THE NEXUS OF FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF BOPHELONG AND SHARPEVILLE TOWNSHIPS

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Abstract
Considered a human right, housing and food security can be viewed as basic to what defines an individual's well-being and is enshrined in the South African Constitution. In any country, affordable housing and food security are central to development to ensure an adequate healthy lifestyle. What makes the link between housing and food security important is that in a household with inadequate resources, housing and food security can be in a competing relationship and may even involve a trade-off between each other. Furthermore, food insecurity and housing insecurity are important components in poverty reduction policies. In this study, a random sample of 600 households was taken based on a quantitative research method. Two low income neighbourhoods were selected in the Emfuleni Municipal area in Southern Gauteng, South Africa. The relationship between food insecurity and housing insecurity was analysed using different statistical techniques. To measure food insecurity the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) developed by the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) was used, while a housing security measurement scale was developed. The research found that a trade-off exists between housing and food security and, in many cases, food insecurity and housing insecurity exist at the same time. The research established the link between food insecurity, housing insecurity and poverty. Recently, a number of studies focused on food security from an urban perspective, however a limited number of studies focused on housing security, with no focus on the relationship between food and housing insecurity. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge on food insecurity, housing insecurity, and the how they can be incorporated in the fight against poverty.

Key Words: Food security, housing insecurity, poverty, households, HHIS, HFIAS

JEL Classification: A10, A13

1 Introduction

The understanding of food insecurity and housing insecurity and how they relate to each other becomes clearer when the definitions of these concepts are clearly highlighted. Food insecurity is more familiar and studies on food insecurity are ubiquitous. The issue of housing insecurity is not as thoroughly researched in the African context as is in western countries, especially in the United States (Ives, Hanley, Walsh, & Este, 2014; Chan, 2011; Kennett & Mizuuchi, 2010). The understanding of food security and its definitions can be credited to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) with their three pronged definitions involving food availability, food access and food utilisation. Food availability is mostly a macroeconomic concept and has more to do with the level of agricultural development and food production in a country or a society. The fact that food is available in the market, however, does not guarantee access to food by all households. This emphasised the component of access, which is more linked to household income and the ability to buy food, especially in urban areas where households do not have access to land to grow their own food. Food utilisation looks at the dietary needs of the household to acquire a healthy livelihood. On the other hand, housing security can also be seen as a concept on different levels. The definitions of housing security or insecurity therefore takes into account a number of things as opposed to just the availability or absence of a roof above the household (Hitman 1998; Geller & Curtis 2011).

The direction in the discourse of poverty studies has concentrated on issues of food security and the measures of food insecurity. There is not much research, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, on housing insecurity and, despite the studies that have been done, it still remains defined without proper measurement (Tyler, Chwalek, Hughes, Karabanow, & Kidd, 2010). However, housing is important to the wellbeing of households, similar to food. Housing and food security can be considered as basic to what defines an individual's wellbeing and are considered a human right and is enshrined in the South African Constitution. In any country, affordable housing and food security are central to human social economic development and to ensure an adequate healthy lifestyle. What makes the link between housing and food security important is that in households with inadequate resources, housing and food security can be in a competing relationship, which may lead to a trade-off between housing and food. Furthermore, food insecurity and housing insecurity are important components in

poverty reduction policies. Food security, just like poverty in general, have been linked to other outcomes such as child health, where it has been established that malnourished children are likely to be prone to diseases than children that have access to a proper diet (Gundersen & Kreider, 2009). Housing insecurity, however, can be associated with equally negative consequences. Where children are not properly housed, there is a greater chance of being exposed to preventable diseases like pneumonia due to exposure to cold, which would not be the case with properly household children. There could be households that choose to have food at the expense of a good shelter, and there could be households that would prefer a good house but fail to provide adequate food. This study explores the nexus between food security and housing security in low income townships of Sharpeville and Bophelong. The paper is organised as follows: the first section introduces food and housing insecurity, section two presents a literature review on food insecurity and housing insecurity. Both theoretical and empirical literature will be presented and a link will be established between these two phenomena. Section three will present the methodology followed in the data collection and the model specification which will be used in the data analysis. Section four presents results of the data analysis, while the last section draws a conclusion emanating from the empirical analysis.

