

ABSTRACT

Orphanage children are one of the groups in the society who have a high risk of malnutrition. The nutritional status during the childhood effect on productivity, health and intellectual capacity of a person in the rest of the life. This study was carried out to compare the nutritional status of orphanage children with non-orphans, and to identify dietary factors associated with the nutritional status of orphanage children. Thirty orphanage girls from an orphanage home and a control group of 40 non-orphan girls from a school at Rambawawa, Kurunagala District were recruited. Anthropometrics measurements were taken and dietary energy and nutrients intakes were assessed using combination of 24–hours dietary recall and weighed diet diaries.

Both orphanage and non-orphanage children of 7–12 years showed high prevalence of under nutrition, 73% and 71% respectively. The children aged between 13–17 years showed considerable incidences of under nutrition, 22% and 19% respectively. Orphanage children of age 13–17 years had high prevalence of stunting compared with non-orphans, (37% vs 4% respectively). Also wasting was high among orphanage children in both age groups compared with non-orphans.

Energy intakes were significantly higher in orphanage compared with WHO standard ($p<0.05$). Vitamin B₁₂ and retinol intake were significantly lower than the standard ($p<0.05$) Vitamin C were significantly higher than the standard ($p<0.05$).

In conclusion, both orphanage and non-orphans showed malnutrition. Prevalence of malnutrition is higher among orphanage girls although they consumed enough energy and protein. Lack of intake of micronutrients or past history such as low birth weight may be the reasons for the signs of malnutrition among orphanage girls.