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Food Agency as a Pathway for Household Food Security Among Women Smallholder
Farmers in La Guajira, Colombia

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Abstract

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By Jamiee M. Gomez

Food insecurity is a global health concern. Approximately 800 million people experience some form of food insecurity. Despite research and evidence-based approaches, food insecurity remains a threat to populations worldwide. In Colombia, 43% of Colombians experience food insecurity and lack access to basic nutritious foods. Therefore, an assessment to understand pathways between food consumption behaviors and food insecurity is needed in order to assess methods to achieve food security. This study examined the perceptions of food insecurity among ethnically marginalized and conflict-affected populations in rural Colombia. Using a cross-sectional qualitative research approach, this study evaluated cash-based transfer programs (CBTs) implemented by the World Food Programme in La Guajira, Colombia. The study observed CBT impacts on women's perceptions of food behaviors in order to examine food agency as a driver towards food security. Results indicated that women in La Guajira hold positive impressions for the CBT programs. Qualitative research explored the ways in which CBT program activities enabled women's economic, social and human resources based on perceptions on food practices and behaviors. Moreover, participants described how program resources facilitated intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency, elements that fundamental to food agency. Lastly, the study analyzed how food agency served as a necessary pathway to achieve food security. Despite barriers in La Guajira, food agency is found to be a pathway for empowerment and imperative to achieve food security. The findings stressed the need to measure food agency in nutrition-related intervention programs. Furthermore, recommendations are offered to apply food agency as a framework towards effective food security program design and implementation.

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Acronym List

CBT	Cash-based transfers
CCT	Conditional cash-based
DD	Dietary diversity
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGs	Focus Groups
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FIS	Food Insecurity
FS	Food Security
GFE	Global Field Experience
HDDS	Household dietary diversity score
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IRB	Institutional Review Board
PSNP	Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Program
RA	Research Assistant
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WFP	World Food Programme

Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement

Food insecurity (FIS) is a health threat to populations worldwide. Food security (FS) is the ability to access adequate food that is nutritious, meets dietary needs and individual preferences at all times in order to live an active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). In 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 10% of the world population experienced severe food insecurity (FIS). FIS impedes a person's ability to develop physically and leads to early mortality (Peng, Dernini, & Berry, 2018). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) one and two aim to end hunger by achieving food security, improving nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (United Nations, 2016). Addressing these goals require an understanding of the burden of global malnutrition.

Currently, nearly 800 million people experience undernutrition resulting from food insecurity (Webb et al., 2016). Undernutrition increases morbidity and mortality rates that disproportionately affects infants, young children and women globally (Fanzo, 2014). Evidence suggests that undernutrition and severe food insecurity are on the rise on a global scale, signifying that about one in every nine people in the world experience undernourishment (de Groot, Palermo, Handa, Ragno, & Peterman, 2017; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018; Webb et al., 2016). Moreover, at least 50 million children under five years-old experience wasting globally and 162 million children experience moderate or

severe forms of stunting (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018; UNICEF, 2013).

Wasting and stunting are strong predictors for acute malnutrition and chronic undernutrition, respectively, that lead to child mortality (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). Conversely, malnutrition also encompasses overweight and obesity (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). Globally, the prevalence of overweight has increased and affects over 38 million children under five years old (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). FIS contributes to all forms of malnutrition and suggests a risk to the fundamental access to food.

Food security (FS) is characterized by four dimensions. These dimensions include food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). Food availability is the physical supply of appropriate foods as determined by food production, reserves, and trade (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006; Peng et al., 2018). Access to food refers to the economic and physical capacity to acquire foods for a nutritious diet, which relies heavily on resources and markets (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006; Peng et al., 2018). Food utilization refers to the physiological way that food is processed and absorbed found through an adequate diet, clean water, sanitation, and healthcare to reach an ultimate state of nutritional well-being and where all physical needs are met (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). Lastly, food stability refers to the conditions in which populations have access to adequate and nutritious foods at all times; highlighting a coexistence between security and temporality that is often interrupted by economic crises, environmental shocks, or

cyclical events (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). These dimensions provide a foundation for understanding household food security, but any of these missing pillars assumes a risk for populations to experience food insecurity (Burkhardtmeier, 2017).

Household food security and dietary diversity have been associated with several health outcomes (Brown et al., 2016; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002; McDonald et al., 2015; Ntwenya, Kinabo, Msuya, Mamiro, & Majili, 2015; Webb et al., 2016). Dietary diversity (DD) is an indicator that measures food consumption aimed to understand accessibility to a various nutritional foods in households (Morales Ruán et al., 2018). DD includes the consumption of nutrient rich foods to incorporate a balanced diet (Headey & Ecker, 2013). Measuring DD allows understanding of an individual's or household's entire diet experience (Ntwenya et al., 2015). DD assists with measuring food insecurity by tracking changes in household circumstances and assessing an intervention's impact targeting food security and nutrition outcomes (Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002). DD is a suitable indicator for assessing child and women malnutrition as well as overall household food insecurity prevalence (Brown et al., 2016; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002; Ntwenya et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2016). Yet, there is limited research to assess the pathways between food consumption behaviors and food insecurity (Ntwenya et al., 2015).

Currently, Latin America experiences high prevalence of severe FIS (Rios Garcia, Alonso Palacio, Erazo-Coronado, & Perez, 2015). FAO regional estimates for severe FIS are higher in 2017 (9.8%) than compared to 2014 (7.6%) (FAO, 2018). This problem is visible

in Colombia, where 43% of Colombians experience food insecurity and lack access to basic nutritious foods (Hines, 2016; World Food Programme, 2017). FIS is a multi-causal phenomenon (Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018). An important root cause for FIS is displacement due to violence and conflict. The political armed conflict in Colombia continues to affect millions of people due to six decades of extreme violence. Human rights violations proceeded throughout the armed conflict due to territorial control, criminal activity, and maintaining power in different regions (Wirtz et al., 2014). Results from the conflict highlight the damaging imprints in the social, economic and political fabric of the country (World Food Programme, 2017). Colombia has the second highest number of forced internal displacements, affecting 7.5 million people (Jaramillo, 2014; World Food Programme, 2017). Populations experiencing the severity of this conflict are ethnic and rural (Londoño, Romero, & Casas, 2012). Seventy-three percent of the country's victims are indigenous and Afro-Colombian (World Food Programme, 2017). Peace negotiations between multiple actors and the Colombian government signed in 2016 awakened new opportunities for reform and are aimed to advocate for marginalized populations and engage in justice reparations (S. Jaramillo, 2017). Reparations and legal procedures between actors aimed to rectify the heinous acts committed and strive towards restorative justice (Jaramillo, 2014). As a result, internally displaced people and marginalized ethnic communities in Colombia are victims of the conflict and as such, are susceptible to all forms of malnutrition (Hines, 2016).

The department of La Guajira in Colombia is a prime example of these challenges. The

department is located in the northeastern

region of the country. It is a peninsula that

borders Venezuela in the southeast and

surrounded by the Caribbean Sea to the

north and west. The region comprises of

44.9% indigenous and 14.8% Afro-

Colombians (DANE, 2005). Ninety percent

of the dispersed population in the region

cannot meet their basic needs (World Food

Programme, 2017). Approximately 60% of

households in the region experience food insecurity (Espitia, Lissbrant, & Moyano-

Tamara, 2018). Rates of malnutrition in La Guajira are higher compared to the national

average (World Food Programme, 2017). La Guajira faces high rates of child mortality

due to malnutrition and food insecurity (Daniels, 2017). The region's isolation coupled

with limited governmental response perpetuate marginalization (Daniels, 2017).

To reduce these health challenges, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

provides humanitarian assistance in La Guajira. WFP Colombia works alongside the

national government to support populations through the use of social protection

programs. Social protection serves as inclusive programs that offer support to

marginalized populations (Jaramillo, 2014). WFP activities provide short- and medium-



Figure 1. Department of La Guajira in Colombia. Shadowfox (2012). Retrieved from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22488799>

term support to stabilize actions in the most intense conflict-affected areas (World Food Programme, 2017). WFP's theory of change aligns with national peacebuilding strategies aimed to assist in reducing hunger and achieving food security. WFP Colombia strategizes to achieve two strategic goals, to ensure access to food and decrease experiences of malnutrition (World Food Programme, 2017).