2 Literature review

This section of the literature will focus on the conceptualisation of housing insecurity. Literature on housing is not as ubiquitous as that of food insecurity and it is important that more attention be given to that component. The second part of the literature review presents the literature on food insecurity, while the final part shows how the issues of housing and food insecurity are linked together, dealing with poverty as an overarching issue.

2.1 Housing security, background and concepts

The literature on housing insecurity shows housing insecurity as a multidimensional phenomenon and it is beyond the idea of having a roof over one's head (Bailey, Cook, de Cuba, Casey & Fran 2016; Fourie 2012, Tissington, 2010). There are a number of other issues over and above the house or a structure that needs consideration. Hartman (1998) points out that housing insecurity and affordability are among the important aspects that results in housing security. A house, according to Hartman (1998), should also be habitable although there

needs to be a clear definition as to what entails “habitable’. The requirement of a house to be habitable may sound as a given fact but it is not always the case, especially in low income neighbourhoods where people may live in shacks. There can be structures that habitation can be a risk due to structural defects especially in informal housing. Housing insecurity has also been associated with homelessness, overcrowded homes and unsafe neighbourhoods (Herbert, Morenoff & Harding, 2015; Johnson & Meckstroth, 1998). Households that experience high housing cost especially when considered as a percentage of their total income are also considered to be insecure. The link between high housing cost and housing insecurity is more clear when one considers households with a higher chance of eviction due to the cost of housing which may be exorbitant (Geller & Curtis, 2011)

Johnson and Meckstroth (1998) pointed out that households or families that live in circumstances of poor quality, insecure neighbourhoods, overcrowded housing, or being homeless, all constitute housing insecurity. Other studies like Wong, Elliot, Reed and Ross (2009) have tried to define housing insecurity as the absence of a settled, steady, and adequate night-time home. People that have an unstable home or no home at all become clear when its night time. The fact that one has nowhere to sleep at night is the severe level of housing insecurity. In most cases people have some kind of shelter although with varied level of insecurity.

In most households, a decision has to be made on what should be prioritised between competing basic needs like housing and food. In some cases, good housing is at the expense of proper meals. Furthermore, proper meals are at the expense of suitable and secure housing. Goldrick-Rab, Broton and Eisenberg (2015) conducted a study on the relationship between food and housing insecurity. The study involved ten community college graduates from seven states of the United States and their results showed that students who experienced food insecurity or who were considered as food insecure were more likely to be in inadequate or unsafe housing. This is basically an indication of poverty. Thus it is beyond a trade-off between food and housing, it is basically a case of having no resources to afford either housing or food.

2.2 Food insecurity, background and measures

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 1996) the concept of food security can be defined as "When all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". However the debate on food security started in 1974 with the World Food Conference (FAO, 1996) and it still continues with more suggestions of what should constitute the definition of food security. As part of the initial debate the debate moved away from only the supply side of food security to the focus on access to food (Maxwell, Ahiadeke, Levin, Armar-Klemesu, Zakariah & Lamptey, 1999). This debate continued up to the 1990s where the emphasis shifted to access to food.

It can therefore be summarised that the current measurement of food insecurity includes five types of methodologies, including the measurement of, undernourishment, food intake, nutritional intake, food access in terms of income and vulnerability (Migotto, Gero. & Kathleen, 2006). However, for the purpose of this study, the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) of USAID is used (Deitchler, Ballard, Swindale & Coates, 2010).

The HFIAS is a nine question food insecurity scale developed by Deitchler et al. (2010) with questions measuring anxiety around food supply, quality of food consumed, and experiences of hunger. According to the HFIAS, measurement approach the food security status can be measured from 0, indicating complete food security to 27, indicating complete food insecurity. Furthermore, the HFIAS measurement approach categorises the food security status of households into being food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure.

