fragrance. However, fortification must be inexpensive enough that the general public may still buy the food.
4. Community Nutrition Education: The topics of nutrition education encompass not only the socialization of nutrient-dense food kinds but also methods of food selection, preparation, storage, presentation, and other factors that might lower a food's nutritional value.

## CONCLUSION

Nutritional condition and economic class are related in society. Low socioeconomic status undoubtedly contributes to the rise in child malnutrition, along with a number of other variables. Changes in the family's socioeconomic level will lead to an increase in the quality of the diet since the family's dietary pattern is directly positively impacted by its socioeconomic status. Due to their continued focus on filling foods rather than the ingredients or composition of meals, toddlers still lack awareness of the need of proper nutrition. Despite the fact that snacks are packed with preservatives and other dangerous ingredients, they are nevertheless seen as a viable option for meeting the requirements of healthy children's meals. Furthermore, it is challenging to meet the daily dietary demands of families with undernourished children due to their low economic status. Although economic growth and equitable initiatives might be seen as adequate circumstances to reduce child malnutrition, they must be combined with focused expenditures to enhance significant contributing elements, including mothers' human capital, in order to increase the likelihood of malnutrition reduction.

Since poverty and hunger are closely linked and each feeds the other, addressing these issues together rather than in isolation is crucial. Both components are the source and the result of one another, forming a two-way relationship. Immediate action is required to combat this vicious cycle, which continues to be a major public health problem. The creation of a society requires a multifaceted approach to combating poverty and hunger that is healthier and more just and to sustain improvements in nutritional outcomes.

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