

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND  
INFANT GROWTH IN DZIMAULI VILLAGE, LIMPOPO PROVINCE,  
SOUTH AFRICA**

By

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## ABSTRACT

### Background

Social class differences have been recognised to affect child growth and development.

### Purpose of the study

This study is focused on investigating the relationship between socioeconomic status and physical growth of infants at Dzimauli Village.

### Methodology

Secondary analysis was done on demographic information of household head, mother and primary caregiver, household socioeconomic data, maternal feeding practices and child anthropometric measurements for 186 infants. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Logistic regression was used to determine independent predictors for stunting and wasting. The Chi-Square test was used to identify related variables and statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

### Results

At birth 6.5% of infants had a low birth weight, 11.3% were stunted, 8.1% underweight and 7.5% were wasted. Stunting became noticeable in the early months with 18.9% being stunted ( $< -2$  Standard Deviation (SD)) by the third month and this percentage remained high for the 12 month period. Increased weight gain was observed during the first three months but then declined until the mean weight-for-age (WAZ) at 12 month was below zero SD. About six percent of infants were overweight ( $> 2SD$ ) by the 12<sup>th</sup> month. Postnatally, a gradual pattern of stunting was observed in the infants. The factors influencing whether a child was stunted included ownership of agricultural land (Odds Ratio (OR)=4.577;  $p = 0.0009$ ), marital status of household head (OR=0.236;  $p=0.029$ ) and sex of child (OR=0.267;  $p=0.024$ ) while household income was the only determinant of wasting (OR=0.279;  $p=0.015$ ). Wealth index was significantly associated with underweight ( $p=0.012$ ) and household income was significantly associated with wasting ( $p=0.037$ ). The infants in the study were breastfed for longer period with 78% still breast feeding by the ninth month. However, exclusive breastfeeding was uncommon because of early introduction of supplementary food, with 39.5% of infants receiving some grains by the end of the first month. Only 0.6% of the infants were exclusively breastfed for more than 3 months.

## Conclusions

At birth stunting and underweight were less common. There was a significant relationship between wealth index and stunting. Similarly, income was significantly associated with wasting. In terms of feeding practice, mothers were inclined to introducing supplementary foods at an early age.

## Recommendations

Growth monitoring and promotional activities should be promoted as a community-based intervention. The issue of poverty also need to be addressed since nutritional status of children depends heavily on the improvement in the socio-economic status of their households. Similarly, the current government policy, the Infant and Young Child Feeding Policy, should incorporate intervention to promote appropriate feeding during pregnancy, early initiation of breastfeeding and correct complementary feeding.

**Key words:** Income; wealth; education; rural; Association; stunting; underweight; child; breastfeeding practice.