

The influence of maternal dietary diversity on child dietary diversity in Nepal: A structural equation modelling approach

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BACKGROUND

- Nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 3 children are micronutrient deficient in South Asia.
- Maternal diet reflects and shapes child's diet.
- Limited research in Nepal has examined the association between maternal and child dietary diversity (DD)– we fill this research gap.

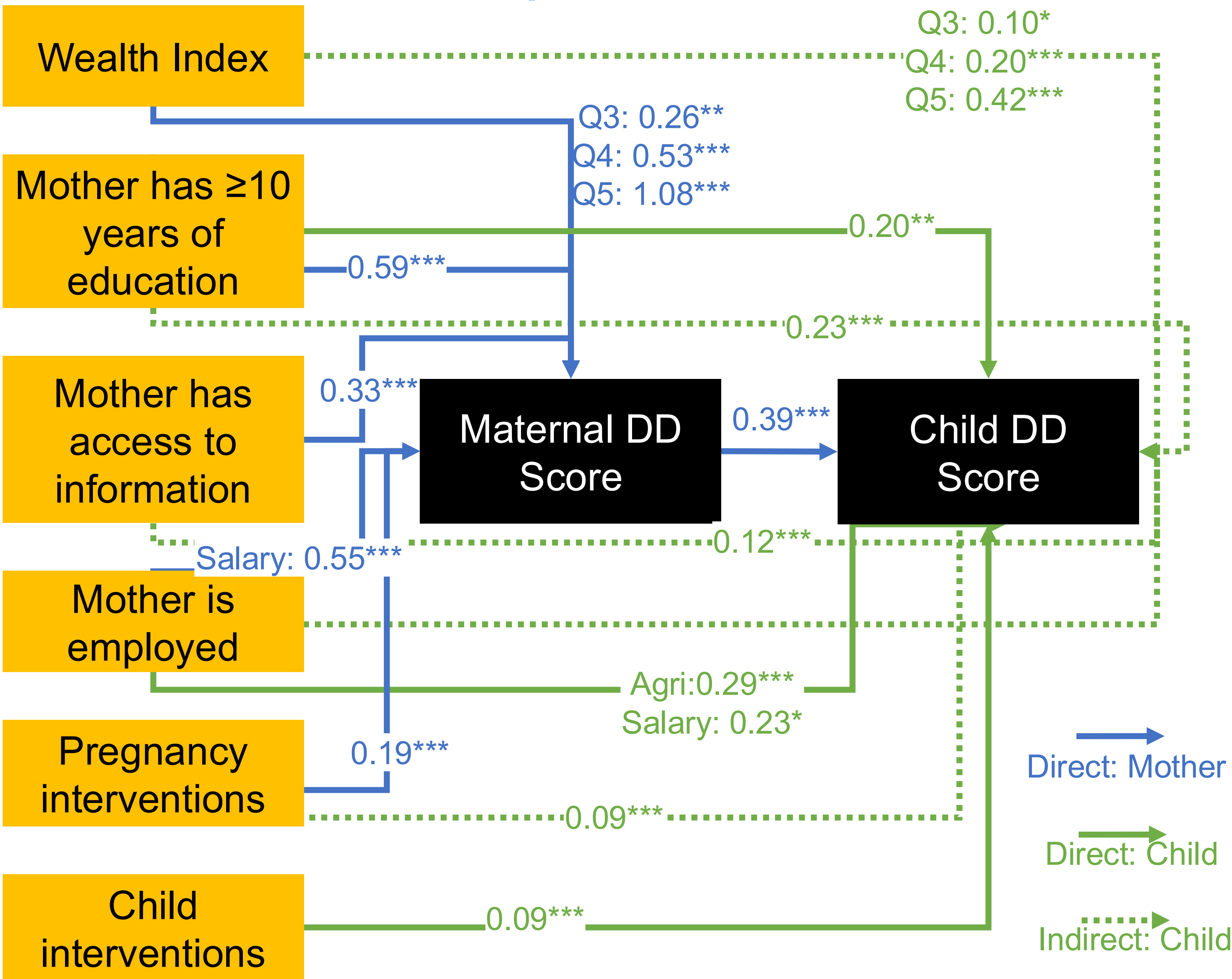
METHODS

- We used DHS surveys in Nepal between 2016 and 2022.
- We assessed trends in DD among mothers and children aged 6–23 months.
- We applied regression and structural equation models to identify key factors associated with DD.

