

# The effect of educational program on mother's child (6 to 9 month age) for reducing growth failure in Hamadan: applying Health Belief Model (HBM)

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Infants and children are valuable human resources for our future. Their desirable growth influences the quality of human resources for the future. Nutritional education is one of the most important ways to improve children's health. The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of nutrition education program on reducing growth failure among children based on Health Belief Model (HBM) in two Hamadan Urban Health Centers (UHC).

**Methods and Materials:** 100 mothers whose children were growth impaired randomly participated in this quasi- experimental study. Mothers form one UHC as experimental group (n=50) attended a 4 session educational program based on HBM components. The data were collected using valid questionnaire tool set and the check list of making child food aid, before, immediately and two month after the educational intervention among 2 groups. Data were analyzed by SPSS 16 and descriptive – analyzes statistics methods, such as paired

T-test, independent T test, ANOVA, repeated measure and  $\chi^2$ .

**Results:** The average mean scores related to knowledge and HBM components variable showed significant differences among two groups of mothers immediately and 2 months after the educational intervention ( $P<0.05$ ). Mean performance scores of mothers in experimental group were significantly higher than those for control group ( $P<0.05$ ).

**Conclusions:** The findings showed that the mother's nutrition educational program based on HBM, as the effective approach in healthcare requires new ways of teaching based on models and theories of behavior change.

**Keywords:** Health Belief Model, Nutrition, Growth Disorder, Educational Program.

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## Introduction

Infants and children are considered to be the most valuable human resources for our future life and their present favorite and desirable growth influences the quality of human life in the future(1). Undoubtedly the most important period from aspect of human's health, is infancy, which plays a significant role in human's growth and any deficiency or damage imposed in this period, are not reversible. As the early years of child's life provide the later life skills, the children who enjoy more care are more likely to survive, grow and develop and show more social skills, therefore, spending time and money for children's growth can decrease other costs in future, thus the nutrition and care of children are two aspects of this bases(2).

Failure to thrive (FTT) refers to inadequate physical growth or inability in maintaining the growth over time among the children. In these children, weigh versus age is placed under the fifth percentile or tenth of growth curve. In another word, weighing is less than 90% of desirable value for age and sex based on growth standard curves (3). FTT is one of the consequences of disease and indicative of inadequate daily nutrient (4). The reason of FTT is multifaceted and covers a spectrum of biological and social factors to environmental factors (5). Among other influential factors are infancy diet, environment and health care quality (6), beliefs, customs and tradition in the society, mother's knowledge in commencing supplementary diet and use of suitable nutrients (7). It has been proven in 46% of cases for which there is no organic cause (8). The recent evidence shows that developing countries are transferring to pandemic phases of dietary disorder and the high incidence of malnutrition (protein, energy and sub nutrients) is greatly seen in these countries which are fatal for children under 5(9). The most common age of inflicting with FTT is 6 – 12 months (10). As the transfer from exclusive feed breasting to

consumption of other food materials is rapid, the issue of FTT at this age is of great significance (11).

Nowadays, 226 million children do not have desirable growth and it is estimated that about 67 million children have a low ratio of weight to height. The weight of 183 million children is not compatible with their age and they are more likely to die in two to eight times than normal children (2). This is most outstanding when we know 11 million children die before they reach 5 years of age and most of these diseases occur at the first year of life. The reason of 54% deaths is malnutrition (12). Based on the statistics of WHO, 16.3% of girls, 15% of boys and 15.7% of all children suffer from weight loss and 18.4% of girls, 19.5% of boys and 18.9% of all children suffer from low height (13). One of the most important actions in the survey of children's growth is to improve the nutritional situation and prevent malnutrition (14).

