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Diet quality as a measure of food security

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Among the four dimensions of food security which are availability, access, utilization and stability, the utilization component still requires attention from decision makers. National indicators of food security as well as food poverty lines measure dietary adequacy based on the energy composition with little emphasis on quality of the foods accessible. Activities that focus on the nutrition adequacy are therefore not clearly outlined in food security programs. While the availability and access to sufficient calories are critical for national and household food security respectively, our current levels of childhood malnutrition, particularly chronic undernutrition and the prevalence of obesity call for a paradigm shift. Food insecurity interventions should therefore include a strong focus on the quality of the foods available on the plate in order to have a positive influence on the individual's health and nutrition status. A health and nutrition education component incorporated in food security programs will provide a more holistic approach to the food security challenge. This will require some resources from the food insecurity programs to be allocated towards a nutrition pillar in order to achieve both food and nutrition security for the country's population.

Biography

Phumeza Mkontwana is a Community Nutrition Lecturer and a PhD candidate at the Nelson Mandela University. She holds BSc in Physiology and Zoology and BSc in Medicine Honors in Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Cape Town. She has also completed her Masters in Health and Welfare Management from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University which is now the Nelson Mandela University. Her areas of interest include infant and young child nutrition as well as community nutrition programs. She has been working for the past 18 years in various nutrition and dietetics areas and published papers in infant and young child nutrition.

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