# MOTHERS' VARIABLES AS DETERMINANTS OF NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN 0-5 YEARS IN NSIT IBOM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*This study on mothers' variables and nutritional status of children 0- 5 years aimed at assessing the influence of mother's age, education and marital status on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. The study adopted the ex-post facto survey research design. A research-made instrument CHRMDS, with a reliability of .93 on Kuder Richardson 21 coefficient alpha scale, was used to elicit responses from 201 mothers, and the nutritional status of 202 children measured in body weight was obtained from the medical records kept in the two medical facilities in the study area. These summed up to a sample size of 403, representing 10% of the study population. Data from 84% of the respondents were suitable for use in analysis. Simple percentage, mean score analysis and independent t-test statistical analysis were adopted. The result of the analysis showed that mothers' variables examined in the study have significant influence on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in the study area. Based on the findings, it was recommended that a programme on nutritional education should be organized for mothers in the state, especially in Nsit Ibom.*

**Keywords:** Mothers, variables, Determinants, nutritional status, children

## INTRODUCTION

Mothers are globally recognized as key persons in the development of children. Global chronic under-nutrition in children is highly prevalent and remains a big challenge in developing countries (Kamiya 2011). Mother and child relationship has been relatively intimate (Reisser and Cox, 1997), therefore mothers' variables are the likely prime determinants of the level and degree of development and relationship existing between the mother and the children, especially at the early development stages of 0-5 years. This is so because effective parenting requires adequate parental survival skills.

Mothers' variables such as age, education, marital status, income, health status, culture and occupation correlate significantly with the display of effective parental care and appropriate child development. Mothers' variables play important roles in determining the nutritional status of children, language development skills, character formation and playing of simple functional roles by children, and their health status as well (Briggs, 2000).

The quality of child's health is, in most cases, influenced by the quality and quantity of food he/she eats. Empirical evidence (Akinsola, 2006) reveals that mothers' variables co-relate with nutritional status of children. Mothers' variables regulate the socio-economic conditions of children and are likely to reflect their nutritional characteristics.

Furthermore, the character of such a mother counts in the mothering of the children; hence the nutritional status of children expresses the mother's nutritional behaviour. The study looks at the factors of mothers that can influence or determine if their children are fed with

nutritional meals or not. Nutritional meals  are those meals containing all the classes of nutrients in the correct proportion, and are served in adequate quantities according to the users' personal characteristics such as age, weight, occupation and so on (Udogwo and Udoh, 2008).

This work is based on the *theory of meal management* (Reisser and Cox, 1997) which asserts that the personal factors of a family manager determine the nutritional status of members of the family, thus, mothers' variables determine a great extent, the class of nutritional health the child belongs. A mother with proper nutritional education is more likely to bring up children with normal feeding and proper nutritional status than a mother that is nutritionally uninformed. In addition, women who receive even minimal education are generally more aware than those who have no education of how to utilize available resources for the improvement of their own nutritional status and that of their families (Girma and Genebo 2002).   Akinpelu (2002) says that under-fed children experience physical and mental weaknesses accompanied by debilitated conditions that expose them to diseases and deprive the body of its powers to resist fatigue and disease. Ulcers, skin disease, anemia and loss of weight are noted among children 0-5 years that are under-fed (Akinpelu 2002). They may cause death when the loss of weight reaches about 40% of the normal body weight (Udogwo and Udoh, 2008).

Sometimes, nutritionally illiterate mothers over-feed their children, especially at the age of 0-5 years when the child cannot adequately indicate resistant behaviour. Over-feeding is an excess intake of food due to large or frequent meals. The resultant effect is fermentation with constipation or ineffective diarrhea, gaunt and obesity. Children aged 0-5 years that are over-fed suffer strain on the organs of digestion, absorption and execution. This may result in intestinal putrefaction, fever, furred tongue, fetid breath and heaviness.

