

## Nutritional Status of Children in Squatter and Urban Areas in Alexandria, Egypt

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### Abstract

**Background:** Normal individuals have their own growth potential, which is genetically determined. However, variations in the growth are due to interactions between these potential and environmental factors such as nutrition and/or chronic diseases.

**The objective** of the study was to compare the nutritional status of squatter and urban children less than two years in relation to their feeding practices.

**Methodology:** Through a cross-sectional approach, 1000 healthy children (<2 years) from a squatter and urban area in Alexandria-Egypt were submitted to weight and length measurements. Mothers were interviewed about demographic characteristics, socioeconomic data, and the current feeding practices using the 24-hours recall method. Stepwise multiple logistic regression analysis was performed with stunting, wasting, and underweight as dependent variables.

**Results:** There is a statistically significant difference between squatter and urban children in the prevalence of wasting (4.2% and 1.4% respectively) and underweight (11.3% and 2.4% respectively), whereas the prevalence of stunting was insignificantly higher among squatter children compared to urban children (21.7% and 16% respectively). Nutritional status was generally better among exclusively breast-fed infants and those breast-fed for 23 months. Beside squatter residence, poor nutritional status was strongly associated with older child's age, male sex and being a child of non-working mothers.

**Conclusion and recommendations:** Better nutritional status was encountered among urban children compared to squatter ones. Measures that enables children to live in environment that favor achievement of their growth potentials were recommended.