



## International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: [www.ijrpr.com](http://www.ijrpr.com) ISSN 2582-7421

# Economic Factors Contributing to Food Nutrition Insecurity among Children Under Five Years in Iringa District Council, Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the social, cultural, and economic factors contributing to food nutrition insecurity among children under five years in Iringa District Council, Tanzania, guided by the Social Ecological Theory. Using a mixed-method, cross-sectional design, data from parents, guardians, caregivers and key informants revealed that limited healthcare access, weak social support, cultural norms, low parental education, and household financial limits are key contributors. The research highlights the need for integrated interventions such as improving healthcare, providing targeted nutrition education, addressing destructive cultural practices, and promoting income-generating activities. Tailoring strategies to the local social, cultural, and economic context can improve child nutrition and growth. The study also emphasizes the importance of government efforts like training health workers and organizing awareness events to bridge existing knowledge gaps and foster better nutrition outcomes for young children.*

**Keywords:** Food Nutrition Insecurity, Children under five, Household income; Social, Cultural & Economic Factors.

### Introduction

Food nutrition insecurity remains a significant public health issue in Tanzania, especially among children under five, with about one-third affected by stunting (World Health Organization-WHO, 2021). Malnutrition leads to impaired growth, cognitive development, and immune function, impacting children's well-being and future productivity. Despite national efforts like the 2020-2025 Nutrition Strategy, progress is uneven, particularly in rural areas like Iringa District Council, where high malnutrition rates are driven by poverty, limited access to nutritious foods, poor feeding practices, and socio-cultural influences (Mbilinyi *et al.*, 2020; Galiatano *et al.*, 2023). Previous studies identified socio-cultural practices, household food insecurity, and maternal knowledge gaps as key factors. This study aims to explore social, economic, and cultural determinants affecting child nutrition, emphasizing the role of education and awareness, which remains poorly understood. Addressing these factors is vital for designing targeted interventions to improve child wellbeing and achieve sustainable progress in the district.

### Theoretical Perspectives

This study was guided by The Social Ecological Theory (SET), introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in the 1970s, focused on how environment interacts with individual development, emphasizing that behavior was influenced by multiple levels of surrounding systems such as family, community, and society (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory shifted from viewing individuals in isolation to understanding that human behavior was shaped by broader social and structural contexts, including policies and cultural norms. Over time, SET recognized that development occurred through dynamic interactions within nested systems that constantly influenced and reshaped individuals. In this study, SET helped explain how various factors—such as family income, community resources, healthcare, and cultural beliefs—affected children's access to nutritious food. Despite interventions in Iringa, many families still lacked sufficient access to healthy foods due to socio-economic constraints and limited maternal education, highlighting the importance of addressing multiple levels of influence to improve nutrition outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

### Empirical Review

Economic factors contributing to food nutrition insecurity among children under five years, employment opportunities and food nutrition insecurity for children under five, recent studies in Tanzania by Mbunda *et al.* (2023), Kamwendo & Mkapa (2024), and Kihupi *et al.* (2023) highlight that stable employment, formal jobs, and educational opportunities are crucial for enhancing household income and food security, directly benefiting child nutrition. Unemployment and informal employment often limit access to nutritious food, exacerbating malnutrition among children under five. Improving employment prospects and vocational training is key to ensuring better nutritional outcomes for vulnerable households. Food prices and food nutrition

insecurity for children under five, Economic factors such as fluctuating food prices, inflation, and socioeconomic disparities significantly impact the nutritional well-being of children under five across regions, leading to malnutrition, growth issues, and diet-related disparities (Mshinga *et al.*, 2023; Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Rossi & Veronesi, 2023). While rising costs hinder access to essential nutrients in Tanzania and Southeast Asia, socioeconomic inequalities in Europe also challenge healthy diets for low-income families. Addressing these economic and social disparities is vital to improving food security and child health globally. Household income level and food nutrition insecurity for children under five, Research shows that economic factors, such as household wealth, shocks, and income growth, strongly influence child nutrition, with wealthier families experiencing better outcomes and economic fluctuations increasing malnutrition risks (Rahman *et al.*, 2022; Kauky *et al.*, 2021; Haddad *et al.*, 2003). Effective interventions combining income support and nutrition programs are crucial to reducing malnutrition and improving child health (Haddad *et al.*, 2003). Addressing economic vulnerabilities is essential for enhancing nutritional outcomes among vulnerable children.