Health education as an approach to focus on its prevention has long been common in developed countries and is considered to be a key factor to control human diseases (15). On the other hand, the efficacy of health education program depends on proper use of theories and models. An educational model commands the program in correct direction and reduces the ambiguous parts emerging in main content of an educational intervention. It also provides a framework for measuring and assessment of educational program and conducts the program to assessment stage (16, 17). The HBM showing the relationship of health beliefs and health behavior is an effective model which relies on this hypothesis that preventive behavior is based on personal beliefs. In other words, behavior is a function of individual's knowledge and attitude (18). According to this model, to make decisions about preventive performance, one must feel threat against children's infliction with FTT (perceived

susceptibility). Then, he must understand this threat in physical, psychological, social and economic dimensions proudly (perceived severity) and believe the usability of prevention program (perceived benefits) with the positive signs which he recovers from surrounding (cues to action). He must regard the preventive factors less costly than its benefits (perceived barriers) so that he sets out to prevent FTT (19). The efficiency of HBM for preventive behaviors such as malnutrition (15), AIDS (20) following diabetic regime (21) and quitting smoking (22) in Iran and other countries (23, 24 and 25) has been proved. As education in older age is difficult, the aim of education wasn't realized in menopause women in Torshizi's (26) study and Mahmoodian's research which tried to educate pilgrims about respiratory disease (27).

According to high prevalence of FTT in Hamadan 10.3 % (38), the present study aims to determine the efficacy of educating mothers about the proper nutrition of 6-9 month old children based on HBM to reduce FTT of children under the coverage of urban centers of Hamadan in 2011.

### Methods and Materials

This study was a quasi-experimental with the target population of mothers having 6-9 month old infants. The research was carried out in urban health centers of Hamadan. Having taken the consensus from respective authorities, the researchers made an analytical assessment of the status quo based on HBM in health centers of Hamadan. Based on the results obtained, the educational intervention compatible to the situation was designed to increase the awareness, focusing on self-efficacy, perceived severity, perceived benefits and improvement of mother's performance about infant's nutrition. As from regression model, the relationship of

mothers performance with toddlers age was measured to be significant ( $P=0.033$ ) and mothers having 6-9 month old infants had a weaker performance than mothers with 9 – 12 months old infants therefore the former range group was selected (28).

As in the descriptive research (28), there was a significant relationship between demographic variables, birth rank and revenue with children's FTT, the mothers with the third order child was chosen for intervention and control group. Because anemia and urinary tract infections can also lead to impaired growth. The children with normal laboratory test results were chosen.

The number of samples was chosen based on the information of awareness score from Hazavehi et al project in Tabriz and

$$n = \frac{(Z_{1-\alpha/2} + Z_{1-\beta})^2 \times (\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2)}{(\mu_1 - \mu_2)^2}$$

the relationship of

with  $\alpha = 0.05$  and  $p=80\%$  in 50 samples. Therefore, 50 samples were chosen for each of control and intervention group.

Of the urban health centers in Hamadan, two centers with the FTT rate more than standard records in IMES (10% in 1388) (38) were chosen randomly. The names of children with FTT were extracted from the registry notebook and 120 were chosen randomly. 100 mothers were invited to participate in the research, divided randomly in to intervention and control group equally.

After the pre-test, four sessions of 90 minutes were held in 2 weeks. In the first session, the objective was to increase awareness and performance of mothers about food groups and the way to enrich food along with emphasis on education for perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, cues to action and self-efficacy constructs of HBM. In the second and third session, the objective was to increase awareness about child's supplement feeding and perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to action and self-efficacy.

The fourth session focused on the diseases common among children under 1 year of age and feeding ill child during disease period along with perceived severity and cues to action. Different methods of education such as lecturing, group discussion and poster presentation were undertaken. The mothers were provided with the review pamphlet at the end of sessions. The personnel of health center were trained in one session to know the cues to action, so that they could answer mother's questions. The control group was provided with the regular education (face to face) and the educational review pamphlet was given to mothers of control group after the second post-test to follow the research ethics. Also, mothers were allowed to determine the time of educational session so that they feel comfort.

