

Peer Review Report

Review Report on A qualitative exploration on perceived socio-cultural factors contributing to under-nutrition among under-fives in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania

Original Article, Int J Public Health

Reviewer: Nicolette Nabukeera-Barungi

Submitted on: 19 Apr 2023

Article DOI: 10.3389/ijph.2023.1605294

EVALUATION

Q 1 Please summarize the main findings of the study.

The study uses qualitative methods (4 FGDS) to explore why undernutrition persists in a region with plenty of food. Infact the food basket. They went out to explore social cultural factors contributing to the undernutrition. They found the usual social and cultural barriers, nothing new seems to come out of the study. It is not clear why this population has very high undernutrition levels yet they are the food basket. The discussion does not explain possible reasons.

Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

The small sample size of 4 FGDS involving largely nutritionists is not enough to understand the Social-cultural factors contributing to undernutrition. The users of the cultures needed to be involved in the study. No limitations are declared in the discussion

Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors. The editors prefer to receive your review structured in major and minor comments. Please consider in your review the methods (statistical methods valid and correctly applied (e.g. sample size, choice of test), is the study replicable based on the method description?), results, data interpretation and references. If there are any objective errors, or if the conclusions are not supported, you should detail your concerns.

Dear Editor,

I am having trouble registering multiple times but I was able to get the full article.

Below are my comments:

This is a relevant study since malnutrition continues to be a problem among children under 5 years. There is need to explore all possible causes so that they can be addressed.

However, it was not well thought through by the authors. The methods chosen do not help fully answer their research question.

Few FGDS: It is not clear why only 4 FGDS were selected. The methods do not indicate why 4 were chosen. The authors do not describe if saturation was achieved by the end of the fourth FGD.

Choice of study participants: It is not clear why the study participants were selected. The best source of information on the social-cultural factors are the users themselves. Why did they interview people in Ministry of Health and NGOs and not the people involved in those cultural practices? They do not indicate how well these people know the cultural practices.

To understand the cultures, they needed to interview the community members, their cultural, political, religious and other community leaders. The authors needed to include this in their discussion or methods why they chose those particular participants who are highly placed and may not be living together with the community members. Otherwise the authors need to convince us that these people working with Research Institutions, Ministry of Health and other agencies were the best source of information.

Choice of Qualitative study data collection methods: It is not clear why some Key Informant interviews were not done to understand the cultural and social issues. Actually the participants that were selected would have been used for KIs and FGDs done with the community members. The authors need to explain their choice of FGDs and not KIs.

Distribution of cadres of Participants: Almost half of the study participants were nutritionists. This is a source of bias which was not described. The perspectives of Nutritionists could be different from other participants. Were FGDs separate with different cadres? Were there differences in findings among different FGDS?

The study design section has a justification (line 102-104). It best fits in justification.

Results too general: The results needed to inform the reader if the information was different in the different FGD groups. Categorize the results and help us see a link between the cultural practices to undernutrition. Are these practices not present in other parts of Tanzania? What was unique about this area? Maybe the questionnaire used did not have the questions to help understand what is unique about this area compared to other areas.

Discussion: The authors do not declare any limitations in their study yet there are a number of them.

The study does not really reveal new information on cultural practices and how they affect undernutrition. They needed to discuss which of those has led to persistent undernutrition in a place which has plenty of food supply. It is general information that is already out. What is special about that area that cultural practices would lead to undernutrition? If they are not the cause, the authors should tell us.

Conclusion: Not tailored to the Southern Highlands which are under study. Too general and does not compare with other parts of Tanzania. What did they find that is unique in this area that is contributing to undernutrition. For example, is there more alcoholism than other areas? Let them report clear factors which need specific interventions.

Those are my comments. They need to address them if you are to publish it.

PLEASE COMMENT

Q 4 ▶ Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

A qualitative exploration on socio-cultural factors contributing to under-nutrition among under-fives in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania

The title is concise, appropriate and it represents what the study is about

Q 5 ▶ Are the keywords appropriate?

Yes they are

Q 6 ▶ Is the English language of sufficient quality?

Yes it is

Q 7 ▶ Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Not Applicable.

Q 8 ▶ Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?

No answer given.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Q 9 ▶ Originality	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q 10 ▶ Rigor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q 11 ▶ Significance to the field	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q 12 ▶ Interest to a general audience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q 13 ▶ Quality of the writing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q 14 ▶ Overall scientific quality of the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

REVISION LEVEL

Q 15 ▶ Please make a recommendation based on your comments:

Major revisions.
