

# Engaging Fathers for Effective Child Nutrition and Development in Tanzania (EFFECTS)

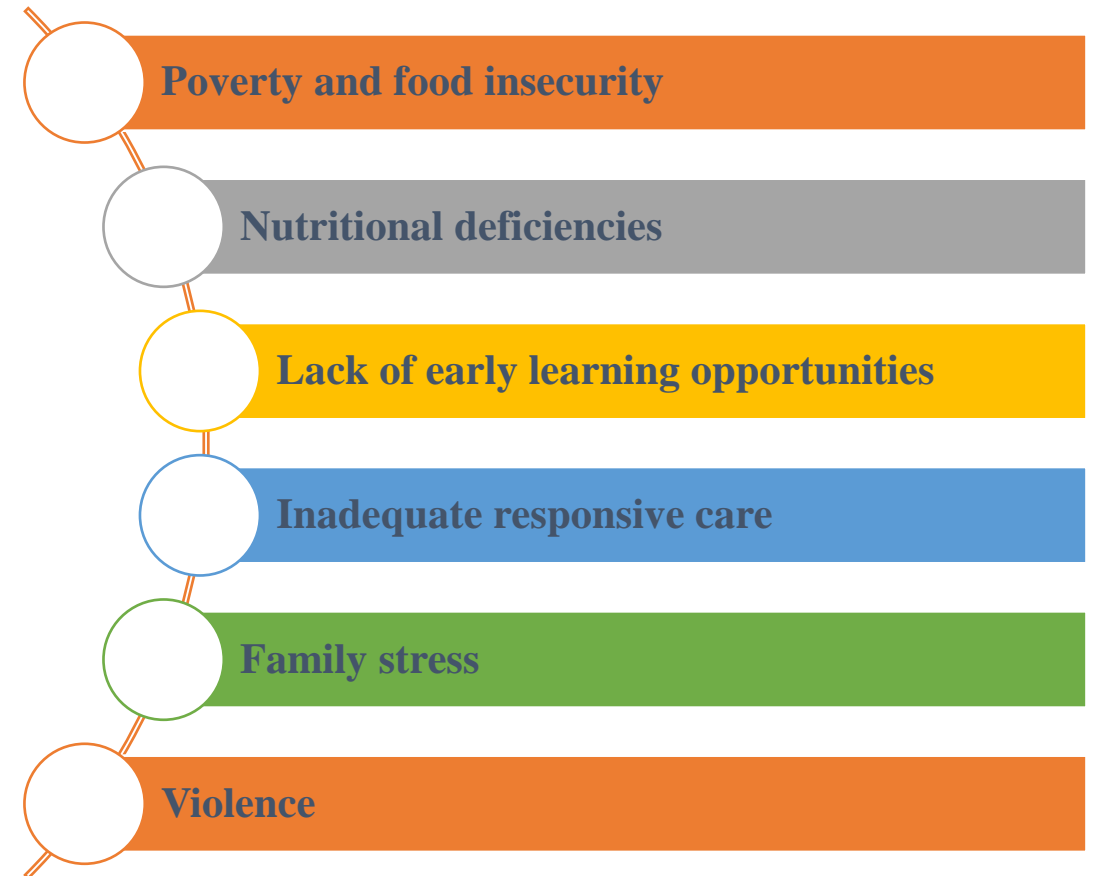
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# Nutrition and Parenting Interventions in Early Childhood

- Nutrition interventions support young children's development, but alone are inadequate to promote early child development (ECD).
- Parenting interventions have shown consistent beneficial impacts on ECD.
- Combining nutrition and parenting can address multiple risks.
- However, most nutrition and parenting programmes focus on the mother alone.
- Father-inclusive early childhood programmes may yield additional benefits for the child, mother, and father.



