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Food insecurity and out-of-school effects on depressive symptomology among adolescents in rural areas of Afghanistan.

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Abstract

Background: The effects of food insecurity and out-of-school on mental health problems among adolescents have been identified in previous studies. However, most studies on these topics are drawn from developed nations, and the associated effects on the mental health of adolescents in a fragile context have received less research focus. This study explored the influence of food insecurity and out-of-school on depressive symptomology among adolescents in Afghanistan.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 1416 adolescents and 1416 parents and/or caregivers in seven provinces of Afghanistan. Reduced meal intake was used to capture food insecurity. A dummy variable was used to measure out-of-school children's status. Mental health was measured by the occurrence of depression. Multivariate logistic regression analysis was used to analyse the relationships.

Results: The multivariate logistic regression results revealed that adolescents who were food insecure were 1.88 times more likely to be depressed (OR = 1.88; $p < 0.000$). The out-of-school adolescents were 1.56 times more likely to exhibit depressive behavior (OR = 1.56; $p < 0.000$). In addition, we found that the effects of out-of-school were more pronounced among girls than boys.

Conclusion: Our findings demonstrate that food insecurity and out-of-school increased depressive symptomology among adolescents. Interventions that promote adolescents' food security and encourage adolescents' school enrolment and retention are needed to reduce mental health problems.

Keywords: Food insecurity; out-of-school; violence; depressive symptomology; adolescents; Afghanistan.

Recent Publications: Minimum 3 publications

1. **Conrad Murendo**, Benza, Rungano, Gudyanga, Nyashadzashe, Velani, Brian and Gutusa, Fungai. (2024). Behavioural determinants of handwashing at critical times among mothers and care givers in Zimbabwe: implications for behaviour change interventions. *Cogent Public Health*, 11 (1), 2322826. <https://doi.org/10.1080/27707571.2024.2322826>
2. **Conrad Murendo**, Mark Manyanga, Rungano Mapfungautsi, and Thulani Dube (2021). COVID-19 nationwide lockdown and disruptions in the food environment in Zimbabwe. *Cogent Food & Agriculture*, 7(1), 1945257. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311932.2021.1945257>.
3. **Conrad Murendo**, Grace Kairezi and Kizito Mazvimavi (2020). Resilience capacities and household nutrition in the presence of shocks. Evidence from Malawi. *World Development Perspectives* 20:100241. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2020.100241>

Biography (150 words limit)

Conrad Murendo (PhD) is a Research, Evidence and Learning Manager with Save the Children, Afghanistan. Previous was a Strategic Learning Advisor at Mercy Corps and CARE International, Zimbabwe. He holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of Goettingen, Germany. His research experiences are in food security, nutrition, resilience, child poverty, child education, protection and mental health.

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