3. Methodology and data collection

The study of food security as opposed to housing insecurity, has widely known measures, indices or matrix although they also vary from one to another (Barrett, 2010). There are three main measures of food insecurity that can be used namely Household food insecurity access scale (HFIAS), Household dietary diversity Score (HDDS) and the Coping Strategy Index (CSI). These are just some of the

measures that can be used to measure household food insecurity or predict the household vulnerability to food insecurity. The issue of housing insecurity has received considerable attention, especially in the US and Europe (Cutts et al., 2011; Geller & Curtis, 2011; Walsh, Hanley, Ives, & Hordyk, 2016) but there still remains a big gap in so far as definitions and measures are concerned (Tyler et al., 2010). There still remains a gap in defining housing insecurity and the measurement of housing insecurity. This paper proposes a measure of housing security which is more or less an adaptation of the process used in the measuring of food security. As is explained in the subsequent section, with the results discussed in section 4 of this paper, it is worth noting that there will be a follow up survey that will include self-evaluating statements so as to capture perceived vulnerability of the households in terms of housing insecurity.

3.1 Data

The paper uses data collected in 2015 in a survey commissioned by the School of Economic Sciences at the North-West University, Vaal Triangle Campus. The survey involved heads of households who were asked a number of question pertaining to the household characteristics, the head of household characteristics and issues on housing and food security among other questions. The population from which the sample was drawn comprised the two low income townships of Bophelong and Sharpeville. These townships are both situated in the Vaal Region of the Gauteng Province and are under the municipal jurisdiction of the Emfuleni Local Municipality. For the study, 300 households were randomly drawn from each of the two townships, making the total sample size 600 households. However after cleaning the data only 580 questionnaires were included in the analyses. The housing insecurity of the households were calculated from the information on the materials used in the construction of the dwelling, the household size, and the percentage of the household income that is spent on rent or mortgage of the house. The percentage spent on the house although important in such a calculation, proved to be less useful in this exercise due to the nature of the sampled area which was mostly dominated by informal housing and hence there hardly existed households that were paying mortgages.

3.2 The Household Housing Insecurity Scale (HHIS)

The literature on housing insecurity is mostly based on qualitative descriptions of households experiences of instability, overcrowding and unsafe and insecure

housing (Tyler et al., 2010). There is still no clear definition or quantitative measure of housing insecurity. This paper uses the proposed measure of housing insecurity scale (Dunga & Mncayi, 2017). In their paper, they proposed using material used in the construction of the dwelling, the number of people in the household, and the percentage spent on housing as a share of the total household to determine the insecurity status of the household. The housing insecurity scale is then categorised into, housing, secure, mildly housing insecure, moderately housing insecure and severely housing insecure.

4. Results and discussion

The results presented shows the profile of food security, housing security and a comparison of households that are food insecure and housing insecure to determine the extent to which the vulnerability of households in this regard overlap. Table 1 presents the frequencies of the four categories of housing insecurity, based on the HHIS.

Table 1: Household Housing Insecurity Scale (HHIS)

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Secure	238	41.0	41.0
Mildly insecure	206	35.5	76.6
Moderately insecure	49	8.4	85.0
Severely insecure	87	15.0	100.0
Total	580	100.0	
	580		

The results in Table 1 show that 41% of the households were secure based on the HHIS measure, and 15% of the households were severely housing insecure. 35.5% were mildly housing insecure and 8.4% were moderately housing insecure. Table 2 presents a cross tabulation of the housing insecurity status and gender.