### Data Collection

The data were collected through a pre-designed questionnaire ( $\alpha=73.3$ ) consisting of two parts: the first part for demographic information (13 questions) and the second for questions of awareness and constructs of HBM as to awareness (9 questions), perceived susceptibility (4 questions), perceived severity (5 questions), perceived benefits (4 questions), perceived barriers (4 questions), cues to action (4 questions) and self-efficacy (7 questions). The questions of awareness were in the form of 4 item ones and others in 6- item Likertscale. The questionnaires were filled by participants as pre-test before the educational intervention and after intervention (post-test 1) and for the second time (post-test 2) two months later. To assess the mothers performance to provide supplement food, a check list was used consisting of 16 items of yes or no with scores 1 and zero, respectively, score 8 and greater was desirable and otherwise undesirable. Also, the effect of mother's performance on the children FTT was assessed in both groups by children's

growth survey two months after intervention.

After data collection, SPSS 16 software was used to analyze the data and descriptive statistics including graphs, tables and statistical indices and to compare the mean average of scores for awareness, perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to action, self-efficacy before and after education in both groups, we used paired-t test, independent-t test for comparison of incidences average, ANOVA test of repeated measures for comparison of score average before, immediately and two months after educational intervention. Man-Witney test was used to compare the FTT between two groups.

### Results

Of 100 questionnaires, 93 were completed: 48 in intervention group and 45 in control group. Of 100 check lists, 25 and 19 were completed for intervention and control group, respectively. 58% and 48% of children were girls in intervention and control group respectively. All the demographic features were the same in both groups without any statistically significant difference (Table 1).

The mean of awareness score, information of model for intervention and control group before the education had no significant difference but there was a significant difference for theme and awareness score, perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived barriers, perceived benefits and self-efficacy in the mean of scores after the education increased immediately in intervention group but it decreased after two months of intervention while there was a significant difference with that in control group, except for self-efficacy informant which increased after education of two months (Table 2).

Independent T- test showed that the mean of score for cues to action before, during and two months after intervention had no

significant difference in two groups. There was a significant difference related to both groups after the questions related to grandparents and fathers were removed (because classes were provided for health workers in intervention health center only and training for parents and grandmothers did not take place).

Chi-square test showed a significant difference for mother's desirable performance percentage to provide supplementary food before and two

months after intervention for two groups (Table 3).

Using chi-square test, the rate of children's FTT had a significant difference in both groups after intervention (Table 4). The test of variance analysis with the repeated measures showed a significant increase of mean score of intervention group during intervention in all the constructs of HBM and awareness but in control group, there was no significant difference in perceived barriers and cues to action in the increase of mean score (Table 5).

**Table 1: Comparison of demographic variables in two control and intervention groups**

| Variable                            |                  | Intervention group<br>Number (%) | Control group<br>Number (%) | P value |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| Sex                                 | Girl             | 29(58)                           | 23(46)                      | 0.32    |
|                                     | Boy              | 21(42)                           | 27(54)                      |         |
| Age                                 | 6months          | 7(14)                            | 13(26)                      | 0.3     |
|                                     | 7months          | 8(16)                            | 6(12)                       |         |
|                                     | 8months          | 11(22)                           | 10(20)                      |         |
|                                     | 9months          | 19(48)                           | 26(52)                      |         |
| At-birth weight                     | Under 2500 gram  | 2(4)                             | 5(10)                       | 0.03    |
|                                     | 2500-4000 gram   | 44(88)                           | 41(82)                      |         |
|                                     | Above 4000 gram  | 4(8)                             | 4(8)                        |         |
| Mothers age in the pregnancy        | Under 18         | 3(6)                             | 6(12)                       | 0.3     |
|                                     | 18-35            | 43(43)                           | 41(82)                      |         |
|                                     | Above 35         | 4(4)                             | 4(6)                        |         |
| Birth order                         | first            | 22(44)                           | 20(40)                      | 0.6     |
|                                     | second           | 22(44)                           | 24(48)                      |         |
|                                     | Third and higher | 6(12)                            | 6(12)                       |         |
| Mothers job                         | employed         | 1(2)                             | 0(0)                        | 0.29    |
|                                     | Housewife        | 49(98)                           | 50(100)                     |         |
| Type of pregnancy                   | wanted           | 38(86)                           | 40(80)                      | 0.26    |
|                                     | unwanted         | 12(24)                           | 10(20)                      |         |
| Household revenue                   | Under 66\$       | 27(54)                           | 21(42)                      | 0.1     |
|                                     | 66-166\$         | 22(44)                           | 29(58)                      |         |
|                                     | Above 166\$      | 1(2)                             | 0(0)                        |         |
| Using breast feeding                | yes              | 46(92)                           | 48(94)                      | 0.6     |
|                                     | no               | 4(8)                             | 3(6)                        |         |
| Supplementary nutrition             | Under 6 months   | 14(28)                           | 10(20)                      | 0.19    |
|                                     | 6months          | 23(46)                           | 24(48)                      |         |
|                                     | Above 6 months   | 13(26)                           | 16(32)                      |         |
| Parents smoking                     | father           | 22(44)                           | 28(56)                      | 0.23    |
|                                     | mother           | 0(0)                             | 0(0)                        |         |
|                                     | Both             | 0(0)                             | 0(0)                        |         |
|                                     | Any one          | 28(56)                           | 0(0)                        |         |
| Regular visits to the health center | yes              | 49(98)                           | 50(50)                      | 0.31    |
|                                     | no               | 1(2)                             | 1(2)                        |         |