# Challenges and Opportunities in Mara, Tanzania

- Malnutrition and poor ECD are prevalent in the region.
- High acceptance of patriarchal norms, men's household domination and women's primarily domestic role.
- Gender inequities in care and household responsibilities may impede full potential of early childhood intervention.
- Strong network of dedicated Community Health Workers (CHWs) who can reach both female and male caregivers.

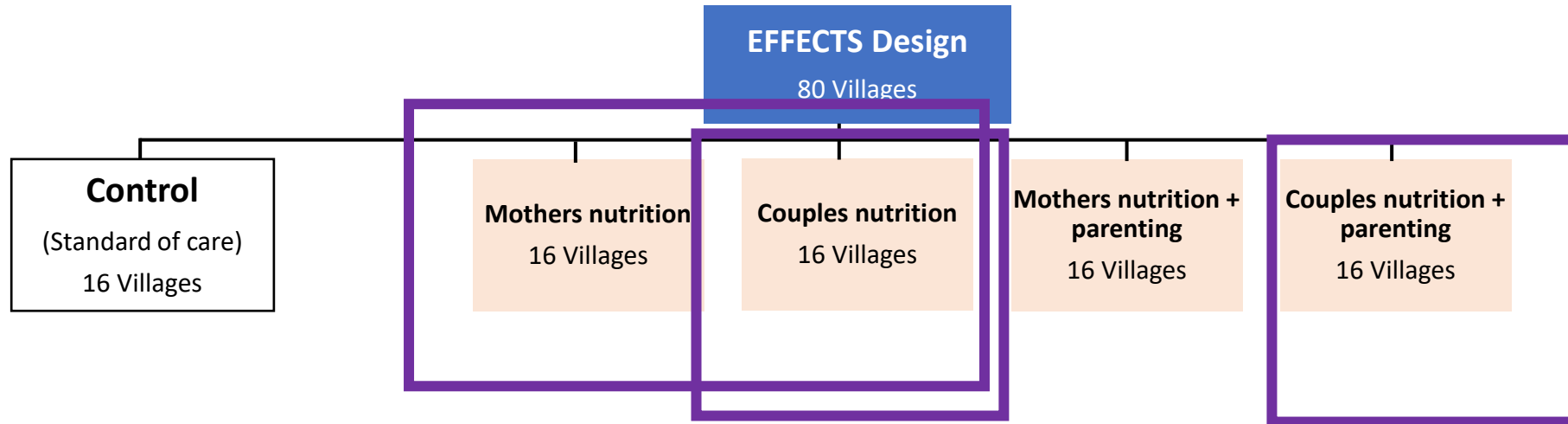


# Research Goals

1. Will **bundling nutrition and parenting (e.g., responsive play and communication) interventions** improve child nutrition and development more so than a nutrition intervention without parenting?
2. Will **engaging fathers** (in addition to mothers) improve child nutrition and development more so than engaging only mothers?