Table 2: HHIS and gender cross tabulation

			HHIS				
			Secure	Mildly insecure	Moderately insecure	Severely insecure	Total
Gender	Male	Count	138	131	33	30	332
		% within Gender	41.6%	39.5%	9.9%	9.0%	100.0%
		% within HHIS	60.3%	64.2%	80.5%	35.7%	59.5%
		% of Total	24.7%	23.5%	5.9%	5.4%	59.5%
	Female	Count	91	73	8	54	226
		% within Gender	40.3%	32.3%	3.5%	23.9%	100.0%
		% within HHIS	39.7%	35.8%	19.5%	64.3%	40.5%
		% of Total	16.3%	13.1%	1.4%	9.7%	40.5%
Total		Count	229	204	41	84	558
		% within Gender	41.0%	36.6%	7.3%	15.1%	100.0%
		% within HHIS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	41.0%	36.6%	7.3%	15.1%	100.0%

Table 2 shows that female-headed households are on average more vulnerable to housing insecurity. Of the 87 households that were severely insecure, 64.3% were female-headed households and 35.7% were male-headed households. Furthermore households that were housing secure, 60.3% were male-headed households and 39.7 were female-headed household. Within gender to take into account sample representation, 23.9% of females were severely housing insecure while only 9% were severely insecure for males.

In terms of food security, a HFIAS was calculated based on a validated scale and the results are reported in Table 3

Table 3: HFIAS in the sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Food secure	227	39.1	39.1	39.1
	Mildly food insecure	64	11.0	11.0	50.2
	Moderately food insecure	86	14.8	14.8	65.0
	Severely food insecure	203	35.0	35.0	100.0
	Total	580	100.0	100.0	

The results show that, in the sample, 39.1% are food secure, 11% are mildly food insecure, 14.8% are moderately food insecure, and 35% are severely food insecure. Thus the biggest percentage is secure followed by those that are severely food insecure. The reasons for this distribution cannot be deduced from the current study, although it should suffice to say that there is a further check as to which of those headed by a male head of household and those of the female fall mostly in which category. Table 4 presents a cross tabulation of HFIAS by gender. The results of the Chi Square test show a significant difference between the male headed households and the female headed households in terms of the food security status. The p-value of the Chi Square test was 0.000 which was significant at the 1% significance level.

The results in Table 4 show that male-headed households are mostly food secure compared to female headed households. Within gender, only 27.7% male headed households were severely food insecure while 44.2% were severely food insecure among the female-headed households.

Table 4: Gender and HFIAS cross-tabulation

			HFIAS				
			Food secure	Mildly food insecure	Moderately food insecure	Severely food insecure	Total
Gender	Male	Count	154	41	45	92	332
		% within Gender	46.4%	12.3%	13.6%	27.7%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS2	70.3%	64.1%	54.2%	47.9%	59.5%
		% of Total	27.6%	7.3%	8.1%	16.5%	59.5%
	Female	Count	65	23	38	100	226
		% within Gender	28.8%	10.2%	16.8%	44.2%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS2	29.7%	35.9%	45.8%	52.1%	40.5%
		% of Total	11.6%	4.1%	6.8%	17.9%	40.5%
Total		Count	219	64	83	192	558
		% within Gender	39.2%	11.5%	14.9%	34.4%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS2	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	39.2%	11.5%	14.9%	34.4%	100.0%
Pearson Chi- Square results			Value 22.843			P-value 0.000	

In the food secure category, among the male-headed households, 70.3% are food secure while 29.7% are food secure among the female-headed households. The Chi Square test was significant with a p-value of 0.000 showing that there is a significant difference in food insecurity between male and female-headed households.

To determine if households are faced with the choice between food or housing, or if a trade-offs exist between food security and housing insecurity, a cross-tabulation and a chi Square test was done on the HFIAS and HHIS. The results are reported in Table 5. The expectation that housing insecurity and food insecurity is a symptom of poverty and that abject poverty would be associated with both severe food insecurity and severe housing insecurity is assumed.

