

The effects of severe malnutrition during early childhood on physical growth and intelligence level of school- age children

Arnelia, author

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Abstrak

Follow-up study of severely malnourished children during early childhood have been carried out in Bogor, Indonesia. The aim of the study is to investigate the long-term effects of severe malnutrition during early childhood on intelligence level and physical growth of school-age children. Fifty six children recovered from severe malnutrition after rehabilitation at NRDC outpatient clinic in Bogor for six months and fifty six well-nourished children matching for age, sex and some socioeconomic condition were included in the study.

Weight and height measurement were conducted in 1991 when they were under-five years of age and in 1998 when they were nine to 13 years of age. Psychological test using the WISC were carried out in 1998.

Intelligence level of the children suffered from severe malnutrition during early childhood were lower 11.34 IQ point compared to the children who did not. Those who were rehabilitated at younger age had significantly higher IQ scores compared to those of older age before the age of 18 months. The more severe the children at admission to the clinic, the lower their IQ level. Previously malnourished group were significantly shorter than match control group. Only little catch-up were observed at 5-6 years among previously malnourished children. Those who came to rehabilitation clinic at older age tend to have the better improvement on physical growth compared to those who came during infancy.