WFP Colombia aims to address food insecurity through the use of conditional, voucher-based transfers. Conditional cash-based transfers (CBTs) offer crisis-affected populations access to nutritious foods and diversified diets to support their livelihoods (World Food Programme, 2017). A voucher transfer is an assistance offered in the form of an electronic voucher redeemable at preselected retailers called points of sale (World Food Programme, 2014). The number of individuals within each household determines the amount of each voucher. Each household receives COP\$ 48,000 for each household member (approximately USD\$ 16). The CBT program offers trainings on the following topics: nutrition and diet, agriculture and livestock, environment, and collective cohesion. CBT beneficiaries receive a list of food items that include vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, meat, and oil; lists are context-dependent based on community. Beneficiaries receive a monthly amount for the duration of the program. The length of the CBT program is three to six months.

To understand the perceived impacts of the WFP CBT program in La Guajira, a qualitative assessment was conducted. This study examined the perceptions of food

insecurity among crisis-affected populations to focus on key determinants to achieve food security. The purpose of this study was to examine perceived impacts and benefits of the CBT program as a pathway to prevent food insecurity. This assessment is part of a larger program evaluation aimed to understand perceptions of food behaviors. The present analysis describes the extent to which trainings empowered beneficiaries' dietary decisions by exploring the concept of food agency throughout their narratives.

Food agency serves as a lens to understand food security in La Guajira, Colombia. Food behaviors are intertwined with a plethora of decisions at different phases leading to food consumption (Trubek, Carabello, Morgan, & Lahne, 2017). Food decisions are choices dependent upon individual's ability to actively engage in the process to access nutritious foods. The study defines food agency as a three-tiered, multifaceted process that describes the necessity to participate in decision-making from a personal, instrumental, and collective level to achieve food security (Kabeer, 1999, 2005; Morgan, 2016; Trubek et al., 2017). A Western approach to food agency coupled with grounded feminist empowerment rhetoric from the global South provided an exploratory lens to examine food security (Kabeer, 1999; Morgan, 2016; Trubek et al., 2017). It also enables a unique perspective to understand individual's dietary decisions that contribute to our knowledge to design social protection programs through this lens. Food agency is used to explore decision-making processes to understand food behaviors for smallholder farmer women participating in WFP's cash-based transfers program in La Guajira, Colombia.

The study applies qualitative research methods to allow the researcher to understand the dimensions of participants' lives rather than quantifying their experiences (Bazeley, 2013). Many CBT intervention evaluations omit qualitative approaches and evaluate with only quantitative metrics. Limited research exists for evaluating CBT programs in a Colombian context (Espitia et al., 2018). Additionally, no qualitative research exists that explores the pathways between food consumption behaviors, food agency and food security. The paucity in literature emphasizes the need to assess CBT impacts on beneficiaries' dietary experiences. This research study aimed to conduct qualitative research of women smallholder farmers residing in La Guajira, Colombia.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to assess the impacts of WFP's CBT intervention program among women smallholder farmers residing in La Guajira, Colombia. Its focus lies in informing the understanding of the pathways between WFP's CBT program and food security. A qualitative cross-sectional study assessed participants' perceptions of household diet-seeking behaviors and key determinants of food behaviors while participating in the CBT program to support the hypothesized pathways to achieve food security. Using grounded feminist theory from the global South coupled with a Western approach of the concept of food agency, the study identified key factors that are necessary to improve food insecurity. The study proposes important factors to consider

when delivering social protection programs aimed to address food insecurity and proposes future implications towards program implementation.

Aim

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between food agency and food security from the impacts of WFP's CBT intervention, among ethnic women smallholder farmers, in La Guajira, Colombia. The study aims to explore ethnic women smallholder farmers' household food insecurity experiences. The objective is to understand the impacts of CBT interventions on dietary food behaviors to assess women's food agency in order to achieve household food security in La Guajira, Colombia.

Significance

To date, no qualitative research has been conducted on the impacts of CBT interventions examining the relationship between food agency and food security in a Colombian context. Studies have reviewed the impacts of CBT interventions on women's empowerment and food security and highlight ambiguity surrounding this relationship (Buller et al., 2018; Van Den Bold, Quisumbing, & Gillespie, 2013). Other studies demonstrate the positive effects CBT interventions outcomes have on women's empowerment and dietary diversity outcomes (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018; Sheela Selin Sinharoy et al., 2017). Women's empowerment is critical to improving household food security and children health outcomes (de Groot et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Food agency is a vital pathway to understand the impacts that

CBT interventions have on achieving food security in La Guajira, Colombia. Gaps in the literature suggest implications for understanding food agency as a pathway to pursue social protection programs that gauge measuring food security using an empowerment framework (Kabeer, 1999).

Theoretical Framework

Using an adapted framework of Fulu and Miedema's (2015) global integrated socio-ecological model is a lens to better understand the complexities of food insecurity (FIS). Fulu & Miedema's framework (2015) specifically focuses on the experiences of violence against women. However, the adapted framework emphasizes the global interconnected levels that are vital to understand FIS. It will specifically explain the socio-political dimensions that result in food insecurity (Peng et al., 2018). The ecological framework emphasizes the complexities of globalization, a term that the authors highlight as a process explained as a multidimensional and multidirectional relationship focused on social relations, transactions and power (Fulu & Miedema, 2015). The readapted framework aims to show the linkage between food insecurity and power. The framework emphasizes each system as a stressor of FIS when heightened contextual factors produce added levels of marginalization (Callo-Concha, Sommer, Kleemann, Gatzweiler, & Denich, 2014; Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018). In La Guajira, factors contributing to poor food and nutrition security include immense hunger gaps and challenges across key sectors that further magnify these issues (World Food Programme, 2017). Furthermore, the model demonstrates how sociopolitical

contextual factors influence women's agency towards achieving food security. Each level poses as a potential threat to achieving food agency for women.

Each structure exists with linkages embedded to each other using a concentric format.

The individual level of the model denotes personal experiences related to food insecurity. This level defines an individual's self-efficacy, individuals' perceptions of food behaviors, and socio-demographic characteristics (Bandura, 2001). This level defines the first stage of understanding food insecurity. The micro-system consists of the household level, which includes gender norms and expectations, household decision-making about food consumption, income-generating activities, household stressors, household dietary practices, household decision-making processes on food and diet behaviors, and household food resource allocation. The meso-system encompasses the community level and includes social, ethnic, and cultural norms, collective support for food insecurity, social networks, community-level conflict, community perceptions of food insecurity. The macro-system, or societal level, emphasizes state and political institutions, government structures, war, conflict, displacement, migration, agricultural food systems and markets, economic and political injustices. The global level of the socio-ecology encompasses the global economy and includes environmental disruptions, agricultural disruptions, fluctuation in crops, and climate change variability. Each level narrates possible pathways that influence each other. Every level of the system is characterized by different interconnected power balances and the types of agency ensued (Kabeer, 1999). The outcome denotes how systems inherently dictate behaviors

and ultimately how the politics of marginalization are forged and contested in specific contexts (Nygren & Wayessa, 2018). As a result, this framework proposes a lens to examine the challenges contributing to food insecurity.

This framework offers a lens to examine food agency among participants in La Guajira, Colombia. To conceptualize the adapted global ecological framework for FIS, each nested level dictates personal agency (Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Gammage, Kabeer, & van der Meulen Rodgers, 2016; Kabeer, 1999; Trubek et al., 2017). Agency is an individual's awareness of their capabilities and rights (Kabeer, 1999). Agency comprises the approach with which to understand women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). Thus, agency is a process by which choices are made and acted upon consciously (Kabeer, 2005). Personal agency requires actively exercising choice about one's rights to nutritious foods for oneself and their family (Kabeer, 2005). Decision-making is influenced by factors that limit the capacity for meaningful food choices (Kabeer, 2005). Personal agency denotes the process for the meaning and motivations surrounding food choices and behaviors.