Table 5: HHIS and HFIAS cross tabulation

			HFIAS				
			Food secure	Mildly food insecure	Moderately food insecure	Severely food insecure	Total
HHIS	Secure	Count	120	32	33	53	238
		% within HHIS	50.4%	13.4%	13.9%	22.3%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS	52.9%	50.0%	38.4%	26.1%	41.0%
		% of Total	20.7%	5.5%	5.7%	9.1%	41.0%
	Mildly insecure	Count	84	22	32	68	206
		% within HHIS	40.8%	10.7%	15.5%	33.0%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS	37.0%	34.4%	37.2%	33.5%	35.5%
		% of Total	14.5%	3.8%	5.5%	11.7%	35.5%
	Moderate insecure	Count	11	4	8	26	49
		% within HHIS	22.4%	8.2%	16.3%	53.1%	100.%
		% within HFIAS	4.8%	6.3%	9.3%	12.8%	8.4%
		% of Total	1.9%	0.7%	1.4%	4.5%	8.4%
	Severely insecure	Count	12	6	13	56	87
		% within HHIS	13.8%	6.9%	14.9%	64.4%	100.0%
		% within HFIAS	5.3%	9.4%	15.1%	27.6%	15.0%
		% of Total	2.1%	1.0%	2.2%	9.7%	15.0%

Total	Count	227	64	86	203	580
	% within HHIS	39.1%	11.0%	14.8%	35.0%	100.0%
	% within HFIAS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	39.1%	11.0%	14.8%	35.0%	100.0%

However, there may exist situations in a household where there household is not in abject poverty and the available resources may not be enough to achieve both food security and housing security. In such circumstances, the household may be forced to choose which of these two options should be prioritised. Table 5 shows that food security is preferred to housing security where resources necessitate a choice. The cross tabulation shows that only 20.7% of the food secure households are also housing secure. In this regard, 5.3% of the food secure households are severely housing insecure, which is an indication of a sacrifice on housing in order to have enough food. A further study may show the characteristics of these households in terms of composition where it is likely that these households may be those with young children. There are also cases where households prefer housing security over food security. Table 5 shows that 50.4% of the housing secure households are also food secure, whereas the remaining 49.6% is either mildly, moderately or severely food insecure.

The actual percentage of housing secure households who are severely food insecure is 22.35%. As a percentage of the total sample, 9.1% were housing secure but severely food insecure. On the other hand, 2.1% of the total sample was food secure but severely housing insecure. It is therefore clear that households sacrifice an equally important basic need for what is most needful to them. There is a connection between the ability of households to earn an income and housing security status, or food security status. Homeless people are less likely to earn an income to enable them to provide food to the household. Hungry people are less likely to be able to work in order to provide themselves with housing. In this regard, a concerted approach is needed to eradicate the problem of homeless people that will lead to hungry people, and more hungry people will lead to more homeless people which will end up as a continuous vicious circle.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Food insecurity and housing insecurity are important components in the fight against poverty. The study of poverty in general has the tendency of generalising the issue and hence ends up with misdiagnosis of the areas that need attention. For

example, social grants are not targeted at any specific expenditure like food and most cases people end up spending the social grants money on non-essentials. Poverty alleviation projects like the RDP houses brings better results than what would have been the case if people were given cash to build houses for themselves. Going a step deeper into the poor households to see what exactly need prioritizing can go a long way in dealing with the scourge. This paper has demonstrated the competition for resources between housing and food. Food is needed for survival, and most households choose to spend money on food rather than on housing given the difficult situation of choosing. In the sample, only 3.8% of the households were found to be severely food insecure and severely housing insecure, otherwise, other households were only severely housing insecure but having enough food to be out of severity. Other households, although a small percentage, preferred to have a secure housing at the expense of food security. The paper also proposed a measure of housing security which uses a similar approach to that used in measuring food security.

The paper has uncovered the existence of these twin social ills that are usually combined in the armpit of poverty. The paper suggests separated approaches to dealing with these ills. There is already a good strategy in place to deal with housing insecurity through RDP houses. However, this is not enough as it leaves out what would be considered the missing middle. Those people that do not qualify for RDP houses still cannot afford secure houses. Instead of government building houses for this category, there can be provisions of soft loans for such people as opposed to relying on the financial sector. On food insecurity, food vouchers as opposed to cash is recommended. These vouchers can be redeemable is food shops across the country, thus forcing people to buy food with the money that is intended for food.

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