Akinsola (2006) asserts that the nutritional status of child can be estimated through weight and clinically where the standard weight is 9kg for 1 year, 12.5kg for 2 years, 14.5 for 3 years, 16.5 for 4 years and 19kg for 5-year-old children. Deviation from the standard weight is a likely sign of malnutrition.

 The age group 0-5 years is a crucial nutritional stage in the growth and development of a child. The growth rate is high; the child is very active and battles with the issue of autonomy. He is vulnerable to developing protein celeriac, malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies and childhood infections. Akinsola (2006) states that, the period 0-5 years is characterized by exceptionally rapid growth. At birth, though all organs are present but they are yet to attain full maturity level for physiological functions. The possibility that a child could die young decreases after five years of age because of less vulnerability to infections and malnutrition. It is rational therefore that care of children 0-5 years is considered of primary importance to parents, especially by mothers who are the primary care-givers.

The effort of governments – federal, state, local, and donor agencies such as United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to provide services like immunization, food supplements, deworming to children 0-5 years is of critical importance. Similarly, the millennium development goals address reducing the proportion of underweight children by half between 1990 and 2015. The improvement of childhood nutrition will also reduce child mortality because under-nutrition is an underlying cause of an estimated more than half of all deaths of under-five children (Kamiya 2011). In addition, Hanson (2008) reports that a well nourished child is one whose weight and height measurements compare very well with the standard normal distribution of weight and height of healthy children of the same age and sex.

It is postulated in this study that mothers' variables are prerequisite for nutritious foods needed by children. This is because mothers' variables are likely to account for quality and quantity of food that children eat. It therefore becomes rational to examine the influence of mothers' variables on nutritional status of children 0-5 years. It is believed that if the extent of influence of mothers' variables on the nutritional status of children is known, mothers will be able to adjust their personal factors and characteristics to ensure effective food management and proper nutrients to children.

It is essential to examine the effects of mothers' variables on nutritional status of children because such effect or influence varies from community to community and among individuals. In addition, malnutrition is widespread in Nigeria especially in the rural areas, partly due to inadequate food and nutrient supply (Olagunju et al 2011). Furthermore, Ukpong (2006) and Okoli (2009) agree that the nutritional status of children are influenced by socio-demographic factors including mothers' age, number of children, social class, ethnicity and marital status.

Ujirio and Idehen (2007) state that women that receive even minimal education are generally more aware than illiterate mothers on how to utilize available family resources for the improvement of the nutritional status of family members. Education is likely to enable women to make independent decision that can be accepted by other household members. Such women could have greater access to household resources that are important to nutritional status (UNICEF, 1999).

The level of education of the mother is likely to determine the nutritional status of the child. This is because mothers with adequate nutritional education can select foods at the right nutritional combination to suit proper family servings. A mother with no knowledge of the basic nutrients, cooking pattern, preservation and serving of foods, may not provide the child the nutrients that provide growth and development. On the other hand, educated mothers provide quality and wholesome foods to family members.

A comparative study on mothers' nutrient in ten Sub-Saharan African countries and a study of Ethopian mothers (Ferro-Luzzi, 2000) indicated that the higher the level of education of mothers, the lower the proportion of undernourishment among children.

Education has a certain level of correlation with the financial and socio-economic status of mothers. Financial status with type of occupation plays an important role in determining the nutritional status of a child. The economic status of a household is an indicator of access to adequate food supply, use of health services and sanitation facilities which are prime determinants of children's nutritional and health status (UNICEF, 1999).

Kolasanoro (2005) observes that dietary deficiencies occur among the poor and this is as a result of the inability to afford the basic foods, poor eating pattern and habit. Also, Olubadewo and Ogwo (2005) report that type of occupation (which determines the level of income) is a silent variable that affects the nutritional status of people. Udoh (2004) asserts that mothers, whose occupation attracts high income, are likely to provide balanced nutrients to the children while the low income earners may not provide food with enough nutrients for the children.