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## Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Iringa District Council, focusing on three wards Kalenga, Mseke, and Ulanda where malnutrition and stunting among children under five were prevalent due to food insecurity. It employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The cross-sectional design captured data at one point in time, exploring factors like feeding practices, household income, and parental involvement. The target population included 103 parents, guardians, and caregivers, selected through simple random sampling, while key informants such as health workers and community officers were purposively chosen. Data collection involved structured questionnaires for quantitative data and in-depth interviews for qualitative insights, complemented by secondary sources like government reports and research articles. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan formula, and data analysis involved descriptive statistics with SPSS and thematic analysis for qualitative data. To ensure validity, tools were reviewed by experts, and reliability was maintained through pilot testing. Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including obtaining approvals, informed permission, and ensuring confidentiality. Overall, this methodology aimed to provide reliable, rich data to understand and address food and nutrition insecurity among children in the district.

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## Findings

### Age group of the respondents

Results Table 1 largest group was aged 26-35 (32.0%) of the respondents were aged between 36-45 years, and 28.2% of the respondents were aged between 15-25 years old. Results also show that only small fractions (1.9%) of respondents were over 45years old. Indicating limited representation of older adults; this matches the known demographic trend in Iringa District Council where the population is largely young to middle-aged, with fewer older residents. Understanding the age distribution and demographic profile is essential for interpreting factors like food and nutrition insecurity among children under five, as caregiver age influences childcare and resource access.

The study mainly reflects the views of younger and middle-aged caregivers, with limited input from older generations. According to the FinScope Tanzania (2017) report, most residents of Iringa live in rural areas, are young, economically active (mainly aged 25–64), and have relatively high education levels, often with tertiary education above the national average. The population primarily depends on agriculture, casual labor, and informal businesses, facing financial challenges due to irregular income but managing finances carefully. Access to financial services is widespread, with most residents living near service points, supporting the region's economic growth. These demographic and economic insights highlight the interconnectedness of livelihood patterns, vulnerabilities, and financial access, emphasizing how young, rural populations engaged in agriculture and informal work experience financial instability, which can be mitigated through tailored financial services to promote resilience and development.

### Education Level of the respondents

Findings from Table 1 reveal that among 103 respondents in Iringa District Council, a significant portion of caregivers have low to moderate educational attainment, with 9.7% having informal education, 41.7% completing primary education, 38.8% with secondary education, and only 9.7% attaining post-secondary education. This distribution indicates that limited formal education among caregivers is associated with a lack of nutritional knowledge, which can negatively impact child feeding practices, breastfeeding, and overall child health. The study emphasizes the importance of enhancing educational opportunities and providing targeted nutrition information, especially for those with limited formal education, to enable better-informed decisions for child care. Research by Grant *et al.* (2022) further supports this, demonstrating that participation in community nutrition education sessions significantly improves caregivers' knowledge and practices, leading to improved dietary diversity and reduced malnutrition among children under five. These findings underscore the critical role of sustained, community-level nutrition education interventions and the need to strengthen training for health workers to effectively promote healthier feeding behaviors.

The relationship between caregiver education levels and nutrition knowledge highlights a persistent challenge in improving child nutrition outcomes in Tanzania. Caregivers with lower education levels tend to have less awareness of essential nutrition practices, which contributes to high rates of stunting and food insecurity in the region. The study underscores that improving educational opportunities and delivering targeted behavior change communication can empower caregivers to make healthier feeding decisions, ultimately promoting better growth and development for children. These insights suggest that strengthening nutrition education and communication efforts are vital strategies for enhancing child health, as increased caregiver knowledge correlates with better feeding practices. Generally, focusing on education and community engagement can significantly improve child nutrition programs in Tanzania, leading to healthier and more resilient children.