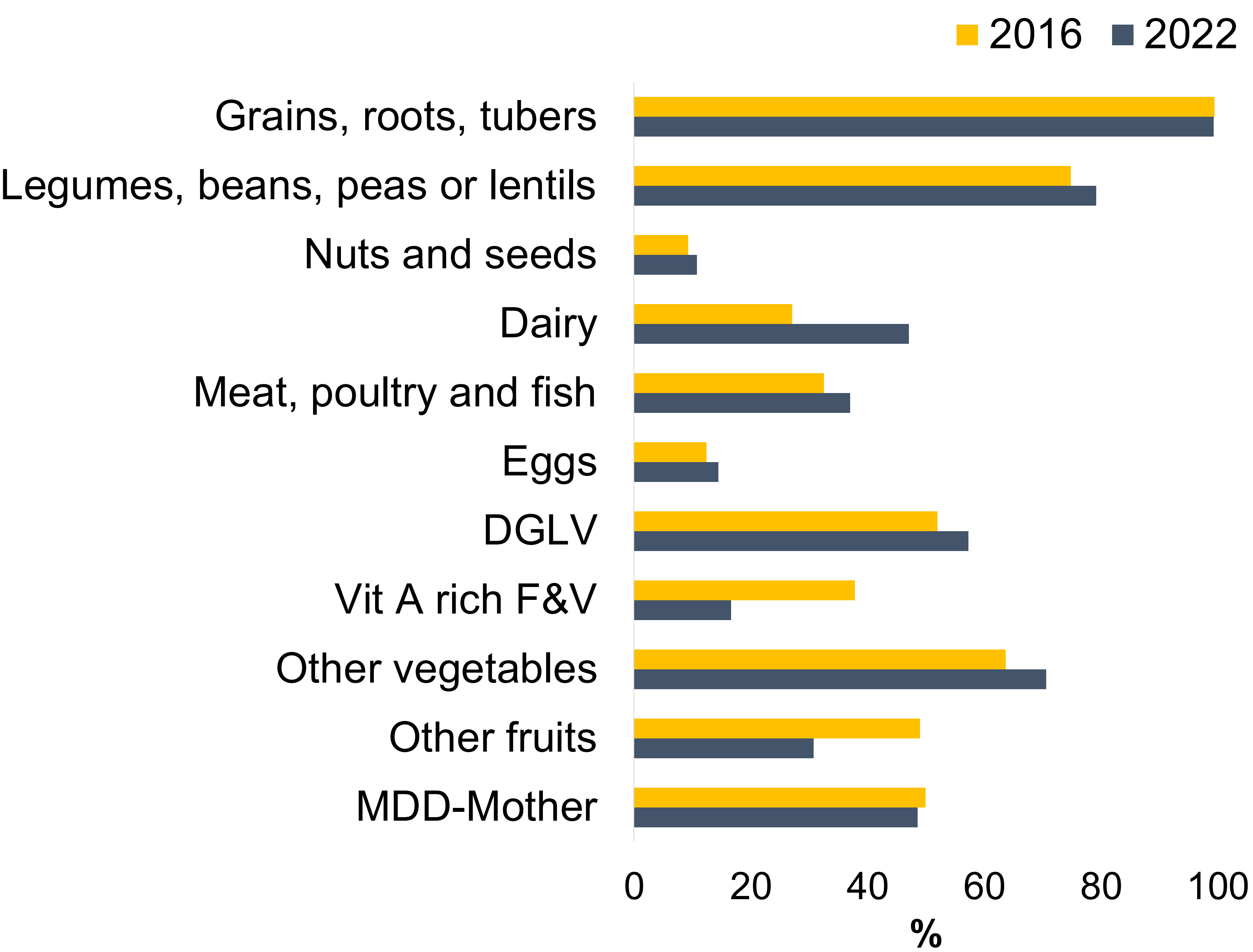
RESULTS

- Maternal minimum DD (MDD) decreased (50% to 48.5%) while child MDD increased marginally (44.3% to 47.2%).
- Both diets dominated by starchy staples, with limited intake of nutrient-rich foods.
- SEM analysis revealed that maternal DD had strong direct effects on child DD ($\beta = 0.39$).**
- Mothers' education and employment emerged as shared determinants of maternal and child DD.
- Wealth, and access to information were associated with maternal diets.
- Child interventions were associated with child diets.