Okafor (2002) states that mothers' age is a factor in determining the nutritional status of children. Women that marry too early (under the age of 20) lack the experience of taking care of themselves and babies. Mothers above the age of 45 are also at risk of mother and child malnutrition as reported by Akinsola (2006).  The greater proportion of mothers' ages 15-19 and 40 to 49 exhibit chronic energy deficiencies. A study conducted by Demoke (2002)

showed that women in the age group of 15-19 are the most affected by personal cleanliness and under-malnutrition and this malnutrition problem is likely to affect the children.

Akpan (2000) states that women employment increases household income with subsequent benefits to household nutrition in general. Employment also increases a woman's social status and the power of adequate nutritional decisions. However, a woman that has no occupation or source of income experiences hardship and poverty with consequence of poor nutritional status of the family. Effiong (2008) observes that though women's employment enhances the household's accessibility to income; it is also likely to have negative effects on nutritional status of children. This is because employment reduces the mother's time for child care. Briggs (2000) adds that mothers of the most malnourished children work outside their homes and also those who are working.

Moronkola (1999) observes that mothers' health status can either have negative or positive influence on nutritional status of children. Mothers with good health conditions are likely to be more active in the selection of food stuff and in preparation of nutritious meals for their families while women with bad health conditions may lack the ability to prepare nutritious and timely meals for the family.

Udoh (2004) reports that single parenthood is a critical determinant of nutritional status of children in many West African countries. Single parenthood is a major driver of poverty and poor nutrition among children. Children of single parents, especially those living with male parents, often suffer from poor nutrition and often experience slowed growth, loss of appetite, decreased energy and susceptibility to infections. Kingsley (2003) asserts that children growing with single and teenage mothers suffer from nutritional needs that are linked to food consumptions.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nsit Ibom Local Government Area recorded the second highest in infant malnutrition in the state in the 2010 health report. This is worrisome as it happens at the time other local governments in the state are reporting impressive improvement in nutritional status of children. It is therefore rational to examine if mothers' variables could affect the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area. Hence, the problem of this study is: what is the influence of mothers' variables on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area? This question requires necessary solution because the extent to which mothers' variables affect the nutritional status of children in the study area is not known. It is postulated in this study that mothers' factors can affect the nutritional status of children. This proposition requires research justification. This study is therefore aimed at examining the influence of mothers' variables on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the influence of mothers' age on the nutritional status of children in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.
2. To determine the influence of mothers' educational level on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.
3. To access the influence of mothers' marital status on the nutritional status of children in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Three research questions were posited to guide the study, thus:

1. What is the influence of mothers' age on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area?
2. What is the influence of mothers' educational level on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area?
3. What is the influence of mothers' marital status on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area?

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were postulated and tested at .05 level of significance.

1. There is no significance difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on mothers' age in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.
2. There is no significance difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on mothers' educational levels in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.
3. There is no significance difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on mothers' marital status in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Area of Study

Nsit Ibom Local Government is the study area. It is a local government area in Uyo Senatorial District of the state. It is bounded in the East by Ibesikpo Asutan, Uyo in the North, Etinan in the West and Nsit Ubium in the South. It has 11 government-owned health facilities. The growth monitoring records from the eleven health facilities indicated that 63% of the 3211 children (0-5 years) that attended the health facilities with their mothers had malnutrition-related health problems. Observing that the people of Nsit Ibom enjoy similar socio-economic conditions as other parts of the state that are observed to record impressive improvement in children malnutrition status, it was necessary to investigate the mothers' variables to ascertain their influence on the nutritional status of the children.