### Occupation of the respondents

In Iringa District Council, respondents' occupations mainly include farming (33%), small businesses (38.8%), and wage labor (28.2%), reflecting the region's typical livelihood patterns. Farming is the most common activity due to the area's agricultural focus, while many engage in informal trade or entrepreneurial ventures through small businesses. A significant portion also works in wage employment across different sectors. This diverse occupation mix aligns with the local economy, where agriculture remains dominant, complemented by opportunities in small enterprises and wage jobs. Research by Grant *et al.* (2022) emphasizes that consistent participation in community nutrition education can improve caregivers' knowledge and practices, leading to better dietary diversity and improved child health outcomes, especially through increased vitamin A intake. Overall, these occupation patterns and ongoing nutrition education are vital for addressing child malnutrition and food insecurity in rural Tanzania.

**Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents**

Parameters	Frequency (N=103)	Percent
<b>Age of the Respondents</b>		
15-25	29	28.2
26 -35	39	37.9
36-45	33	32.0
More than 45	2	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education Level of Respondents</b>		
Informal education	10	9.7
Primary	43	41.7
Secondary	40	38.8
Post-Secondary Education	10	9.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Occupation of the Respondents</b>		
Farming	34	33.0
Small business	40	38.8
Wage Labour	29	28.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Researcher 2025

### Economic factors contributing to food nutrition insecurity among children under five years in Iringa District Council, Tanzania

Under this objective, the researcher aimed to assess the economic factors contributing to food nutrition insecurity among children under five years in Iringa District Council, Tanzania, with the goal of providing education and understanding to the community of Iringa District Council. To achieve this, the researcher presented several key statements, encouraging respondents to express their views by indicating their agreement or disagreement with each statement.

### Employment opportunities and food nutrition insecurity for children under five

The findings from Table 2 indicate that 32.0% of respondents perceive that there are few employment opportunities available, while 17.5% reported that there are none. The research findings reveal that in Iringa District, most respondents see employment opportunities as limited, with 32% reporting few options and 17.5% indicating none at all, while only 1.9% believe there are many opportunities. Unemployment is also significant, with 11.7% of people not working. Job stability is generally low, as 19.4% describe their employment as unstable, and only a small fraction, 1.9%, feel their jobs are very stable. Additionally, a notable number of respondents are unsure about the availability of jobs. These conditions of limited and insecure employment likely impact household income and access to food, contributing to food and nutrition insecurity among families with young children. Overall, the community faces substantial economic challenges that affect their well-being and food security.

**Table 2. Availability of employment opportunities in the community**

Variable	Frequency	Percent
<b>Employment opportunities in your community</b>		
Few	33	32.0
None	18	17.5
Not employed	12	11.7
Many	2	1.9
Unsure	4	3.9
<b>Your economic status stable</b>		
Somewhat stable	12	11.7
Unstable	20	19.4
Very stable	2	1.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher 2025**

Msuya & Kessy (2020) found that limited access to stable employment significantly impacts household food security and child nutrition in rural Tanzania, with higher unemployment linked to increased malnutrition among children under five. They emphasize the need for employment programs to improve food security. Similarly, Mwenda & Ndunguru (2022) highlighted that low community employment levels lead to reduced household income, restricting access to adequate diets for young children. Both studies underscore that enhancing employment opportunities is essential for reducing childhood malnutrition and ensuring food security in rural areas of Tanzania.

One of the key informant from Ulanda Ward stated that:

As I continue to engage with the community, it's becoming increasingly clear that the job situation is a pressing concern. While there are some job opportunities available, they are scarce and often come with low wages. I've spoken to numerous residents who are currently employed, but they're living with a sense of uncertainty, worried about the possibility of layoffs and unsure about their long-term job security. It's a paradox that labor is in high demand, yet wages are not keeping pace with the rising cost of living. As a result, many individuals are taking on multiple jobs just to make ends meet, which is placing a significant strain on the community. The stress and uncertainty that comes with this reality is taking a toll on the well-being of community members, and it's necessary that we work together to find solutions to address this issue. (CDO in Iringa District Council, August 2025)

The results aligned with the study done by Chilenga & Mwafurirwa (2021) results showed that in Malawi (a Central African country) examined how employment insecurity affects household food security and child nutrition. The authors found that unstable employment and low income levels hinder access to sufficient and nutritious food, leading to higher rates of malnutrition among children under five. The research underscores that job instability, especially in rural settings, exacerbates food insecurity and impacts child health outcomes.