# Study Design

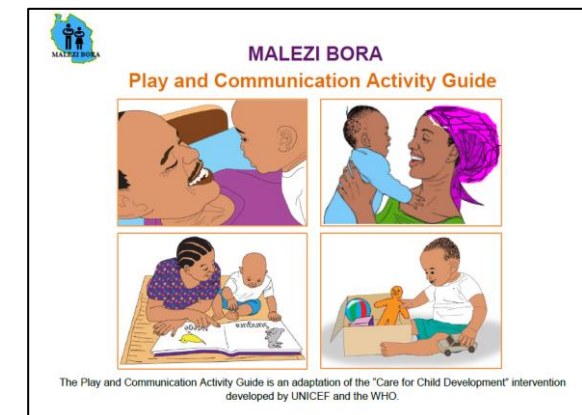
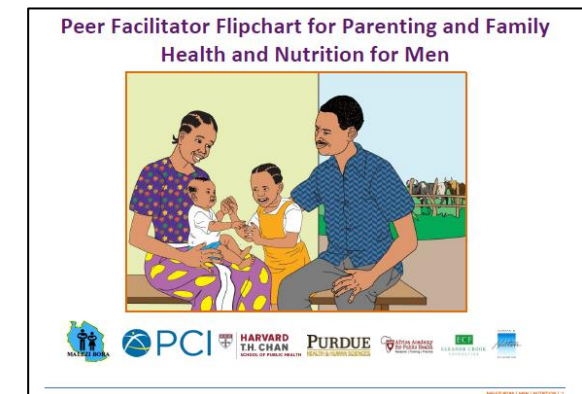
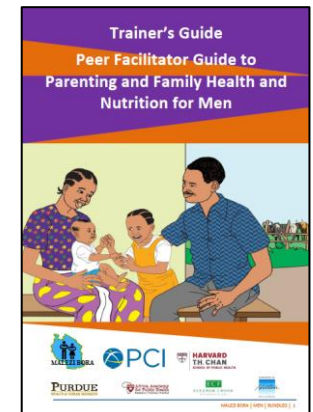
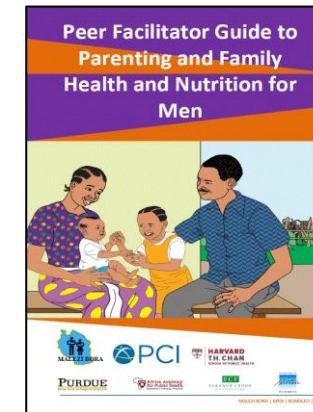
- Cluster randomized controlled trial with 5 study arms



- Inclusion Criteria: index child 0-18 months of age; mothers and fathers living together at least 10 months a year; household intends to remain in study area for duration of study; both parents provided informed consent.
- Primary outcomes: ECD (BSID III) and Child Dietary Diversity