### Research Design

The ex-post facto survey research design was adopted for the study. This was appropriate because the study involved the process of examining the opinion of people and obtaining data to reveal factors contributing to malnutrition of children 0-5 years in the area. More so, the situations are already in existence and the researchers cannot manipulate the variables but can observe the situation in a given sample in order to define the domain of generalizing the influence of the mothers' variables on the population of the study.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of all the 2022 children 0-5 years diagnosed for malnutrition and their mothers that reported for health checks and immunization during the 2010 to 2011 medical year in the health facilities in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area (2010 to2011health/ immunization report in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State). This gives a total study population of 4030 subjects for this study.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 403 was drawn for the study. This comprised 202 children 0-5 years and 201 mothers. This represents 10% of the study population. They were selected using stratified

random sampling technique where each health facility formed the stratum. The weight records of the children 0-5 years diagnosed for malnutrition were randomly picked from the health records of the children and questionnaire was randomly distributed to the mothers as they reported to the health facilities between 15-10-2010 to 15-11-2011.

### Instrumentation

A researcher-made instrument called Mothers' Demographic Scale (MDS) was used to collate data on mothers' variables. Data on health status of children 0-5 years were picked from the health records of the children kept at the health facilities in the study area. The MDS had 10 items under homogenous scale.

### Validation of Instrument

The MDS was validated by experts in Community Health Education. A test and measurement expert also validated the instrument. They corrected the ambiguities in the instrument and ensured the validity of the instrument.

### Reliability of Instrument

The Kuder Richardson 21 Coefficient Alpha Scale was adopted on scores collected from 50 mothers of children 0-5 years that were not part of the final study. The Kuder Richardson 21 analysis yielded reliability coefficient of .93, this indicated that the instrument was reliable. An instrument is considered reliable if it consistently yields the same result each time it is used in testing what it was designed to test (Asika, 1991; Akpabio and Ebong, 2009).

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical involvement with mothers covered the following main areas of concern, issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent. In this study, privacy and confidentiality were upheld.

Approval also, was granted by the Head of Council of the local government as well as the local chiefs of the community being studied.

### Procedure for Data Collection

The researchers administered the instrument on the mothers of the children that were diagnosed at the health facility for malnutrition problem. The researchers also visited the other health facilities and administered the questionnaire in person. It lasted for a month. At each health facility the weight scores of children were picked from the records of their medical reports (growth monitoring charts). After the administration of the instrument, it was observed that 169 copies of the questionnaire were fit for the use in the study. Mortality of 16% was recorded and the 169 correct responses were used for the data analysis. Therefore, weight scores of 202 children and data collected from 169 mothers were used in the study.

### Procedure for Data Analysis

Simple percentage and mean score analysis were used to answer research questions while independent t-test was used for the hypothesis testing at .05 level of significance.

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULT

**Research question 1:** What is the influence of mothers' age on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area?

**Table 1. Analysis of nutritional status of children in Nsit Ibom Local Government based on mothers' age**

| Variables | | | Nutritional status of children measured in mean weight | | | |
| | | | $N_1 = 89$ Not deficient | | $N_2 = 113$ Deficient | |
| Age of mothers | No of mothers | Percentage | X | SD | X | SD |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 15-25 years | 42 | 25% | 18.62 | 3.94 | 16.4 | 3.95 |
| 26-35 years | 71 | 42% | 26.32 | 5.89 | 24.5 | 4.05 |
| 36 and above | 56 | 33% | 21.62 | 4.09 | 19.8 | 3.44 |

Entries in Table 1 show that 25%, 42%, and 33% of the mothers examined were in the groups of 15 – 25 years, 26-35 years, 36 years and above respectively. The nutritional status of the children 18.62, 26.32, 21.62 for not deficient groups were different from the 16.4, 24.5 and 19.8 mean weight for the deficient group respectively. The differences in the mean weight of the children in the nutritionally not deficient group and those that were nutritionally deficient indicated the influence of mothers' age on the nutritional status of the children.