Instrumental agency denotes the decision-making process that enable individuals to act (Kabeer, 2005). It is the process by which women engage in willful acts towards their rightful decisions. It is the process by which an individual recognizes their awareness to act on their life choices (Kabeer, 1999, 2005). Women who recognize their abilities and power to act on improving their food behaviors, heighten their abilities to improve their

household dietary needs (Kabeer, 1999; Poelker & Gibbons, 2018). Evidence suggests that women's schooling level is positively associated with their dietary diversity (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Women's ability to improve household diet diversity is contingent upon their position to actively and consciously negotiate their position amidst gender normative power dynamics (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). In the ways that agency can ignite for an individual, agency can also shape collective experiences. Collective agency is the process that enables groups to engage towards a common interest. Agency can be individual or collective to operate in the spaces necessary to improve food security and nutritional outcomes (Kumar et al., 2018; Sethi et al., 2017; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Thus, agency is the right by which choices are made and exercised to actively engage in a process of change (Kabeer, 2005; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Food agency is the act which focuses on an individual's experience within a larger food system (Morgan, 2016). It is defined as a multivariate experience surrounding food behaviors (Trubek et al., 2017). Food behaviors consist of access to food items, access to resources, food consumption, diet behaviors, nutritional and dietary knowledge, and decision-making (Morgan, 2016). Our approach examined food agency by examining individual, instrumental and collective agency as a three-tiered process to achieve food security (Kabeer, 1999, 2005). The study aimed to explore the perceptions of food agency among women CBT participants in La Guajira, Colombia to examine the impacts of WFP's CBT intervention on food security in the region. Food agency is a Western

concept adapted to include a perspective from the global South on women's agency in order to understand pathways of achieving food empowerment (Kabeer, 2005; Trubek et al., 2017). It offers an approach to assess the implications of agency on the impacts of food security and diet diversity (Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to examine cash-based transfers (CBTs) evaluations and their impacts on food security. In particular, the review serves to understand the current study's focus on pathways to understand the impacts of CBT interventions on women's empowerment and food behaviors perceptions. In particular, an overview of conditional CBTs and unconditional cash-based transfers is included to offer context to the existing types of interventions that have proven success in Latin America (Molyneux, 2006). This section will delineate the ways in which CBT interventions impact women's empowerment and diet diversity to improve food security.

Cash-Based Transfers and Household Food Insecurity

CBTs are interventions implemented in the development arena as a form of social protection for vulnerable and marginalized populations. They offer conditional direct monetary assistance in order to increase household income, improve food security, and improve the livelihoods of families, particularly in humanitarian and conflict-affected areas. Such programs aim to measure behavior changes within households where families and recipients follow specific requirements issued by CBT programs in order to receive subsidies. In addition, CBTs target families that are affected by extreme poverty and conflict. The main objectives of CBT programs are thus to reduce both short-term vulnerability and the long-term intergenerational transmission of poverty (Adato &

Hoddinott, 2010). Cash-based assistance also aim to address these objectives through human capital development, as defined as investing in a person's health, knowledge and skills (Fernald, Gertler, & Neufeld, 2008; Janvry & Sadoulet, 2006). Cash-based transfers interventions are designed using conditional and unconditional parameters. Conditional cash-based transfers are targeted interventions that include adhering to behaviors addressing specific conditions related to nutrition, education, and health (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Unconditional transfers have no set requirements in order for households to receive subsidies. This review demonstrates an overview of CBT programs that have demonstrated success on food security and health outcomes.

Mexico's conditional cash-based (CCT) program is one of the many CBT interventions in Latin America known for its proven success. The *Oportunidades* CCT program is one of the oldest and largest programs in existence (Barber & Gertler, 2008). A program evaluation conducted by Barber and Gertler (2008) examined the impacts of the *Oportunidades* CCT program on low birthweight among poor rural women. It evaluated the impacts of cash transfers on health and education outcomes. Households received a stipend between US\$ 90-160 per household per month and for both education and health requirements. Conditionalities included regular clinic visits and monthly health education meetings as well as complying with attending school for all children in the household. Additional requirements for pregnant women included five pre-natal visits, monitoring the pregnancy's progression, as well as milk-based nutritional supplements for pregnant and lactating women (Barber & Gertler, 2008).

The impact evaluation used a randomized design with a sample of 506 communities. The treatment group randomly assigned 306 communities and began receiving benefits in April 1998. The remaining communities served as the control group and received benefits in December 1999. Researchers stratified beneficiary births as births that occurred after the household received their first cash transfer and non-beneficiary births as those that occurred to eligible women prior to receiving the first cash transfer (Barber & Gertler, 2008). Overall, the *Oportunidades* CCT program impacts resulted in a 127.3 g increase in birthweight and a 4.2 percentage point reduction in the incidence of low birthweight (Barber & Gertler, 2008). The program evaluation attributed these results to three pathways: improved maternal nutrition, higher health care utilization, and improvement in the quality of health care received (Barber & Gertler, 2008). Furthermore, the authors noted the increase of disposal income and its association with improved nutritional outcomes. Additional studies have demonstrated a positive association between *Oportunidades* cash transfers and improved growth and development outcomes in children, including a lower prevalence in obesity in children (Fernald, Gertler, & Neufeld, 2008).

Another sound example that demonstrates the impact of conditional cash transfers on household security and dietary diversity improvements is the Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). This program offers conditional cash and food transfers to measure the effects of dietary diversity and food security outcomes. A cross-sectional, quantitative survey was implemented to demonstrate findings in 195 beneficiary

households—67 received food and 128 received cash (Baye, Retta, & Abuye, 2014). The study monitored household dietary diversity using the household dietary diversity score (HDDS), households' self-perceived food shortages and coping strategies as well as observed modality preferences. Results demonstrated higher reporting for households that received cash than those that received food for adopting coping strategies that reduced the number of daily meals and spending less (Baye et al., 2014).

Moreover, the HDDS for households that received cash was significantly higher ($p=0.02$) compared to households that received food (Baye et al., 2014). Cash transfers provided variability for participants, with many households using their cash transfers for other obligations, such as health expenses, amongst other things. The study presented their findings on household modality preferences as mixed; reporting that 82.3% of food beneficiaries preferred their same modality, while 56% of cash beneficiaries preferred receiving a mixture of food and cash (Baye et al., 2014). While these findings illustrated the differences in outcomes based on transfer modality, the study demonstrated a higher adaptation for food-related coping strategies among cash modality households. Lastly, the study demonstrated decreased food shortage experiences in the last year versus in the last three months (96.4% vs. 47.2%), respectively, due to the exposure of cash or food transfers. The study's cross-sectional, non-experimental design may serve as a limitation for causal inferences, but provides useful insight on the effectiveness of a cash and food transfer program to assist with alleviating food insecurity (Baye et al., 2014). One noteworthy concept to emphasize is the adopted household self-perceived

coping strategies that the study highlighted. This provides significant understanding on how household food behaviors operate under strenuous and limited conditions.

In a study aimed to evaluate the impact of the *Bolsa Familia* Program in Brazil, Martins and Monteiro (2016) examine how the program has helped understand food consumption through food purchases amongst low-income families in Brazil. Families received a monthly stipend ranging from US\$ 27.20 to US\$ 80, depending on the composition of the household (Martins & Monteiro, 2016). Using a national sample from Brazil's household budget survey, a quasi-experimental study design was implemented to understand food purchasing behaviors. All foods purchased through *Bolsa Familia* cash-transfers were grouped together in four groups and subgroups, based on NOVA food classification standards based on food processing, in order to understand impacts on food purchasing (Martins & Monteiro, 2016).