# Intervention Delivery: *Malezi Bora*

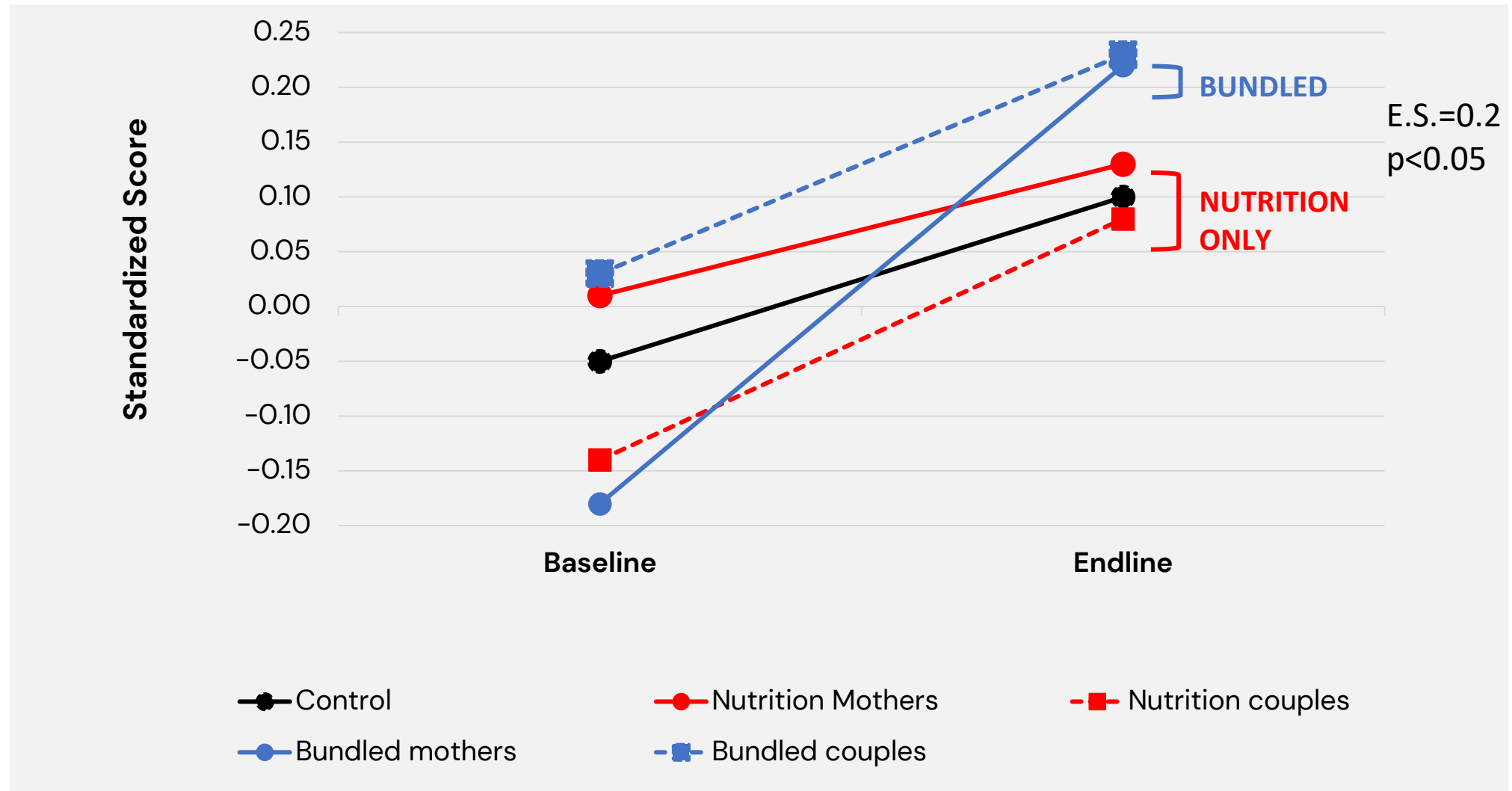
- Bi-monthly peer groups led by CHWs for first nine months (18 sessions)
- In father engagement arms, separate mother and father groups with some joint sessions with couples
- 4 month pause due to COVID-19, resumed last 3 months (6 sessions) with home visit model
- Intervention packages consisted of training guide, facilitator's manual, flipchart, story book, recipe book, and play and communication guide (bundled arms)
  - All groups received nutrition education & couples engagement (gender attitudes, managing stress, resolving conflict, co-decision making).
- Behavior change approach entailed discussion, problem-solving, coaching, story-telling, skill-building, scaffolding of skills, commitment setting
- CHWs trained for 10 days; skill-based and coaching-oriented. Follow-up trainings and group mentorship provided quarterly. Bundled arms received additional training on stimulation activities



