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Topic: Food and nutrition security

Title: Pathways to Food Security in South Africa: Quality vs. Quantity

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Intro: South Africa is food secure at the national level; however widespread food insecurity persists at the household level. To understand the dynamics of micro-level food insecurity this paper investigates how two different aspects of 'food access' – diet quality and diet quantity – affect two outcomes of 'food utilisation' – hunger and nutrition. **Method:** Analysis is carried out using the nationally representative data set of the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) Wave 1 using STATA 12. Diet quantity is captured by food expenditure and diet quality with both a food group and a food variety score. Regression analysis is used to determine whether the theoretical differences between diet quality and quantity play out empirically in the case of nutrition (adult BMI) and hunger (self-reported household hunger). An ordinal logit was applied for analysis of the hunger variable as self-reported hunger is discrete and ordinal. **Results:** The results reveal that food variety and food quantity are complementary in explaining the chance of household hunger, with food quantity having a slightly more important effect. The pathways to BMI differ by gender. Dietary diversity and food expenditure are substitutes in the case of male BMI; however, food variety and food expenditure are complementary to explaining female BMI when food expenditure enters into the model as a quadratic. Overall, food variety proved to be a stronger and more significant correlate of both outcomes than the food group dietary diversity score. **Conclusion:** Pathways differ by population group and outcome.