Results demonstrated *Bolsa Familia* beneficiaries' total weekly per capita expenditure on food was significantly higher at approximately 6% for beneficiaries (Martins & Monteiro, 2016). Additionally, beneficiaries spent 7.7% higher than non-beneficiaries on minimally processed foods, and 18% higher on culinary ingredients (Martins & Monteiro, 2016). On the program's overall impact, beneficiaries had 115.5 kcal higher total food availability as compared to non-beneficiaries. In all, *Bolsa Familia* showed varying impacts that contributed food security. Participants had higher expenditure on food, increased availability of total calories, as well as increased availability of minimally

processed foods and processed culinary ingredients among low-income households (Martins & Monteiro, 2016). These findings highlight the exposure to nutritional foods and allows for diversification of diets among low-income households. The study also demonstrates the implications for exposure to a variety of foods that demonstrated how programmatic activities enabled beneficiaries to discern food security. Lastly, the study demonstrated the positive impacts that *Bolsa Familia* has on families, including the improvement of the autonomy of vulnerable populations when deciding on the most appropriate way to spend and invest their money (Martins & Monteiro, 2016).

CBT program evaluations overwhelmingly tend to be quantitative in nature. This approach lends itself to understand the impact that CBT interventions have on food insecurity. However, there is an adamant need for qualitative evaluations, as it can provide access to findings that can help guide and complement future quantitative evaluations. Specifically, very few qualitative evaluations exist in understanding CBT impacts in a Colombian context. Qualitative evaluations enable deep and detailed information about programs' processes of change that are necessary when understanding CBT interventions. While the point of a qualitative evaluation are not causal inferences, these types of evaluations provide an in-depth understanding of beneficiaries' food behaviors experiences while participating in the CBT program.

Cash-based Transfers and Women's Empowerment

CBT interventions that include women's empowerment rhetoric as a key pathway also exist to improve food insecurity. Kabeer (1999) offers an important definition of empowerment as a guide to examine its dimensional context. Empowerment is the ability to "exercise choice in the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). Women's empowerment is discussed in the literature as a critical factor for achieving development goals striving to reduce poverty. Additionally, evidence suggests that women's empowerment aids in improving nutritional outcomes (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Empowerment is a process that supports women enacting their agency on shared interests towards transformative change (Kabeer, 2005; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

There are several studies that examine the ways that CBT interventions impact women's empowerment to improve nutritional outcomes. A systematic review examined a plethora of different forms of structural interventions to examine the linkages between the dimensions of women's empowerment and improved nutritional outcomes to argue the broader structural implications to achieve gender equality (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Qualitative evidence from this review about CCTs suggested positive outcomes on the impact of CCT programs on women's empowerment dimensions, while quantitative evidence suggested mixed outcomes (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). While mixed results denoted CBT impacts on long-term nutritional outcomes and its pathways, evidence highlighted the importance of rigorously measuring these specific pathways. Moreover, evidence demonstrated that agricultural components as an intervention was

positively associated with changes in women's knowledge and awareness (Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Moreover, conditional requirements for CBT interventions offer direct pathways towards achieving women's empowerment. Often times, CBT interventions require attending skills-based trainings to transfer resources that improve health, education and nutritional outcomes. While receiving a CBT subsidy is contingent upon adhering to these conditions, programs are able to measure agency through participation of these trainings to understand the ways that CBTs interventions impact women's empowerment. A qualitative study evaluated Colombia's national cash-based transfer program denoted the positive experiences gained from women that shared a common experience of being internally displaced. Additionally, mothers revealed the importance of collective activities, as they described their meetings as increasing their social networks which improved their self-confidence and trust (Downs-Tepper, 2014). Women participating in these spaces were empowered to share their stories (Downs-Tepper, 2014; Kabeer, 1999).

Studies that measured women's empowerment used various behavioral indicators to encompass the various dimensions that explained impacts by CBT interventions.

Another evaluation examined Brazil's CBT intervention, *Bolsa Familia*, on intrahousehold decision-making. This study analyzed eight dimensions of decision-making in both rural and urban areas and found that impacts on contraception decision-making increased by 10% by receiving the *Bolsa Familia* transfer (De Brauw, Gilligan, Hoddinott, & Roy, 2014;

Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Results indicated significant differences in program impacts between the urban and rural areas, denoting that cash transfers to women in both areas hold significant contextual implications regarding resource control (De Brauw et al., 2014).

Another study observed gender dynamics among Mexico's *Oportunidades* smallholder beneficiaries. The authors found that women in the program had an improved position in intrahousehold decision-making compared to women not receiving the subsidy (Radel C, Schmook B, Haenn N, 2017). The study found that women that received *Oportunidades* funds were more likely to hold specific land rights and titles compared to those not participating in the program. Also, women that received the CBT funds were more likely to report higher rates of decision-making for cultivation of specific crops compared to women not participating in the program (Radel C, Schmook B, Haenn N, 2017). The study noted an increase in bargaining positions and status for women among households participating in the *Oportunidades* program (Radel C, Schmook B, Haenn N, 2017). This study displayed the impacts that a CBT program contributes to a highly complex and gendered experiences such as land tenure rights and agricultural production.

Women's Empowerment and Dietary Diversity

Studies reviewed for this study also included examining women's empowerment on dietary intake. One study in Bangladesh observed the impacts of strengthening women's decision-making and voice to improve their dietary diversity (Sheela S Sinharoy et al.,

2018). This study examined the pathways of women's empowerment through three domains— social solidarity, decision-making and voice with husband (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018). It also observed that completed years of post-primary schooling positively influenced voice with husband, which was positively associated with dietary diversity (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018). The study noted women's schooling as an important predictor of their dietary diversity (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018). Studies like this are seminal in understanding women's empowerment pathways to understand the implications on women's nutritional and health outcomes.

Similarly, another study aimed to understand socio-economic determinants of household food security effects on women's dietary diversity in Bangladesh. Socio-economic determinants such as wealth and land ownership were found as protective factors against food insecurity (Harris-Fry et al., 2015). Moreover, the study noted indicators measured that assessed food availability, access and utilization were associated with food insecurity (Harris-Fry et al., 2015). Literacy and access to media was significantly associated with reducing the risk of food insecurity (Harris-Fry et al., 2015). Additionally, ownership of livestock and women's freedom to attend the market alone were protective against food insecurity (Harris-Fry et al., 2015).

The ability to exercise individual choice is embedded in the notion of three interrelated elements: resources, agency and achievements (Kabeer, 1999). Studies that measure women's empowerment examine indicators comprised of gendered experiences as

pathways to understand health or nutritional outcomes (Huis, Hansen, Otten, & Lensink, 2017; Kabeer, 1999). Studies that measured diet diversity and overall diet quality observed the importance that women's participation and decision-making in the household have on these outcomes (Amugsi, Lartey, Kimani, & Mberu, 2016). More importantly, evidence suggested these forms of agency are significantly associated with improved diet diversity and food security outcomes (Amugsi et al., 2016; Harris-Fry et al., 2015; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Evidence suggested that measuring women's empowerment indicators require a multifaceted and dimensional approach embedded in social and contextual structures (Huis et al., 2017).

CBT interventions as a Social Protection Program

WFP's CBT interventions promote gender-focused social protection programming tailored to meet the contextual needs of the area they serve. Applying a gender-sensitive lens for program implementation offers a critical responsiveness and responsibility to the gendered social-risks and vulnerabilities that arise from systemic gender inequality and marginalization that act as barriers for social inclusion (Bizzari, 2017; Cookson, 2016; Molyneux, 2006). Operating using a gendered lens to implement social protection programs promotes a rights-based approach to engage in transformative change (Bizzari, 2017; Hines, 2016; Kabeer, 1999). WFP's gender-transformative approach is used to implement CBT programs to achieve food security (Bizzari, 2017).

CBT interventions have demonstrated proven impacts on beneficiary livelihoods (Fisher et al., 2017). Despite positive outcomes on the individual, social and community level, it is important to consider the normative gendered approaches aimed to improve social well-being. CBT programs operate as social protection programs predominately targeted to women and children as a mechanism embracing gender normative assumptions and obligations that aid to improve children's health and household livelihoods (Cookson, 2016). These programs are instrumental to assist participants who are often excluded due to intersectional identities that include gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic setting (Cookson, 2016). Many critics of CBT interventions claim that the role of social protection programs normalize and perpetuate such identities through its inclusionary and integrative development program design (Molyneux, 2006). Scholars critique CBT interventions as development programming that perpetuates gender normative experiences as a pathway to accomplish poverty-driven outcomes instead of a reforming systemic gender inequality policies (Molyneux, 2006; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Gaps in the Literature

The literature on the overall CBT impacts on women's empowerment is wide-ranging. Findings suggested a gendered development agenda with appealing motivations (Gamage et al., 2016; Kabeer, 2005; Molyneux, 2006). Moreover, research finds that CBT interventions create both harmful and protective outcomes (Molyneux, 2006).

