

Topic:

HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY AND ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS, DIETARY DIVERSITY AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN 6 TO 59 MONTHS IN CENTRAL RIVER REGION SOUTH, GAMBIA

ABSTRACT

Food insecurity is a global public health challenge. Household food insecurity is the leading risk factor of malnutrition, claiming approximately 300,000 deaths each year. Whether directly or indirectly, due to inadequate food consumption and poor diet quality, it is also accountable for over half of all deaths among children in Sub-Saharan Africa, including The Gambia. Food insecurity is a major challenge in The Gambia, especially in the Central River Region South. However, little is known about its determinant factors. The objective of this study was to assess the household food insecurity (food access) and its associated factors, household dietary diversity, and nutritional status of children aged 6 to 59 months in Central River Region South, The Gambia. A cross-sectional study was conducted among the households (n= 334) consisted of children aged 6 to 59 months. Women, as a proxy to the selected households, were interviewed as they were responsible for food acquisition and preparation of meals for their family members. The households were selected through a random sampling technique. Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) and Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) questionnaire were used to measure household food security and dietary diversity status, respectively. The children's nutritional status was assessed through anthropometric measurements. Weight, height/length, and mid-upper arm circumference were recorded. Weight and height/length were calculated using the WHO Anthro Calculator, and nutritional status was determined based on WHO (2006) reference. Multiple logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify factors associated with household food insecurity (food access). The

finding showed that the prevalence of household food insecurity was 80.5% in the study area. Whereas 65.0% of children were stunted, 32.7% underweight, and 17.1% were wasting. Moderate and severe acute malnutrition was 1.8% and 6.3%, respectively. In terms of dietary diversity status, 60.2% were at low diversified, 25.4% of them were medium diversified, and 14.4% were highly diversified. Wasting was associated with household food insecurity (X^2 , $p=0.030$), but not for stunting and underweight. Household dietary diversity was also significantly associated with household food insecurity (X^2 , $p=0.003$). Based on multiple logistic regression analysis, women employment status (AOR = 4.23, 95% CI: 1.21, 14.86, $p=0.024$), husband's employment status (AOR = 4.60, 95% CI: 2.00, 10.57, $p=0.001$) and lack of market access (AOR = 2.09, 95% CI: 1.09, 3.99, $p=0.025$) were the factors associated with household food insecurity (food access) in the study area. In conclusion, household food insecurity was prevalent, and employment status regardless of either the women or their husbands and market access were the predictors of household food insecurity. Household food insecurity was associated with poor dietary diversity and malnutrition, in particular, wasting among children aged below five. Therefore, programmes to improve job opportunities should be strengthened, in particular among women to improve household food insecurity, therefore, would reduce child malnutrition in this region.

Name: Wuyeh Drammeh

Public email: wuyehdrammeh1@yahoo.com / wuyeh9002513@gmail.com

Home institution: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Republic of The Gambia, Quandragle Banjul.

Host institution: Universiti Sains Malaysia, Health Campus, Kubang Kerian, 16150 Kelantan, Malaysia.