\*=P<0.05

**Table 2: comparisons of mean score of awareness and construct of Health Belief Model in intervention and control group**

| variables                     | Time                           | Intervention group<br>Mean(SD) | Control group<br>Mean(SD) | Pvalue | Paired-T |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|
| Awareness                     | Before intervention            | 39.6(1.57)                     | 39.4(1.55)                | 0.8    | 1.15     |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 88(0.96)                       | 40.6(1.48)                | 0.001* | 14.9     |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 42.8(0.98)                     | 42.8(1.59)                | 0.004* | 11.19    |
| Perceived susceptibility      | Before intervention            | 39.6(29.20)                    | 34.5(2.8)                 | 0.08   | 2.41     |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 97.75(0.97)                    | 24.8(2.9)                 | 0.001* | 7.64     |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 95(1.28)                       | 34.8(3.33)                | 0.001* | 5.71     |
| Perceived severity            | Before intervention            | 35.7(3.2)                      | 35.6(4.11)                | 0.8    | 0.6      |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 95.8(2.26)                     | 36.53(3.81)               | 0.006* | 9.14     |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 91(2.58)                       | 36.26(3.84)               | 0.01*  | 6.66     |
| Perceived benefits            | Before intervention            | 45.8(2.77)                     | 40.58(2.21)               | 0.09   | 2.5      |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 98.3(0.5)                      | 42(2.5)                   | 0.001* | 10.47    |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 98.58(0.9)                     | 42.6(2.5)                 | 0.001* | 9.28     |
| Perceived barriers            | Before intervention            | 33.54(17.23)                   | 34.83(16.3)               | 0.763  | 0.21     |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 94.83(1.6)                     | 32.25(16.86)              | 0.001* | 17       |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 94.51(11.5)                    | 34.51(16.5)               | 0.001* | 16       |
| Cues to action                | Before intervention            | 44.25(3.82)                    | 44.75(3.70)               | 0.7    | -0.15    |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 45.16(3.31)                    | 44.75(4)                  | 0.2    | 1.44     |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 47.41(4.41)                    | 45.25(4.10)               | 0.27   | 0.68     |
| Cues to action<br>(personnel) | Before intervention            | 33.54(17.23)                   | 34.83(16.3)               | 0.763  | 0.31     |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 94.83(10.6)                    | 32.25(16.86)              | 0.004* | 17       |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 94.51(11.5)                    | 34.51(16.5)               | 0.001* | 16       |
| Self-efficacy                 | Before intervention            | 44.2(3.85)                     | 43.71(4.77)               | 0.9    | 1.22     |
|                               | Immediately after intervention | 93.90(2.45)                    | 43.19(5.19)               | 0.004* | 7.09     |
|                               | Two months after intervention  | 96.4(2.35)                     | 44.28(5.26)               | 0.001* | 9.12     |