Research suggesting that CBT impacts improve women's empowerment is mixed within the literature (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Findings that suggest improved outcomes for women's empowerment are taken with the notion that women's individual choices are embedded in historical and structural conditions (Huis et al., 2017).

Literature on CBT interventions illustrated positive findings towards improved nutrition and health outcomes, specifically, reviewing dietary diversity measures (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). However, limited qualitative research existed to understand the impact of CBT interventions on women's agency and diet diversity. To date, limited research exists addressing these factors to examine food security in the context of La Guajira, Colombia (Espitia, Lissbrant, & Moyano-Tamara, 2018a).

To date, limited research exists regarding CBT implementation examining food agency as a pathway to achieve food security. Moreover, no research exists concerning this topic in the context of La Guajira, Colombia. The literature reviewed assessed CBT evaluations that assessed implications for improved livelihoods, women's empowerment, diet diversity and food security outcomes. Additional research is necessary to understand the impacts of CBT programs on women's empowerment when considering food agency as a pathway to food security. Lastly, qualitative research methods as demonstrated by this study allowed for understanding the experiences of people's livelihoods in ways that quantitative methods cannot capture (Bazeley, 2013). Limited qualitative studies addressing food security and health outcomes exist in this region (Espitia, Lissbrant, &

Moyano-Tamara, 2018b). This study aims to propose recommendations for future program design and implementation that empower CBT beneficiaries.

Chapter 3: Manuscript

Food Agency as a Pathway for Household Food Security Among Women Smallholder Farmers in La Guajira, Colombia

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The student researcher designed the research project through its entirety with the assistance of the thesis chair, Dr. Kathryn Yount. This project was designed to fulfill a Global Field Experience (GFE) practicum requirement for the student's master's program. The GFE proposal was reviewed by staff at the World Food Program Colombia (WFP) prior to the start of field work and data collection. The student researcher developed the study objectives based on the need programmatic needs of WFP. The final proposal detailed the project objectives and aim, data collection methodology and deliverables and was approved by both WFP and thesis advisor.

While in Colombia, the student researcher designed data collection tools such as the focus group discussion guide and participant consent forms prior to the field work process. The student worked with expert staff from WFP to modify the guide and comply with cultural competency and sensitivity to language barriers. WFP supported the sample recruitment and field work coordination for data collection. WFP also provided staff during the data collection process through supervision and translation during focus group discussions. After data collection, the researcher prepared and organized all data audio files in an encrypted web-based box provided by Emory.

The student researcher worked with two research assistants (RAs) who helped with verbatim transcription of the audio files. The researcher reviewed transcripts that were transcribed by RAs. The student researcher created the codebook for data analysis. The student researcher memoed and coded the data and conducted a thematic data analysis that contributed to this project. Intercoder reliability was conducted by an RA to measure data validity. All data analysis received feedback from the thesis advisor. The student researcher wrote the entire thesis, including the manuscript with feedback from the thesis advisor throughout the entire writing process.

Abstract

Food insecurity is a global health concern. Approximately 800 million people experience some form of food insecurity. Despite research and evidence-based approaches, food insecurity remains a threat to populations worldwide. In Colombia, 43% of Colombians experience food insecurity and lack access to basic nutritious foods. Therefore, an assessment to understand pathways between food consumption behaviors and food insecurity is needed in order to assess methods to achieve food security. This study examined the perceptions of food insecurity among ethnically marginalized and conflict-affected populations in rural Colombia. Using a cross-sectional qualitative research approach, this study evaluated cash-based transfer programs (CBTs) implemented by the World Food Programme in La Guajira, Colombia. The study observed CBT impacts on women's perceptions of food behaviors in order to examine food agency as a driver towards food security. Results indicated that women in La Guajira hold positive impressions for the CBT programs. Qualitative research explored the ways in which CBT program activities enabled women's economic, social and human resources based on perceptions on food practices and behaviors. Moreover, participants described how program resources facilitated intrinsic, instrumental, and collective agency, elements that fundamental to food agency. Lastly, the study analyzed how food agency served as a necessary pathway to achieve food security. Despite barriers in La Guajira, food agency is found to be a pathway for empowerment and imperative to achieve food security. The findings stressed the need to measure food agency in nutrition-related intervention programs. Furthermore, recommendations are offered to apply food agency as a framework towards effective food security program design and implementation.

Key words

Food insecurity, nutrition, La Guajira, cash-based transfers, women's empowerment, social protection program, food agency, Colombia

Introduction

Food insecurity (FIS) is a health threat to populations worldwide. Food security (FS) is the ability to access adequate food that is nutritious, meets dietary needs and individual preferences at all times in order to live an active and healthy life (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). In 2017, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimated that 10% of the world population experienced severe food insecurity (FIS). FIS impedes a person's ability to develop physically and leads to early mortality (Peng et al., 2018). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) one and two aim to end hunger by achieving food security, improving nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (The United Nations, n.d.). Addressing these goals require an understanding of the burden of global malnutrition.

Currently, nearly 800 million people experience undernutrition resulting from food insecurity (Webb et al., 2016). Undernutrition increases morbidity and mortality rates that disproportionately affects infants, young children and women globally (Fanzo, 2014). Evidence suggests that undernutrition and severe food insecurity are on the rise on a global scale, signifying that about one in every nine people in the world experience undernourishment (de Groot et al., 2017; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018; Webb et al., 2016). Moreover, at least 50 million children under five years old globally experience wasting and 162 million children experience moderate or severe forms of stunting (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018; UNICEF, 2013). Wasting and stunting are

strong predictors for acute malnutrition and chronic undernutrition, respectively, that lead to child mortality (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). Conversely, malnutrition encompasses overweight and obesity (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). Globally, the prevalence of overweight has increased and affects over 38 million children under five years old (Fanzo, 2014; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, 2018). FIS contributes to all forms of malnutrition and suggests a risk to the fundamental access to food.

Food security (FS) is characterized by four dimensions. These dimensions include food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). Food availability is the physical supply of appropriate foods as determined by food production, reserves, and trade (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006; Restrepo-Arango et al., 2018). Access to food refers to the economic and physical capacity to acquire foods for a nutritious diet, which relies heavily on resources and markets (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006; Restrepo-Arango et al., 2018). Food utilization refers to the physiological way that food is processed and absorbed found through an adequate diet, clean water, sanitation, and healthcare to reach an ultimate state of nutritional well-being and where all physical needs are met (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). Lastly, food stability refers to the conditions in which populations have access to adequate and nutritious foods at all times; highlighting a coexistence between security and temporality that may be interrupted by economic crises, environmental shocks, or cyclical events (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006). These dimensions provide a foundation for understanding household food

security, but any of these missing pillars assumes a risk for populations to experience food insecurity (Burkhardsmeier, 2017).

Household food security and dietary diversity have been associated with several health outcomes (Brown et al., 2016; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002; McDonald et al., 2015; Ntwenya et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2016). DD includes the consumption of nutrient rich foods to incorporate a balanced diet (Headey & Ecker, 2013). Measuring DD allows understanding of an individual's or household's entire diet experience (Ntwenya et al., 2015). DD assists with measuring food insecurity by tracking changes in household circumstances and assessing an intervention's impact targeting food security and nutrition outcomes (Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002). DD is a suitable indicator for assessing child and women malnutrition as well as overall household food insecurity prevalence (Brown et al., 2016; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002; Ntwenya et al., 2015; Webb et al., 2016). Yet, there is limited research to assess the possible pathways between food consumption behaviors and food insecurity (Ntwenya et al., 2015).