# ECD & Parenting Results

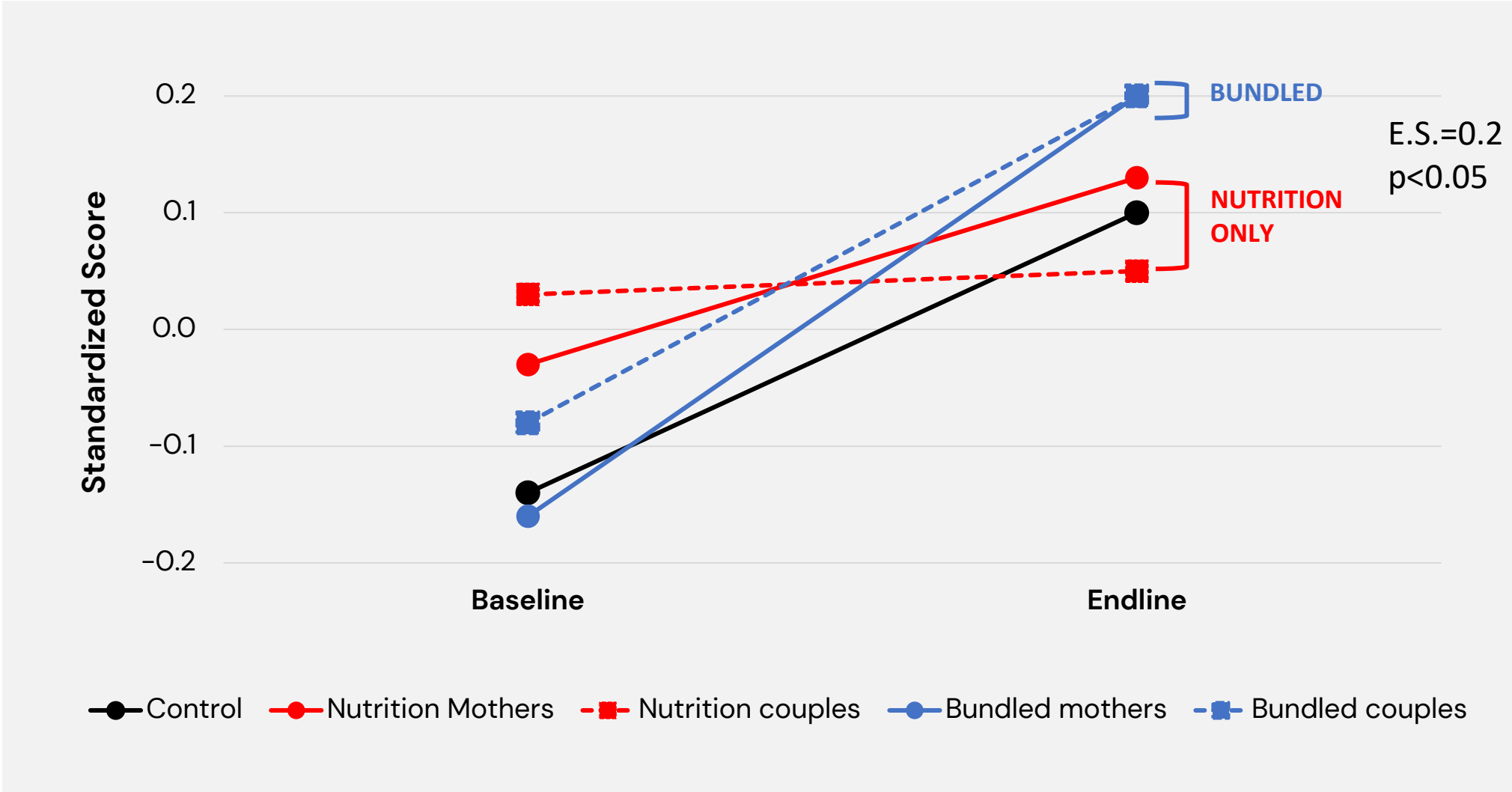


# Child Cognitive Development

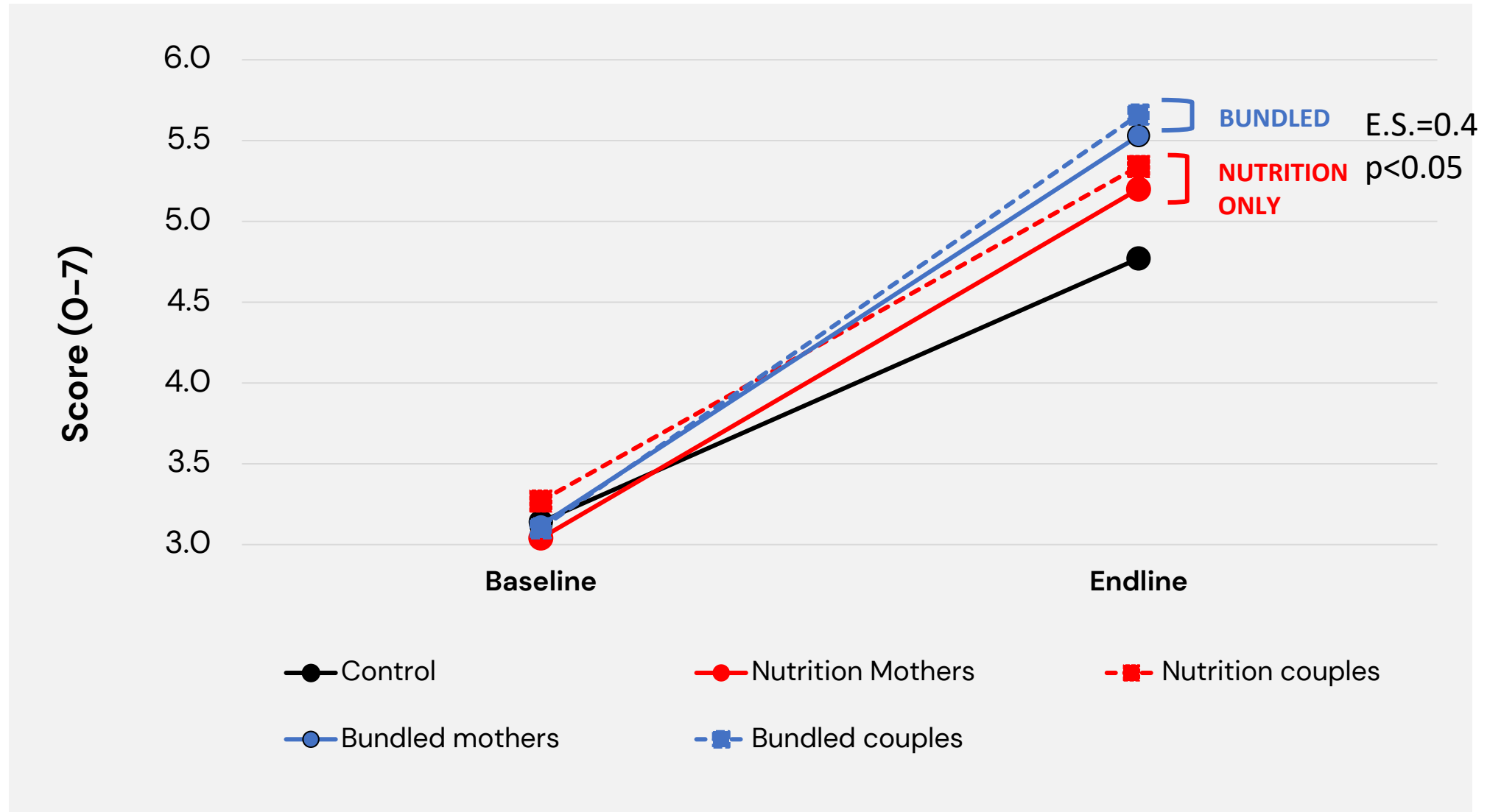




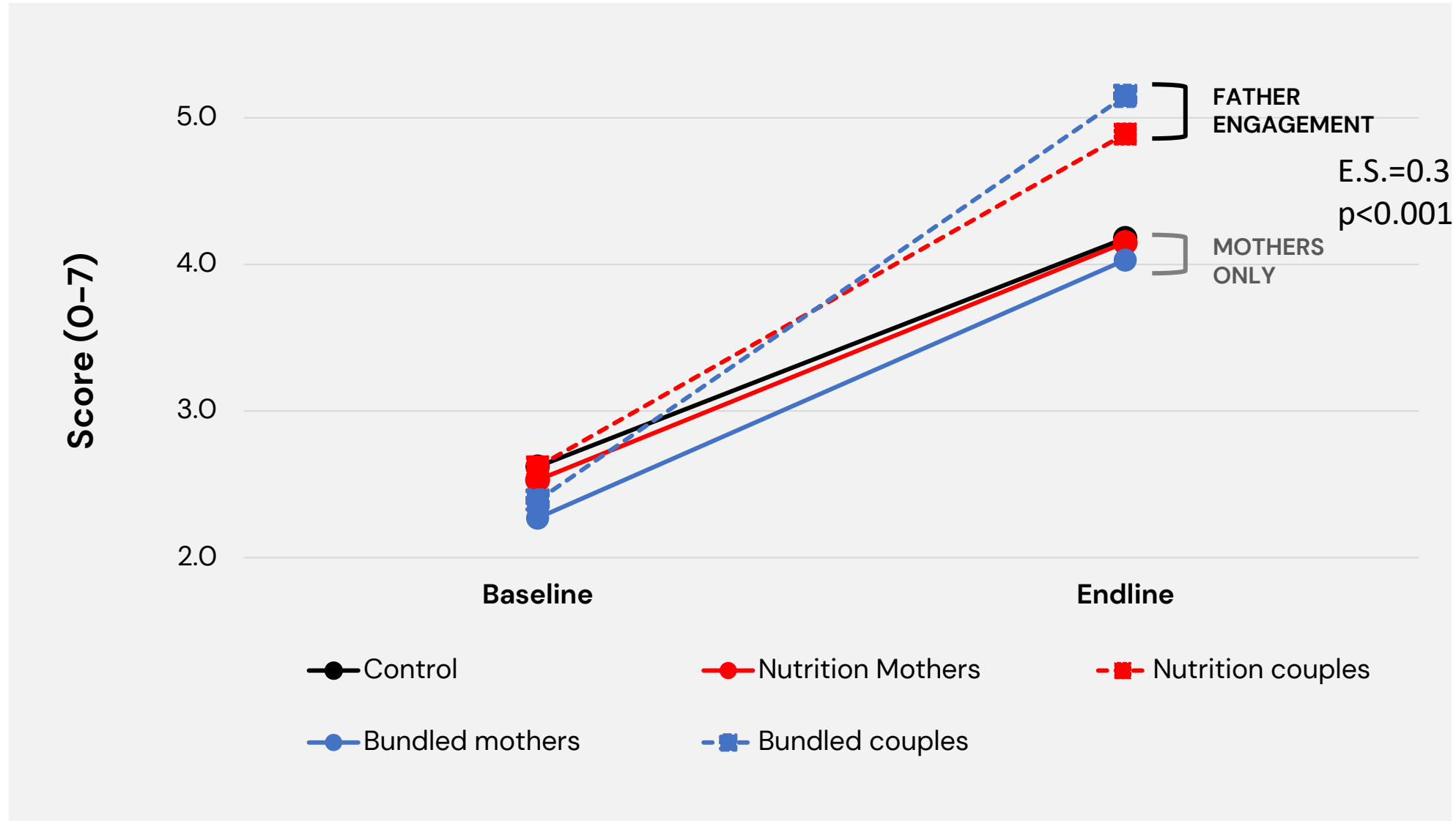
# Child Receptive Language



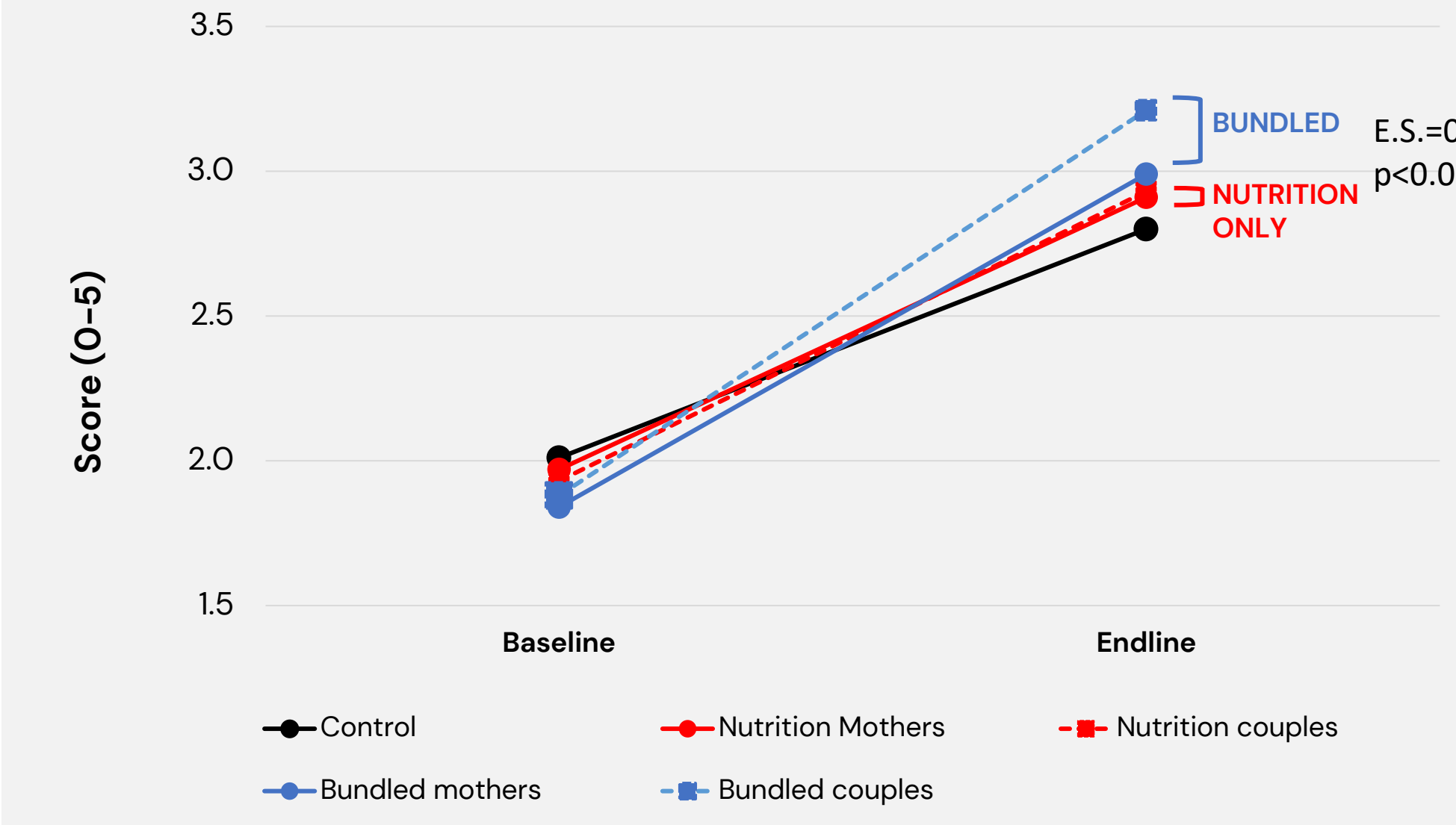
# Maternal Stimulation Practices



# Paternal Stimulation Practices



# Variety of Home Learning Materials



# Key findings

## Compared to nutrition intervention, bundled nutrition and parenting intervention improved:

- Child cognitive and receptive language development
- Maternal stimulation
- Variety of learning materials in the home
- *Other caregiving outcomes:* paternal parenting distress, maternal agriculture practices, intimate partner violence, maternal dietary diversity

## Compared to mothers alone, engaging fathers improved:

- Paternal stimulation
- *In addition to:* paternal IYCF and WASH knowledge and practices, paternal time spent per day on domestic chores, maternal and paternal gender attitudes, maternal decision-making power, maternal dietary diversity

## A few interaction effects were observed from engaging fathers in the bundled intervention

- E.g., child dietary diversity, couple's communication frequency

# Summary

1. Nutrition and parenting programs should be delivered together and engage not only mothers, but also fathers
  - Intentionality in design of content and delivery to ensure fathers are actively engaged and supported
2. Additional research should investigate the right balance of nutrition and parenting content to maximize effectiveness on both nutrition and ECD outcomes

# Acknowledgements

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