

Food choice decision-making in the context of changing livelihoods in low- and middle-income countries

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Introduction

- People in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) experience livelihood changes due to environmental, geopolitical, and sociocultural pressures changing how and where people work
- Occur in conjunction with changes in food choice behaviors
 - Production, acquisition, preparation, distribution, consumption
- Important to generate impactful programs and policies
- **Objective:** to understand how changing livelihoods in LMICs are related to food choice behaviors

Methods/Approach

- Narrative review of the literature
- Search terminology included:
 - Livelihood changes
 - Food choice behaviors
 - LMICs (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America)
- 57 articles reviewed
- Descriptive summaries of relationships between livelihood change and food choice behaviors

Results

- Changes in the nature and environment of workplaces, income, time use, and social interactions may alter food choice
- Relationships between changing livelihoods and five food choice behaviors are described below

Production

- Constraints on time and opportunities due to livelihood shifts from agriculture to wage-earning livelihoods (e.g., mining), in rural or urban areas, often necessitate a reliance on food markets rather than household food production
- Shifts from pastoral livelihoods to agricultural livelihoods or changes in type of agricultural production lead to changes in types of foods produced for sale versus household consumption

Acquisition

- Shifts from agricultural and other non-wage livelihoods to wage-earning livelihoods often increases access to cash that leads to increase in acquisition of food from markets
- Changes to informal wage-earning livelihoods can lead to income instability/uncertainty, which can impact food purchasing behavior
- Migration from rural to urban areas for wage-earning livelihoods increases exposure to and availability of different foods that can change consumer valuation and willingness to spend disposable income on less traditional, more modern food and drink from retail outlets (e.g., supermarkets, convenience stores)

Preparation

- Livelihood changes that increase workplace distance lead to less food prepared at home and higher dependence on food prepared by vendors or establishments en route to or near work sites
- Livelihood changes that increase time away from home decrease time for home food preparation and increase dependence on cheap, palatable, and pre-packaged or processed/convenience foods
- Livelihood changes that lead to older children spending more time in schools or other settings where foods are provided can lead to introduction of new foods and methods of preparation in the household

Distribution

- Livelihood changes that increase adults' time away from home or lead to asynchronous work schedules, including women working outside the home, can alter family meal patterns, with fewer shared meals, more individualized eating, and lead to changes in child feeding practices
- Change from livelihoods where individuals have autonomy over their time to livelihoods with long hours in tightly controlled workplaces can lead to time poverty and subsequently, repetition, rejection, and skipping of meals at both households and workplaces

Consumption

- Shifting from agricultural to non-agricultural livelihoods impacts food consumption including types and amount of food
- Livelihoods that require more time away from home leads to changes in the type, frequency, and speed of consumption
- Relocation from rural to urban areas for wage work may shift consumption away from traditional staples, and towards more processed or prepared convenience foods

Implications and Conclusions

- Understanding how livelihood changes impact food choice behaviors in LMICs
 - Informs food and nutrition policies and programs to support individuals and households as they navigate transitions
 - Important for developing solutions in response to emergent needs (e.g., time constraints) and for mitigating the negative effects of the nutrition transition (e.g., consumption of processed and packaged food)

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