Latin America experiences high prevalence of severe FIS (Rios Garcia et al., 2015). FAO regional estimates for severe FIS are higher in 2017 (9.8%) than compared to 2014 (7.6%) (FAO, 2018). This problem is visible in Colombia, where 43% of Colombians experience food insecurity and lack access to basic nutritious foods (Hines, 2016; World Food Programme, 2017). FIS is a multi-causal phenomenon (Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018). An important root cause for FIS is displacement due to violence and

conflict. The political armed conflict in Colombia continues to affect millions of people due to six decades of extreme violence. Human rights violations proceeded throughout the armed conflict due to territorial control, criminal activity, and maintaining power in different regions (Wirtz et al., 2014). Results from the conflict highlight the damaging imprints in the social, economic and political fabric of the country (World Food Programme, 2017). Colombia has the second highest number of forced internal displacements, affecting 7.5 million people (Jaramillo, 2014; World Food Programme, 2017). Populations experiencing the severity of the conflict are ethnic and rural. Seventy-three percent of the country's victims are indigenous and Afro-Colombian (World Food Programme, 2017). Peace negotiations between multiple actors and the Colombian government signed in 2016 awakened new opportunities for reform are aimed to advocate for marginalized populations and engage in justice reparations (Jaramillo, 2017). Reparations and legal procedures between actors aimed to rectify the heinous acts committed and strive towards restorative justice (Jaramillo, 2014). As a result, internally displaced people and marginalized ethnic communities in Colombia are victims of the conflict and as such, are susceptible to all forms of malnutrition (Hines, 2016).

The department of La Guajira in Colombia is a prime example of these challenges. The department is located in the northeastern region of the country. It is a peninsula that borders Venezuela in the southeast and surrounded by the Caribbean Sea to the north and west. The region comprises of 44.9% indigenous and 14.8% Afro-Colombians (DANE,

2005). Ninety percent of the dispersed population in the region cannot meet their basic needs (World Food Programme, 2017). Approximately 60% of households in the region experience food insecurity (Espitia, Lissbrant, & Moyano-Tamara, 2018). Rates of malnutrition in La Guajira are higher compared to the national average (World Food Programme, 2017). La Guajira faces high rates of child mortality due to malnutrition and food insecurity. The region's isolation coupled with limited governmental response perpetuate marginalization (Daniels, 2017).

To reduce these health challenges, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) provides humanitarian assistance in La Guajira. WFP Colombia works alongside the national government to support populations through the use of social protection programs. Social protection serves as inclusive programs that offer support to marginalized populations (Jaramillo, 2014). WFP activities provide short- and medium-term support to stabilize actions in the most intense conflict-affected areas (World Food Programme, 2017). WFP's theory of change aligns with national peacebuilding strategies aimed to assist in reducing hunger and achieving food security. WFP Colombia strategizes to achieve two strategic goals, to ensure access to food and decrease experiences of malnutrition (World Food Programme, 2017).

WFP Colombia aims to address food insecurity through the use of conditional, voucher-based transfers. Conditional cash-based transfers (CBTs) offer crisis-affected populations access to nutritious foods and diversified diets to support their livelihoods (World Food

Programme, 2017). A voucher transfer is an assistance offered in the form of an electronic voucher redeemable at preselected retailers called points of sale (World Food Programme, 2014). The number of individuals within each household determines the amount of each voucher. Each household receives COP\$ 48,000 for each household member (approximately USD\$ 16). The CBT program offers trainings on the following topics: nutrition and diet, agriculture and livestock, environment, and collective cohesion. CBT beneficiaries receive a list of food items that include vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, meat, and oil; lists are context-dependent based on community. Beneficiaries receive a monthly amount for the duration of the program. The length of the CBT program is three to six months.

To understand the perceived impacts of the WFP CBT program in La Guajira, a qualitative assessment was conducted. This study examined the perceptions of food insecurity among crisis-affected populations and focused on key determinants to achieve food security. The purpose of this study was to examine perceived impacts and benefits of the CBT program as a pathway to prevent food insecurity. This assessment is part of a larger program evaluation aimed to understand perceptions of food behaviors. The present analysis describes the extent to which trainings empowered beneficiaries' dietary decisions by exploring the concept of food agency throughout their narratives.

Food agency serves as a lens to understand food security in La Guajira, Colombia. Food behaviors are intertwined with a plethora of decisions at different phases leading to

food consumption (Trubek et al., 2017). Food decisions are choices dependent upon individual's ability to actively engage in the process to access nutritious foods. The study defines food agency as a three-tiered, multifaceted process that describes the necessity to participate in decision-making from a personal, instrumental, and collective level to achieve food security (Kabeer, 1999, 2005; Morgan, 2016; Trubek et al., 2017). A Western approach to food agency coupled with a grounded feminist empowerment rhetoric from the global South provided an exploratory lens to examine food security (Kabeer, 1999; Morgan, 2016; Trubek et al., 2017). It also enables a unique perspective to understand individual's dietary decisions that contribute to our knowledge to design social protection programs through this lens. Food agency is used to explore decision-making processes to understand food behaviors for smallholder farmer women participating in WFP's cash-based transfers program in La Guajira, Colombia.

The study applies qualitative research methods to allow the researcher to understand the dimensions of participants' lives rather than quantifying them (Bazeley, 2013). Many CBT intervention evaluations omit qualitative approaches and evaluate only using quantitative metrics. Limited research exists for evaluating CBT programs in a Colombian context (Espitia et al., 2018). Additionally, no qualitative research exists that explores the pathways between food consumption behaviors, food agency and food security (Ntwenya et al., 2015). The paucity in literature emphasizes the need to assess CBT impacts on beneficiaries' dietary experiences. This research study aimed to conduct qualitative research of women smallholder farmers residing in La Guajira, Colombia.

Theoretical Framework

Using an adapted framework of Fulu and Miedema's (2015) global integrated socio-ecological model is a lens to better understand food insecurity (FIS). Fulu & Miedema's framework (2015) specifically focuses on the experiences of violence against women. However, the adapted framework emphasizes the global interconnected levels that are vital to understand FIS. It will specifically explain the socio-political dimensions that result in food insecurity (Peng et al., 2018). The ecological framework emphasizes the complexities of globalization, a term that the authors highlight as a process explained as a multidimensional and multidirectional relationship focused on social relations, transactions and power (Fulu & Miedema, 2015). The readapted framework aims to show the linkage between food insecurity and power. The framework emphasizes each system as a stressor of FIS when heightened contextual factors produce added levels of marginalization (Callo-Concha et al., 2014; Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018). In La Guajira, factors contributing to poor food and nutrition security include immense hunger gaps and challenges across these systems that further magnify these issues (World Food Programme, 2017). Furthermore, the model demonstrates how sociopolitical contextual factors influence women's agency towards achieving food security.

Each structure exists with linkages embedded to each other using a concentric format.

The individual level of the model denotes personal experiences related to food

insecurity. This level defines an individual's self-efficacy, individuals' perceptions of food behaviors, and socio-demographic characteristics (Bandura, 2001). This level defines the first stage of understanding food insecurity. The micro-system consists of the household level, which includes gender norms and expectations, household decision-making about food consumption, income-generating activities, household stressors, household dietary practices, household decision-making processes on food and diet behaviors, and household food resource allocation. The meso-system encompasses the community level and includes social, ethnic, and cultural norms, collective support for food insecurity, social networks, community-level conflict, community perceptions of food insecurity. The macro-system, or societal level, emphasizes state and political institutions, government structures, war, conflict, displacement, migration, agricultural food systems and markets, economic and political injustices. The global level of the socio-ecology encompasses the global economy and includes environmental disruptions, agricultural disruptions, fluctuation in crops, and climate change variability. Each level narrates possible pathways that influence each other. Every level of the system is characterized by different interconnected power balances and types of agency ensued (Kabeer, 1999). The outcome denotes how systems inherently dictate behaviors and ultimately how the politics of marginalization are forged and contested in specific contexts (Nygren & Wayessa, 2018). As a result, this framework proposes a lens to examine the challenges contributing to food insecurity.

