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Predictors of food insecurity and its association with mental health among pregnant women

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The inability to get enough food has contributed immensely to dangers confronting pregnant women such as higher maternal mortality in the developing countries. Food insecurity has been associated with a variety of negative outcomes such as poor mental health and well-being. The impact of food insecurity on mental health has not received the needed attention in the developing countries where the issue of food insecurity and its consequence is very alarming. The objective of this study was to identify predictors of household food insecurity among pregnant women in Northern Ghana, and to identify the association between household food security status and mental health. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey where 186 pregnant women were recruited to complete questionnaires on demographic, psychological and economic factors, mental health and food insecurity. Regression analysis was used to estimate the association between the selected predictors (psychological, demographic and economic) and household food security status. Linear regression analysis was conducted to estimate the associations between food security status and mental health (depression, anxiety). Findings: Self-esteem, proactivity and economic status negatively predicted food insecurity. Demographic factors had mixed predictions on food insecurity. Food insecurity predicted a significant poor mental health (depression and anxiety). Social support and maternal care were found to moderate the relationship between food insecurity status and mental health. Mechanisms instituted to curb food insecurity and maternal mortality would not be enough if food insecurity is not reduced to the barest level. Recommendations are made for pregnant mothers to be supported and empowered to boost their self-esteem and make them proactive.

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