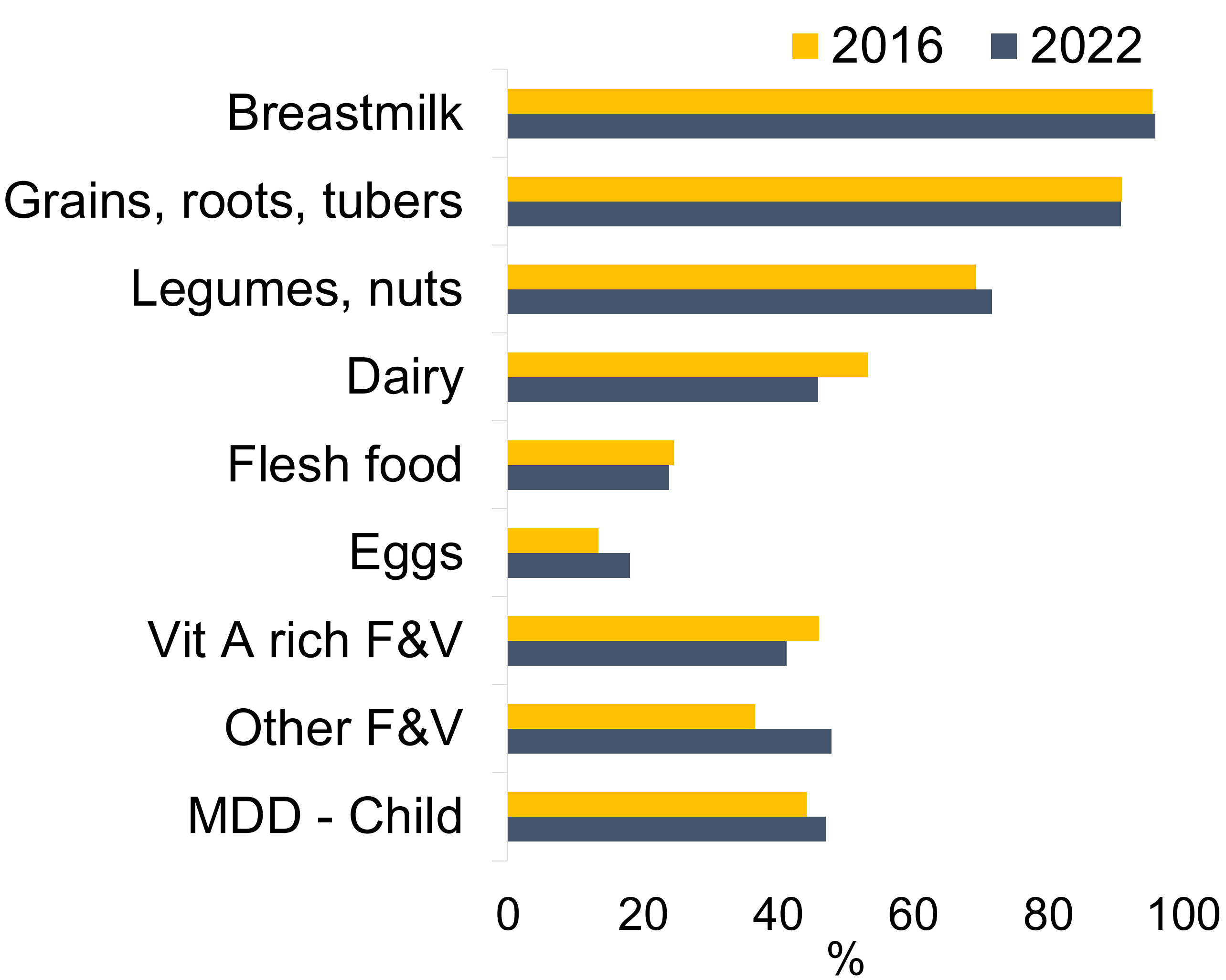
Structural Equation Model



Trends in dietary diversity among mothers



Trends in dietary diversity among children



CONCLUSION

- Dietary diversity is sub-optimal among mothers and children in Nepal.
- Maternal diet was a critical pathway linking socioeconomic factors to child diet.
- Maternal employment and education were linked with both mother and child diets (direct and indirect).
- To accelerate progress, national strategies should focus on expanding women's economic opportunities, improving education, access to nutrition information, and integrating dietary counselling into pregnancy and child health services.