\*= $P < 0.05$ **Table3: comparison of mother's performance related to supplementary food before and two months after intervention**

| Group        | Before intervention       |               | Two months after intervention |               |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
|              | Undesirable (%)           | Desirable (%) | Undesirable (%)               | Desirable (%) |
| intervention | 4(16)                     | 21(84)        | 23(92)                        | 2(8)          |
| control      | 3(15.3)                   | 16(84.2)      | 5(26)                         | 14(73)        |
| Chi-square   | $P_{\text{value}} = 0.13$ |               | $*P_{\text{value}} = 0.001$   |               |

\*= $P < 0.05$

**Table 4: comparison of children's failure to thrive in intervention and control group**

| Group        | Without failure to thrive  |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Intervention | 32(68)                     |
| Control      | 11(22)                     |
| Chi-square   | *P <sub>value</sub> =0.001 |

\*=P&lt;0.05

**Table 5: comparison variance analysis with observation repetition before, during and two months after intervention in control and intervention group**

| Variable                   | Group        | F     | P value |
|----------------------------|--------------|-------|---------|
| Awareness                  | Intervention | 26.2  | 0.000*  |
|                            | Control      | 44.12 | 0.04*   |
| Perceived susceptibility   | Intervention | 55.1  | 0.001*  |
|                            | Control      | 34.2  | 0.03*   |
| Perceived severity         | Intervention | 33.7  | 0.000*  |
|                            | Control      | 21.2  | 0.03*   |
| Perceived barriers         | Intervention | 60    | 0.000*  |
|                            | Control      | 8.1   | 0.35    |
| Perceived benefits         | Intervention | 15.2  | 0.001*  |
|                            | Control      | 4     | 0.01*   |
| Cues to action (personnel) | Intervention | 53.1  | 0.001*  |
|                            | Control      | 8.5   | 0.04*   |
| Self-efficacy              | Intervention | 14.1  | 0.001*  |
|                            | Control      | 35.2  | 0.04*   |

\*=P&lt;0.05

## Discussion

Based on the results, educational program based on HBM was effective in the improvement of mothers performance for proper nutrition of children followed by the reduction of children FTT to the extent that a significant difference was seen in the mean of awareness, information of model and mothers performance in the intervention group.

The awareness score of mothers in intervention group increased remarkably in this study and was greater than that of control group while it had a relative decrease after two months of intervention, confirmed by Sabzmakan's study (29). The present research shows the importance of continuing follow up and education to the stage these educations are internalized in the individual. No studies were found based on which education didn't increase awareness.

Before intervention, mothers perception was lower than medium from rate of susceptibility and probability of inflicting with compensable outcomes of malnutrition for their children. The significant difference after educational intervention between the average of mothers perceived susceptibility of intervention and control group shows the positive effect of education on the promotion of susceptibility about the importance of proper nutrition. Mothers became sensitive against long term and short term outcomes of malnutrition and FTT and suppose their children are inflicted with malnutrition symptoms which is in agreement with Hazavehei (30) and Karimi's(15) findings. Mothers with the 6-9 months old infants had a medium perception of seriousness of malnutrition and FTT symptoms before the intervention. The significant difference after educational intervention between mean score of mothers perceived severity in control and intervention group shows the positive affect of education on the promotion of mother's perceived severity about prevention of children's FTT by

proper nutrition also in the study of Hazavehei et al (28). This construct of HBM was obtained as a strong predictor of infliction for children's FTT. Therefore, the importance of perceived severity as a driving force for promotion of nutritional behavior is evident, which is confirmed with studies of Vakili (20) and Hazavehei (30).