The results aligned with findings from Kawango & Nsubuga (2020), this paper from Uganda (Central Africa) which emphasized and explored how limited employment opportunities in rural communities contribute to household food insecurity and malnutrition among children under five. The authors highlight that seasonal and informal employment results in inconsistent income, affecting household ability to purchase diverse and nutritious foods necessary for children's growth. They advocate for rural employment programs to improve nutrition outcomes.

The results aligned with findings from Mselle & Kassa (2022), focused on how employment opportunities (or the lack thereof) influence food and nutrition security among households with children under five in rural Tanzania. The findings indicate that unemployment or unstable jobs limit household income, reducing access to adequate food and increasing the risk of malnutrition in young children. The authors emphasize that enhancing rural employment could significantly improve child nutrition and health.

The findings indicate critical labor market vulnerabilities within the community studied. The predominance of "Few" or "No" job opportunity responses aligns with recent research showing persistent challenges in job creation in many regions (OECD, 2025). Employment instability remains a significant concern, with nearly one-fifth of respondents categorizing their work status as unstable. This reflects global trends where job insecurity and underemployment hamper economic security (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2025). Collectively, these perceptions suggest economic insecurity affecting a substantial portion of the community, posing challenges for income stability and social mobility. Targeted employment policies focusing on increasing job availability and promoting employment stability are essential to alleviate these challenges.

#### **Response on food prices and food nutrition insecurity for children under five**

The results below Table 3 show that, the a large portion of respondents, 41.7%, reported that rising food prices significantly affect their ability to access nutritious food, while 9.7% said they are somehow affected, and only 3.9% reported no effect. Regarding the frequency of this impact, 7.8% said it always affects them, 27.2% said often, 5.8% sometimes, and 3.9% rarely or never. These results indicate that rising food prices are a major barrier for many families, limiting their access to nutritious food, which can contribute to food and nutrition insecurity among children under five in the district.

**Table 3. Food prices and food nutrition insecurity for children under five (n=103)**

Parameter	Frequency	Percent
<b>Does food prices affect your child nutrition?</b>		
Not affected	4	3.9
Somehow affected	10	9.7
Significantly affected	43	41.7
<b>Are you affected with the food prices?</b>		
Always	8	7.8
Often	28	27.2
Rarely/Never	4	3.9
Sometimes	6	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Researcher 2025**

Results Table 3 show, (n=103) show the extent to which respondents are affected by the parameter under study. A significant proportion of respondents, 43 individuals (41.7%), reported being *significantly affected*, indicating that the parameter exerts considerable influence on their experiences. Additionally, 28 respondents (27.2%) stated they are *often affected*, further underscoring the parameter's strong impact on nearly two-thirds of the sample. A smaller proportion, 10 respondents (9.7%), reported being *somehow affected*, while 8 respondents (7.8%) indicated they are *always affected*. On the other hand, very few participants reported limited or no effect: 4 respondents (3.9%) said they are *not affected*, and the same number (3.9%) indicated they are *rarely or never affected*. Similarly, only 6 respondents (5.8%) reported being *sometimes affected*.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that a majority of respondents (76.7%) fall into the categories of being *significantly affected*, *often affected*, or *always affected*. This suggests that the parameter under investigation plays a substantial role in shaping respondents' experiences, while only a minority reported negligible or no effect.

During an interview one of the community health worker stated that:

For me, the problem is limited access to nutritious food. Even when parents have some money, foods like fruits, meat, or milk are not always available in nearby shops or markets. Sometimes you have to travel far, which is not possible for the most of the parents. (CHW in Iringa District Council, August 2025)

Another community health worker stated that:

From what I observe in the clinic, economic difficulties make it hard for families to prioritize children's nutrition. Parents often choose cheaper, filling foods rather than nutritious options. At the same time, some families lack awareness about the importance of dietary diversity. (CHW in Iringa District Council, August 2025)

The study sought to explore professional opinions on the most common causes of food nutrition insecurity among children under five years within the ward. Interviews were conducted with four respondents, including health workers, caregivers, and local leaders. Their views revealed two major contributing factors:

Results from this study aligned with those done by Mwang'onda *et al.* (2021), examined how fluctuations in food prices affect nutritional outcomes among children under five in rural Tanzanian communities. The study found that increased food prices significantly limited access to nutritious foods, leading to higher rates of undernutrition, stunting, and micronutrient deficiencies. The authors emphasized that economic barriers driven by food price instability play a critical role in shaping children's nutritional status in rural areas.

