Food insecurity and quality of life in informal settlements of Katutura, Windhoek, Namibia

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URI: http://hdl.handle.net/11070/2326
Date: 2017

Abstract:
Globally, with rapid urbanization in most cities of the World, more people are now living in urban areas than in rural areas. The housing backlog coupled with a shortage of housing subsidies means that for many there is no alternative but to live in informal settlements. Urban food insecurity is often overlooked since at aggregate level, economic and social conditions in urban areas are much better than those in rural areas. The urban poor often live in neighborhoods with poor sanitation, high environmental pollution and therefore high and chronic exposure to health hazards. Such unhealthy living conditions aggravate food insecurity and quality of life of individuals. This study explored linkages between food insecurity and quality of life in informal settlements in Windhoek, Namibia and determine how socio economic factors mediate and explain both. A cross-sectional quantitative design through a two-stage cluster survey sampling was applied. The sample size of the study was 416 respondents selected from 40 Primary Sampling Units (PSU’s). The research instrument used in this study was the face to face administered questionnaire, distributed to 416 respondents. The study measured three (3) indicators of food security namely, Household Food Insecurity Access Scores (HFIAS), Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) and Months of inadequate Household Food Provisioning (MIHFP). Lived Poverty Index (LPI) and World Health Organization Quality of Life (WHOQoL) instruments were used to measure quality of life. Bivariate analysis using crosstabulations and chi-square tests, were also carried out to relate explanatory variables to food insecurity and quality of life. A binary logistic regression was used to relate quality of life status with food security, controlling for confounders like the bio-demographic and socio-economic variables. Ordinal logistic regression model was used to investigate the effect of household characteristics to food insecurity and quality of life. This study found that food insecure households in informal settlements are associated with poor quality of life. The study found that food insecure households in the informal settlements as measured by the HFIAP is 63%. Food insecure households have average levels of intake in any foods made from beans, peas, lentils, or nuts (54.1%); eggs (47.3%); potatoes, yams, manioc, cassava or any other foods made from roots or tubers (49.5%); vegetables (54.3%) and fruits (48.8%). Households in the informal settlements had less food in the months of August, November and January. Low level of education, large family size, female headed household and low/lack of income were associated with increased food insecurity. The four domains of quality of life were also assessed and it was found that the highest mean score was observed for domain 2.
(Psychological health, mean= 63.8508) and domain 1 (Physical health, mean= 63.8018). The lowest mean score was observed for Domain 4 (Environmental health, mean= 37.1803). Furthermore, it was found that there is a statistical significant relationship between food insecure households and quality of life (Physical health, Psychological health, Social relationships and Environmental health, P< 0.005). It is concluded that poor quality of life is associated with high levels of food insecurity in the informal settlements of Katutura and thus a linkage between food insecurity and quality of life exists. Thus, to improve food insecurity, there is also a need to focus on advancing quality of life of individuals. Further dedicated quality of life and food insecurity research in informal settlements is required.