**Research Question 2**

What is the influence of mothers' educational levels on the nutritional status of children?

| Variables | | | Nutritional status of children measured in mean weight | | | |
| | | | $N_1 = 89$ Not deficient | | $N_2 = 113$ Deficient | |
| Mothers' Educational Status | No of mothers | Percentage | X | SD | X | SD |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Primary | 56 | 33% | 14.26 | 4.78 | 12.04 | 3.64 |
| Secondary | 52 | 31% | 15.11 | 5.89 | 13.58 | 4.15 |
| Tertiary | 49 | 29% | 12.86 | 3.98 | 12.98 | 3.82 |
| Non-Formal Education | 12 | 11.62% | 11.62 | 3.48 | 9.69 | 3.19 |

Entries in Table 2 show that the mean weight of children in the not-deficient group of 14.26,15.11,12.86 and 11.62 differs from the mean weight of children in the deficient group of 12.04,13.58, 12.98 and 9.69 among mothers that had primary, secondary, tertiary and non-formal education group respectively. These differences in mean weight of the children in the deficient and not-deficient groups showed the influence of mothers' educational levels on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

**Research Question 3**

What is the influence of mothers' marital status on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area?

**Table 3. Analysis of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area on marital status of mother**

| Variables | | | Nutritional status of children measured in mean weight | | | |
| | | | $N_1 = 89$ Not deficient | | $N_2 = 113$ Deficient | |
| Mothers' Marital Status | No of mothers | Percentage | X | SD | X | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 118 | 71 | 28.13 | 6.33 | 26.14 | 5.81 |
| Single | 51 | 29 | 13.68 | 4.32 | 11.92 | 3.54 |

Entries in Table 3 show that the mean weight of children in the not-deficient group 28.13, 13.68 differs from those in the deficient group 26.14, 11.92 between married mothers and single mothers respectively. These differences in the mean weight of the children indicate the influence of mothers' marital status on the nutritional status of the children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

## TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

**Hypotheses 1:** There is no significant difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area based on the age of mothers.

**Table 4. Independent t-test analysis of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area based on the age of mothers.**

| Variables | N | $N_1 = 89$ | $N_2 = 113$ | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age of Mothers | | $X_1$ | $SD_1$ | $X_2$ | $SD_2$ | t-cal | Df. | t-cri | Decision |
| 15-25 years | 42 | 18.62 | 3.94 | 16.4 | 3.95 | 3.541* | | | |
| 26-35years | 71 | 26.32 | 5.89 | 24.5 | 4.05 | 6.642* | 200 | 1.65 | Significant |
| 36 and above | 56 | 21.62 | 4.09 | 19.8 | 3.44 | 7.951* | | | |

*t-cal (3.541, 6.642, 7.951) > t-crit 1.65

An examination of entries in Table-4 indicated that t-calculated of 3.541, 6.642 and 7.951 are greater than t-critical 1.65 at 0.05 level of significance and df 200. The null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted, that there is significant difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area based on the age of mothers.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area based on mothers' educational level

**Table 5. Independent  t-test analysis of the difference in nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on educational levels of mothers in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area**

| Variables | $N_1$ = 89 | $N_2$ = 113 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mother Education Status | $X_1$ | $SD_1$ | $X_2$ | $SD_2$ | t-cal | Df. | t-cri | Decision |
| Primary | 14.26 | 4.78 | 12.04 | 3.64 | 2.785 | | | |
| Secondary | 15.11 | 5.89 | 13.58 | 4.15 | 2.330 | | | |
| Tertiary | 12.86 | 3.98 | 12.98 | 3.82 | 5.206 | 200 | 1.65 | Significant |
| No Formal Education | 11.62 | 3.48 | 9.69 | 3.19 | 1.078 | | | |

*t-cal 2.758; 2.330; 5.206; > t-crit 1.65

Entries in Table-5 show that t-calculated 2,758, 2.330 and 5.206 are greater than t-critical of 1.65 at .05 level of significance and df.200. The null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted that there is significant difference in the influence of mothers' educational status on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant difference in the influence of nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on mothers' marital status in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