This framework offers a lens to examine food agency among participants in La Guajira, Colombia. To conceptualize the adapted global ecological framework for FIS, each nested level dictates personal agency (Fulu & Miedema, 2015; Gammage et al., 2016; Kabeer, 1999; Trubek et al., 2017). Agency is an individual's awareness of their capabilities and rights (Kabeer, 1999). Agency comprises the approach with which to understand women's empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). Thus, agency is the process by which choices are made and acted upon consciously (Kabeer, 2005). Personal agency requires actively exercising choice about one's rights to nutritious foods for oneself and their family (Kabeer, 2005). Decision-making is influenced by factors that limit the capacity for meaningful food choices (Kabeer, 2005). Personal agency denotes the process for the meaning and motivations surrounding food choices and behaviors.

Instrumental agency denotes the decision-making process that enable individuals to act (Kabeer, 2005). It is the process by which women engage in willful acts towards their rightful decisions. It is the process by which an individual recognizes their awareness to act on their life choices (Kabeer, 1999, 2005). Women who recognize their abilities and power to act on improving their food behaviors, heighten their abilities to improve their household dietary needs (Kabeer, 1999; Poelker & Gibbons, 2018). Evidence suggests that women's schooling level is positively associated with their dietary diversity (Sheela S Sinharoy et al., 2018; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Women's ability to improve household diet diversity is contingent upon their position to actively and consciously negotiate their position amidst gender normative power dynamics (Van Den Bold et al.,

2013). In the ways that agency can ignite for an individual, agency can also shape collective experiences. Collective agency is the process that enables groups to engage towards a common interest. Agency can be individual or collective to operate in the spaces necessary to improve food security and nutritional outcomes (Kumar et al., 2018; Sethi et al., 2017; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Thus, agency is the process by which choices are made and exercised to actively engage in a process of change (Kabeer, 2005; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Food agency is the act which focuses on an individual's experience within a larger food system (Morgan, 2016). Trubek, Carabello, Morgan, and Lahne (2016) define it as a multivariate experience surrounding food behaviors. Food behaviors consist of access to food items, access to resources, food consumption, diet behaviors, nutritional and dietary knowledge, and decision-making (Morgan, 2016). Our approach examines food agency by examining individual, instrumental and collective agency as a three-tiered process to achieve food security (Kabeer, 1999, 2005). The study aims to explore the perceptions of food agency among women CBT participants in La Guajira, Colombia in order to examine the impacts of WFP's CBT intervention on food security in the region. Food agency is a Western concept adapted to include perspective from the global South on women's agency in order to understand pathways of achieving food empowerment (Kabeer, 2005; Trubek et al., 2017). It offers an approach to assess the implications of agency on the impacts of food security and diet diversity (Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Methods

Study Design Overview

This cross-sectional qualitative research study was designed as a part of a larger program evaluation for the World Food Programme (WFP) cash-based transfer programs (CBT). The formative assessment aims to understand the perspective of CBT beneficiaries and how trainings of the WFP program contributed to nutritional behavioral change, improved dietary diversity, and improved livelihoods of beneficiaries. Secondly, it evaluated qualitatively the community's knowledge, attitudes, perceptions, and practices of CBT beneficiaries with respect to their dietary habits through the trainings offered. Lastly, the study described the extent to which trainings empowered beneficiaries, with respect to their dietary decisions. Semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gain a community-level perspective that offered a range of opinions from the CBT beneficiaries to understand program norms (M. Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). The research study presented reflects findings from a purposive sample of eleven FGDs.

Data Collection

Study Site

The present study was conducted in the department of La Guajira in Colombia. WFP selected the department due to its ethnic diversity and high prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition relative to the rest of the country (World Food Programme, 2017). The department also has CBT programs implemented throughout several

municipalities. Regionally, La Guajira has a high burden of violence victimization, internally displaced peoples (IDP) and vulnerable ethnic groups, those being predominantly indigenous and Afro-Colombian smallholder farming communities. The five municipalities identified by WFP sub-office staff where data collection occurred were Riohacha, Uribia, Maicao, Manaure, and Dibulla.

Recruitment of Study Participants

Data for the study consisted of a purposive sample of 11 focus groups (FGs) with CBT beneficiaries residing in the region. Participants were selected from WFP's CBT beneficiary population. Eligible participants were female, prior or current beneficiaries of the WFP CBT program, between the ages of 18 and 75 years. The WFP sub-office team, specifically the sub-office regional director and staff members in the region, organized all the participants for interviewing. The FGs were designed to be homogenous with respect to socio-demographics and experiences to facilitate sharing their views and relatability to the conversation (M. Hennink et al., 2011). WFP sub-office staff recruited participants based on the research study's inclusion criteria, and all participants were asked questions to verify the inclusion criteria prior to the start of every FG. All focus groups included six to eight participants. The group size seemed most feasible, as it allowed for exploratory research to identify a broader range of ideas, opinions and experiences surrounding the study topic (M. Hennink et al., 2011).

Results presented are based on findings from a subset sample size of eight focus group discussions (FGs). Of the eight FGs, participants from six groups identified as indigenous

Wayuu and two groups identified as Afro-Colombian and Mestizo. All participants were women. Participants were between the ages of 18 and 75 years. The Wayuu women in the sample reported knitting and selling traditional artisanal handbags and hammocks as their primary source of income. Afro-Colombian and Mestizo women reported agricultural production as their primary source of income. At the time of data collection, all but one FG received at least one CBT training. Two of the eight FGs received both CBT vouchers and in-kind food. Participants' engagement in the CBT program ranged from one to ten months.

Focus Group Discussions Methodology and Piloting

A semi-structured guide was developed and piloted to facilitate group discussions. The guide initially was developed in English, translated into Spanish, revised by WFP subject matter experts in CBT programming and implementation, and then revised with the assistance of the WFP sub-office staff in La Guajira to ensure participant comprehension, understanding, and the cultural appropriateness of the questions.

Piloting of the guide occurred in Riohacha with one focus group. The WFP sub-offices selected the municipality based on the location and CBT program participation.

Participants for the pilot FGD identified as *Wayuu* but spoke and understood Spanish at a comprehensible level in order gauge the discussion. Piloting allowed the researchers to assess participants' understanding of the questions when asked during the discussion and for the considerations of any revisions towards the guide after the discussion (M. Hennink et al., 2011). After the piloting process, the discussion guide went through

modifications for question redesign and reformatting for added delivery and comprehension.

The final FGD guide covered the following topics—(1) demographics, introductions and a description of participants' perceptions of a healthy plate; (2) nutritional decision-making using the CBTs; (3) conditional trainings and perceptions of CBTs quantity; (4) how CBTs affect cultural food norms and diet diversity; (5) limitations due to conditional requirements and market access; (6) CBTs and empowerment as it relates to nutrition and diet diversity; and (7) modality preferences. All domains had two to three questions, each with two to three probes. The FGD followed the discussion guide but also integrated an inductive approach to gain deeper knowledge on the research topic (M. Hennink et al., 2011).

The researcher also applied a qualitative method called participatory learning and action approach as an activity during the FGDs. Each FGD included a card sorting activity to help identify and facilitate further exploration of the themes. The activity commenced by asking participants to describe their version of a healthy and nutritious meal based on recalling from current or previous CBTs conditional activities and trainings.

Participants were distributed seven square flashcards developed by WFP program staff. Each flashcard consisted of a food item from the following staple food groups: meats, fruits and vegetables; dairy products; sugars; fats; and grains, roots and tubers. Each participant selected the flashcards that contained the food product they considered the

most nutritious for their individual healthy plate and were informed to select only from the seven flash cards distributed to them. Cards were shuffled at the beginning of each discussion and were randomly distributed. Although cards were repeated within the deck, no one participant received an identical stack of seven flashcards. Participants' responses were documented using field notes and audio recordings.

A note-taker from the research team supported the moderator by observing the FGs and taking field notes during each session. The moderator and note-taker collaborated after discussions to generate post-discussion notes based on observations and individual notes. The research study assumed an iterative approach based on inductive reasoning to meet saturation. Due to the broad and exploratory themes of the study as well as to the homogenous study population, the sampling strategy achieved saturation with the completed FGDs (M. Hennink et al., 2011; M. M. Hennink, Kaiser, & Weber, 2019).