The effects of rising food prices on household food security and child nutrition in rural Bangladeshi communities. The findings indicated that increased food costs led to reduced dietary diversity and inadequate nutrient intake among children under five, contributing to higher rates of stunting and wasting. The study highlighted the need for policies that stabilize food prices to improve nutritional outcomes for vulnerable children. These findings are similar to that of the reviewed literature. (Lee *et al.*, 2022)

The findings by Mwaseba, *et al.* (2016) employs a precise qualitative approach to investigate how food culture shapes child feeding practices in rural Tanzanian communities. Situated within the disciplines of cultural anthropology and nutrition, the research highlights the socially constructed nature of feeding behaviors, emphasizing the interplay of cultural norms, beliefs, and economic factors.

Their findings demonstrate that practices such as pre-lacteal feeding and limited exclusive breastfeeding are culturally embedded, influenced by symbolic rituals and perceptions around cleanliness, identity, and social belonging. Milk-based nutritional interventions face challenges in uptake due to these cultural frameworks, underscoring the need for integrative health interventions that respect and work within existing cultural logics.

The research exemplifies academic writing that blends ethnographic sensitivity with public health concerns, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural determinants of child nutrition. It underscores the necessity of culturally informed program design that engages local actors and social networks to effect meaningful behavioral change.

#### Household income level and food nutrition insecurity among children under five years

The results presented below Table 4 indicates that all 103 households surveyed, representing 100%, reported experiencing issues related to household income levels. Specifically, every household acknowledged their income situation as a contributing factor to food and nutrition insecurity among children under five years. Among the factors caused by household income, financial stress was identified by 65 households, accounting for approximately 59% of the total. Additionally, 38 households, or about 41%, reported that their income was insufficient to meet their family's nutritional needs. These findings highlight that a significant majority of households face financial challenges, which directly impact their ability to provide adequate nutrition for young children. The results underscore the critical link between household income and food security, emphasizing the need for interventions targeting economic stability to improve nutritional outcomes among children under five.

**Table 4: Household income level and food nutrition insecurity (n=103)**

Parameters	Frequency (n=103)	Percent
<b>Affected with low income in your family</b>		
Yes	103	100
No	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Factors caused by household income level</b>		
Financial stress	65	59
Insufficient to meet family's nutritional needs	38	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher 2025**

Results Table 4 clearly show that household income level is a critical factor influencing food and nutrition insecurity among children under five years. All the respondents (100%) agreed that income affects their ability to provide food. This means that in this community, no household is free from the impact of income constraints when it comes to ensuring adequate nutrition for children. When we look at the specific effects, the majority of families (about 63%) reported that low income creates financial stress. This stress is not just about lack of money, but also about the constant worry and emotional burden of not being able to afford enough nutritious food. On the other hand, about 37% of households pointed out that their income is simply insufficient to meet their family's nutritional needs. This reflects real shortages families are forced to reduce meal quality, quantity, or skip meals entirely, which directly threatens child health.

The findings therefore reveals a strong relationship as household income decreases, food and nutrition insecurity increases. Families either experience high financial stress, or their limited income prevents them from buying nutritious foods altogether. In both cases, young children are the most affected, since they depend entirely on household resources for proper growth and development. Every household in the study acknowledged that income affects their ability to provide food. Most families (63%) suffer financial stress due to low income, while 37% cannot meet nutritional needs at all. This demonstrates that income level is a powerful driver of food insecurity, where children under five face the highest risks of malnutrition.

Different researchers have highlighted the strong connection between household income levels and food and nutrition insecurity among children under five years old. For instance, a study by Johnson *et al.* (2022) emphasized that families with lower income are significantly more likely to struggle with providing adequate nutrition, which can adversely affect the growth and development of young children. They found that financial stress and insufficient income are primary factors contributing to food insecurity, a pattern that has persisted over recent years, especially during economic downturns caused by global events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Smith *et al.* (2023) noted that efforts to improve household income could directly impact the nutritional status of children under five, highlighting the importance of economic support programs. Overall, these findings underscore the critical need for policies aimed at alleviating financial stress among vulnerable families to ensure better nutritional outcomes for young children in the years spanning 2021 to 2024.

