

Exploring sociocultural determinants of dietary behaviour among rural women of reproductive age in Amhara region, Ethiopia

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Introduction

- > Women of reproductive age (WRA) have specific nutritional requirements due to pregnancy and lactation (FAO, 2021).
- > Dietary behaviour: defined as follows: (i.e. Food choice, eating habits, and dietary intake) (Stok et al., 2018).
- > Cultural and socially defined gender inequities limit women in household decision-making in low-and-middle income countries (Compaore et al., 2021).
- > Gender inequalities in access to food result in women receiving less food and lower quality food than men (Compaore et al., 2021; Diamond-Smith et al., 2022).
- > The aim of this study is to understand the dietary behaviour of WRA and to identify associated sociodemographic and sociocultural determinants of dietary diversity of WRA.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of dietary behaviour of WRA?
2. Which determinants at different levels of socioecological framework affect the dietary diversity of WRA?

Table 1. Minimum dietary diversity and determinants among WRA

Variables	MDD-W Inadequate N (%)	MDD-W Adequate N (%)	Chi-Square	p-Value
Socially constructed Amharic proverbs				
Prioritize husbands for food consumption ቆልጥም እና ፈረሰኛ ለአባባራ	248 (82.9)	51 (17.1)	50.27	* 0.01
Yes	60 (49.2)	62 (50.8)		
No				
Women should not eat much food (voracious eater) ከሴት ሆዳም የአንድ አመት በረዶ ይሻላል	173 (82.0)	38 (18.0)	16.81	* 0.01
Yes	135 (64.3)	65 (35.7)		
No				
Religious fasting practice				
All fasting days	247 (76.5)	76 (23.5)	7.73	* 0.01
Major fasting days (including Wednesday and Friday)	54 (76.1)	17 (23.9)		
Do not fast	7 (25.9)	20 (74.1)	32.83	* <0.01
WRA workload				
Domestic tasks without family support	134 (78.4)	37 (21.6)	3.971	* 0.046
Domestic tasks with family support	174 (69.6)	76 (30.4)		
Household decision to purchase food				
Wife	69 (63.3)	40 (36.7)	7.29	* 0.01
Husband	86 (83.5)	17 (16.5)	7.40	* 0.01
Both	153 (73.2)	56 (26.8)		
Household decision to consume food				
Wife	209 (75.2)	69 (24.8)		
Husband	16 (94.1)	1 (5.9)	3.96	0.05
Both	83 (65.9)	43 (34.1)	4.84	* 0.03

- Majority of WRA (72.6%) did not achieve the MDD-W (≥ 5 food groups out of ten food groups) and are, therefore, less likely to have adequate micronutrient intakes.

Material and Methods



Study Area

Figure 1: Study area (West Gojam and south Gondar, Amhara region, Ethiopia)

Method

- Community based cross-sectional study (April and August 2019) in Amhara, Ethiopia
- Quantitative survey involving ($n = 421$) WRA
- Socioecological framework for clustering determinants at intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, institutions/organization level

Data analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Chi-square test was applied; statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$

Results



Figure 3: The food consumed while interviewing, © Simegn Kassa Alamirew

- 76.7% of WRA followed food restriction, which is religious fasting practice
- Specific foods were considered religious and/or cultural taboo foods (e.g. pork meat, goat milk)
- 59.9% of WRA prioritized their husbands for food consumption.

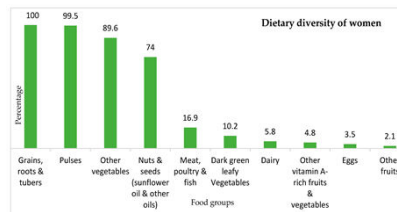


Figure 2: Percentage (%) of consumption of food groups by WRA ($n = 421$), Amhara region, Ethiopia, 2019

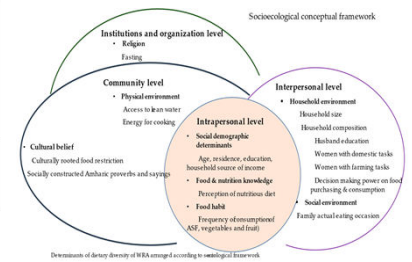


Figure 3: Determinants of dietary diversity of rural WRA in Amhara region Ethiopia.

Conclusions

- Majority of WRA had inadequate MDD-W
- Gender-based discrimination and inequality related to food consumption, negatively affected the dietary diversity of WRAs and their children.
- Lack of decision-making power on food purchasing and consumption hinder to have adequate dietary diversity of WRA
- Amharic proverbs and sayings are still widely being practiced, negatively affect the dietary diversity of WRA
- Cultural beliefs and religious practice related to food restrictions affects the dietary behavior of WRA

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Recommendations



Figure 4: Diversified and adequate diet for women in Ethiopian culture

Source: <https://www.mercycorps.org/blog/food-brings-us-together-around-world>

- Empowering women is key for improving access to household resources and decision-making power in general and for improved dietary diversity of women and their children in particular
- The government and concerned institutions are obliged to prevent gender-based discrimination in all its forms and to adopt more culturally sensitive approaches
- The larger society should abolish such kinds of proverbs and sayings to support other efforts that promote healthy dietary behaviour
- Educating women about finding alternative options, such as replacing ASFs during the fasting period with equivalent non-animal-sourced food groups that contain similar nutrients.

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