Before the intervention, mothers had moderate awareness of the perceived benefits of proper nutrition and considered it to be time consuming. The significant difference between the mean score of perceived benefits for mothers of control and intervention group shows the positive effect of education on the remarkable promotion of perceived benefits for the 6-9 month old children, as confirmed by Karimi's study (15). This point shows that house chores are the barriers of paying attention to children's proper nutrition. There was an attempt to help mothers to get a correct insight about cost-benefit analysis of proper nutrition. The significant difference after educational intervention between the mean of perceived barriers in both groups shows the positive effect of education on the noticeable reduction. In the Hazavehei et al (28), mother's attention to this point was known to be a strong predictor variable for children's FTT. Therefore, families are forced to remove barriers so that they can promote nutrition level of children. The findings of this research are confirmed with those of Mardani(21) and Rahnavard(22) while having significant difference with those of Turshizie's(26), it seems that education is less effective alone. In Karimi et al study (31) educational program did not have any significant effect on the reduction of perceived barriers in subjects, which was probably due to the effects of social and cultural factors out of the control.

Assessing answers given to cues to action questions by mothers, it was known that for the question "my spouse helps me to

fed the baby” and “my mother helps me to prepare child’s food” the responses were same before and after the intervention with low scores (mostly disagreed and completely disagreed), it means that educational intervention should be involving the family and spouse which is confirmed by Labross et al study(24) performed in Nebraska university, based on which the scores of cues to action before and after education did not have significant difference in intervention group. In Pirzadeh's study (32) with partnership in families and participating in the process of training, practice tips scores before and after the intervention had significant increase and in Shamsi's study (18), as the scores of cues to action was obtained for the frequency distribution of external cues to action (radio, TV, and book) about the self-consumption of medication before and after the intervention, there was a significant increase. In Khazaeipol's study (33), cues to action (physician, radio and TV) were expressed on the number and percentage for intervention and control group without any comparison of scales for scores before and after intervention. In the studies of Hamoule, karimifard, Shadzi, and Vakili (20, 30, 15, 21) the cues to action was not assessed among the formant of HBM. Motamedie's study (34) on coetaneous Leishmaniasis, Karimy 's study (35) on breast self-examination and Rahnavard's (22) on smoking preventive behavior had different findings. Based on our study, educating mothers is not effective to increase the score of cues to action by itself and members of the family must participate in the process of feeding children. There appeared a significant difference between the two groups as the questions related to grandmothers and fathers were removed and with regard to the health personnel's questions for which the training classes were held.

The significant difference after the intervention between the score of self-efficacy of both groups showed the

positive effect of education on the remarkable promotion of perceived self-efficacy of mothers for their children's nutrition, which can be attributed to practical training of preparing high calorie food with cheaper food materials. In the Hazavehei et al (28) study, this component of model was determined to be the strong predictor variable of mothers behavior to prevent the FTT. Therefore, assuring mothers about their ability to provide supplementary food by health personnel is necessary. There was an increase in mothers self-efficacy score during two months intervention resulted from education of practical skills, as confirmed by Kelsey's (25) and Rahnavard's studies (22).

As with mothers performance, it can be said when mother's awareness about proper feeding is increased along with the increase of mother's perceived susceptibility about probability of infliction to malnutrition and increase of mothers perceived severity rate about short and long term outcomes of malnutrition, mothers understand that they can prevent high costs of treatment by spending more time supervising their children's feeding. Through practical training, mothers perceived barriers related to time consuming action of feeding are removed leading to reduction of FTT in intervention group. These findings are comforted with those of Davari's(36) and MOHME (37) but not with those of Toshizi et al(26) in which calcium uptake in intervention group increased 82.29 mg. in this study; it seems that the two month opportunity is small to change such behaviors.

### Conclusions

Educational planning based on HBM affects positively all the aspects of behavior and juxtaposition of all factors increases the efficacy of children, the importance of following up the education to increase durability of behavior and involving the family in education plays a great role in cues to action. Producing a

mutual interaction between health personnel and family members, encouraging mothers to implement better behavior through modern methods instructed by health personnel can guarantee the health of all society.

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