During an interview with a community development officer stated that:

I think the biggest issue is economic challenges. Most families here have very low incomes, and when they cannot afford a balanced diet, they end up giving children only what is available, like maize porridge or rice, without adding proteins or vegetables. (CDO in Iringa District Council, August 2025)

Another key informant stated that:

Rising food prices are a significant challenge for families with low incomes, making it difficult for them to provide their children with a balanced diet. With limited financial resources, these families are concerned that their children are not getting the essential nutrients needed for healthy growth. The struggle to afford nutritious food is a common issue for many low-income families, who often have to make difficult choices when food prices increase. They may be forced to skip meals or opt for cheaper, less healthy options, which raises concerns about malnutrition. (WEO in Iringa District Council, August 2025)

Results from this study aligned with those done by Mrema *et al.* (2021) where participants conducted in rural Tanzania found that low-income households predominantly rely on staple foods such as maize and rice, with limited access to proteins and vegetables due to financial constraints. The researchers highlighted that economic challenges and rising food prices significantly impair families' ability to provide balanced diets to children. Many caregivers reported resorting to cheaper, less nutritious foods, raising concerns about malnutrition and poor growth outcomes among children.

Results from this study aligned with those from Kessy *et al.* (2022), they observed that rising food prices and household poverty are major barriers to achieving adequate nutrition for children. The study reported that many low-income families often skip meals or purchase cheaper, less nutritious foods like maize and rice, neglecting essential nutrients from vegetables, fruits, and proteins. The authors emphasized that these economic and price-related challenges contribute to increased rates of child malnutrition and stunted growth. These responses highlight how household income directly contribute the ability to access nutritious food, which is crucial for the healthy development of children under five years old.

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## Discussion

This study in Iringa District Council showed that food nutrition insecurity among children under five is driven by social, cultural, and economic factors, with all 103 households recognizing that low household income greatly affects their ability to provide proper nutrition. Most households experienced financial stress, and many said their income was insufficient to meet their children's nutritional needs, highlighting the strong connection between poverty and malnutrition. Limited employment opportunities, unstable jobs, and high unemployment worsened economic hardships, while rising food prices significantly impacted about 42% of families, forcing many to rely on cheaper, less nutritious foods like maize or rice, with nutritious foods becoming scarce or too expensive. Caregivers' low education levels hindered their knowledge of proper feeding practices, affecting child health and growth, while cultural beliefs often restricted dietary diversity. Economic vulnerabilities led families to skip meals or choose unhealthy options, further jeopardizing children's development. The community mainly relied on farming, small businesses, and wage labor, with many facing irregular or informal employment, which limited income and food access. Respondents emphasized that rising food costs, limited job prospects, and low income perpetuate a cycle of poverty and malnutrition, contributing to high rates of stunting. These findings highlight the urgent need for policies that create stable employment, control food prices, and improve caregiver education to effectively address childhood malnutrition in the region.

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## Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of education for mothers, guardians, caregivers, health workers, and the community in Iringa District Council to improve child well-being. It shows that social factors like accessible healthcare and community support help ensure children get proper nutrition. Cultural practices, such as breastfeeding and feeding habits, also play a key role in child health, influenced by traditions and economic means. Economic factors, including employment and food prices, greatly affect a family's ability to provide nutritious meals; stable jobs allow families to buy diverse foods, while high food costs can limit what children eat. Overall, understanding how social, cultural, and economic factors impact child nutrition can help communities' better support children's growth and development.

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## Recommendations

The study recommends that local government and health authorities keep health facilities accessible and well-equipped to provide key child health services like vaccinations and nutrition advice. Mothers should be encouraged to join community support groups, which offer helpful resources and knowledge to improve child nutrition. Outreach programs can help raise awareness about using available social support effectively. Mothers should also be supported to continue good feeding practices, such as breastfeeding and timely complementary feeding, with educational campaigns reinforcing healthy traditions and correcting harmful ones. Training programs can help caregivers combine cultural practices with scientific nutritional knowledge for better child growth. Additionally, efforts should focus on creating stable jobs and income opportunities for families, along with food subsidies or community gardens to reduce the impact of high food prices. Caregivers should also receive guidance on budgeting to ensure they can provide consistent, nutritious meals for their children.

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