**Table 6. Independent  t-test analysis of the difference in nutritional status of children 0-5 years based on marital status of mothers in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area**

| Variables | $N_1$ = 89 | $N_2$ = 113 | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mother Marital Status | $X_1$ | $SD_1$ | $X_2$ | $SD_2$ | t-cal | Df. | t-cri | Decision |
| Married | 28.13 | 6.33 | 26.14 | 5.81 | 6.591 | | | |
| Single | 13.68 | 4.32 | 11.92 | 4.54 | 2.353 | 200 | 1.65 | significant |

*t-cal (6.591, 2.353) > t-crit 1.65

An examination in Table 6 shows that t-calculated 6.591 and 2.353 is greater than t-critical of 1.65 at .05 level of significance and df.200. The null hypothesis is rejected. The alternative hypothesis is accepted, that there is significant difference of the marital status of mothers on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The analysis of data collected on hypothesis one indicated significant influence of mothers' age on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area. This finding agrees with the report of Okafor (2002) that mothers' age is a factor in determining the nutritional status of children. This finding is not unconnected with the fact that mothers in the age group of 15-25 are more or less still inexperienced in home management of the child, family nutrition and proper child development, while mothers in the age group of 26-25 years are more experienced in home management and child nutrition. This group of mothers is likely to be in the right physiological, psychological and emotional health. They are stronger and energetic enough to prepare nutritionally adequate meals for their children. Mothers of the age of 36 years and above are often in the high risk of child birth. This could keep such

mothers away from responsibility of preparing nutritionally adequate meals for the family. These are visible in Table 1 where mothers in the age group of 26-35 (71%) had the largest number of children seeking medical care. These facts also reflected in the mean score of 26.32 being higher in the not-deficient group and 24.5 in the deficient group of children.

The analysis of data collected on hypothesis 2 yielded significant influence of educational level of mothers on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in the study area. This finding agrees with Ujiro and Idehen (2007) that asserted that mothers that received even minimal education are generally more aware than illiterate mothers on how to utilize available family resources for improvement of nutritional status of the family members. This finding is obvious: mothers that had no formal education in Table 5 presented children that had the lowest mean weight score of 11.62 in the not-deficient group and 9.69 in the nutritionally deficient group. This indicated that children whose mothers were illiterate were more predisposed to nutritional problems such as over-feeding and under-feeding with consequent diseases associated with malnutrition.

Scores on hypothesis 3 when treated to independent t-test statistics revealed significant influence of mothers' marital status on the nutritional status of children 0-5 years in the study area. This finding is in line with the work of Udoh (2004) which observed that single parenthood is a critical determinant of nutritional status of children in many West African countries. This finding is likely dependent on the fact that 71 percent of the mothers studied were married. Table 6 shows that children presented by married mothers were nutritionally better than those presented by single mothers as indicated by mean weight of 26.13 not-deficient, 26.14 deficient and 13.68, 11.92 groups respectively.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed at ascertaining the influence of mothers' variables on nutritional status of children 0-5 years in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area. The study was founded on the *meal management theory* (Reisser and Cox, 1997) which postulates that the personal factor of a home manager is a prime determinant of the nutritional status of the members within the home. Previous studies on the related conceptual and empirical issues indicated that mothers' variables were capable of influencing nutritional status of children.

The ex-post facto research design was adopted in the study. Data were collected from 169 mothers using CHRMDS, and nutritional status of the children measured in terms of body weight were picked from the medical record of 202 children from the medical facilities in the study area. Simple percentage, mean score and independent t-test statistics were used in the data analysis. The result indicated significant influence of mothers' variables on the nutritional status of the children. It was therefore concluded that mothers' variables are significant determinants of nutritional status of children 0-5 years in the study area.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that:

1. Mothers between the ages of 26-35 should be encouraged to manage meals for the children 0-5 years for optimum nutritional effects and should be exposed to nutritional awareness programmes.
2. Nutritional awareness programmes should be organized for mothers in the rural areas of Akwa Ibom State, especially at Nsit Ibom Local Government Area.

3. That marital counseling programme should be organized for women and the men that are up to the age of marriage so as to improve the nutritional status of children in the study area.

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