All of the FGDs ranged between 45 and 60 minutes using the FGD guide and participatory learning approach. In addition, a WFP staff member or training implementing partner, assisted as a translator to help translate between Spanish and the local indigenous language, Wayuunaiki, for FGs with participants that identified as *Wayuu*. The research group spent seven days interviewing participants at each of the five municipalities. A WFP staff member attended all visits to the respective communities with the research team.

Ethics and Informed Consent

During the pre-fieldwork phases, study consent forms were developed and translated from English to Spanish. Consent forms were reviewed and edited by WFP staff to ensure comprehensibility in the field. All five municipalities consented to participate in the study prior to each visit. Research ethics approval was obtained from the Emory University Institutional Review Board (IRB) in Atlanta, GA. The study research protocol was granted IRB exemption in June 2018.

For every visit to each community, the WFP liaison introduced the research team and the purpose of the visit. During the consent process, the interviewer explained the purpose of the study and its objectives, the length of the interview, the voluntary nature of participating in the study, the importance of confidentiality, and the use of audio recording during the interview. Before all interviews, the moderator read the consent form aloud and allowed participants to provide consent using their signature or a fingerprint.

Transcriptions

Two research assistants (RAs) at Emory University fluent in Spanish transcribed all FGDs verbatim. They completed all necessary ethical trainings prior to the transcription process and were added to the IRB ethical protocol. The two RAs accessed all audio files using an encrypted cloud storage called Emory Box and saved all completed transcripts in the same location. The RAs and the researcher maintained ongoing communication

during the transcription process to eliminate any discrepancies. All quotes selected during the data analysis phase and presented in the results section were translated from Spanish to English.

Data Analysis

Eight FGDs were randomly selected for data analysis as a result of limited time constraints for the project. The researcher listened to all eleven interviews to ensure interviews had breadth in length. Then, the researcher used a random number generator to select the transcriptions to proceed with those FGDs to the data analysis phase.

Data exploration led to the development of deductive, inductive and *in vivo* codes (Bazeley, 2013; M. Hennink et al., 2011). Codes were managed through the use of a codebook created in English and Spanish, as analysis occurred in Spanish. All codes were refined after two series of annotating and reviewing the data to validate that repetition of the same codes occurred throughout all eight transcripts (M. Hennink et al., 2011). The final codebook included all meaningful codes and their respective exclusion and inclusion criteria which assisted with applying the codes appropriately throughout the data and maintaining adherence to the overarching objectives of the study. The researcher applied codes using MAXQDA software (Version 18.1.0) to the subsample and reviewed the coded transcripts once to ensure all meaningful segments were included. One additional coder applied codes to the subsample, in addition to the

researcher, to contribute towards intercoder reliability and ensure validity during the coding phase (Bazeley, 2013).

Data analysis was conducted in Spanish and evident quotes discovered during the analysis phase were translated to English for the purposes of this study. The researcher applied a thematic analysis approach that led to identifying patterns and emerging themes in the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This process included reviewing the transcripts two to three times and memo writing during each time to ensure adequate understanding of what the data revealed. The investigator practiced analytic and reflexive memo-writing throughout the data to ensure transparency during the research process (M. Hennink et al., 2011). Thick description captured during the card sorting activity complemented the memo writing phase and allowed to facilitate the themes generated during this process.

The first author is fluent in Spanish which allowed for a seamless analysis and interpretation of the data. The researcher is a woman of Afro-Caribbean descent and practiced reflexivity throughout the research study. She demonstrated cultural humility in order to understand the socio-contextual factors in La Guajira, Colombia. The researcher was sensitive to her position and aware of her Western perceptions of gender norms throughout the implementation of the research study.

Results

Figure 2. Conceptual framework evaluating WFP's cash-based transfer program

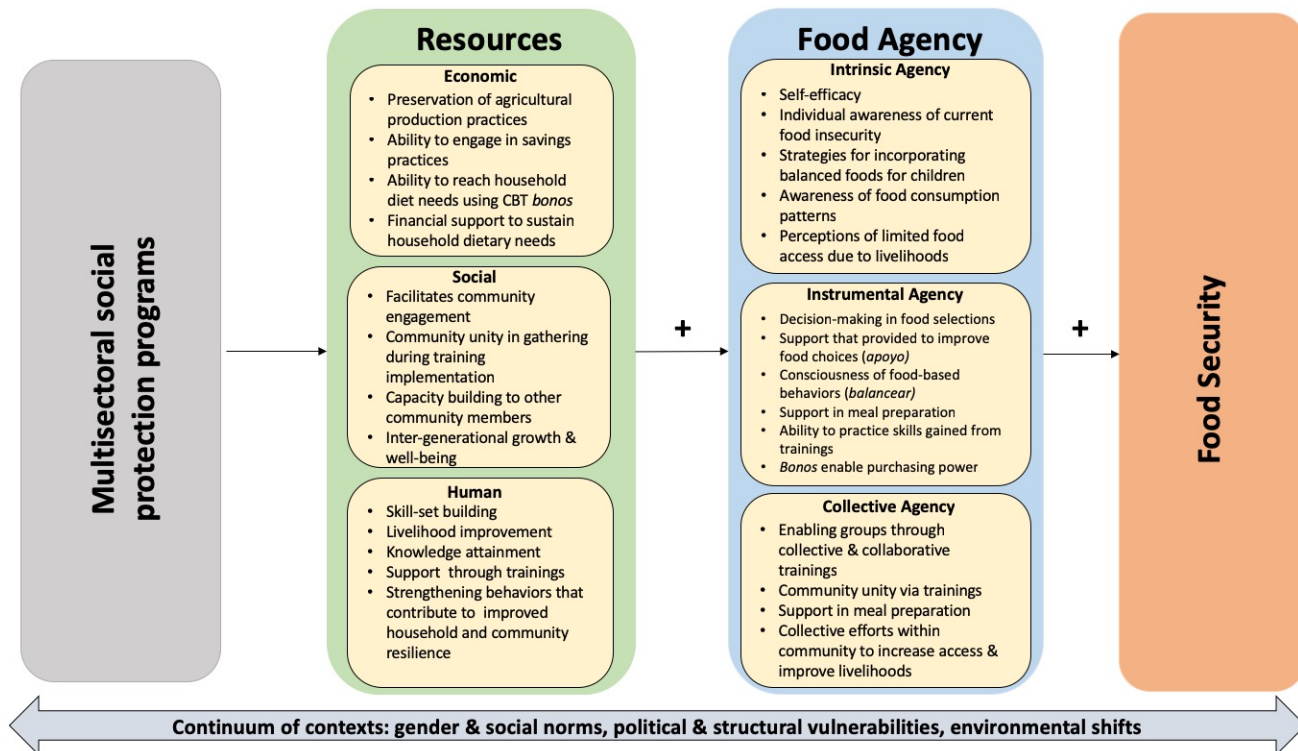


Figure 2 is a framework developed to adapt concepts that cater to examining food security. Feminist empowerment theory from the global South coupled with the Western theory of food agency provide a lens to apply grounded theory that supports the process evaluation to understand the benefits of WFP's CBT program (Kabeer, 1999; Morgan, 2016; Trubek et al., 2017). The grounded approach is defined by a one directional model that indicates the positive relationship that multisectoral social protection programs (in this case, is WFP) have on beneficiaries to achieve food security. Resources and food agency are the second and third pathway, respectively, to achieve food security. Elements in the resources box illustrate the economic, social and human resources gained from multisectoral social protection programs (Kabeer, 1999; Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981). Food agency is the third box that encompasses intrinsic,

instrumental, and collective agency that are fundamental to understand how participants engage in the process of food decision-making behaviors that ultimately leads to hypothesizing increased food security (Kabeer, 1999; Trubek et al., 2017). The results presented examine each node based on qualitative findings that demonstrate this hypothesized relationship.

Social protection program resources

Economic

[...] for example, [the] Alianza Foundation donated a goat to each family and that has allowed us to see that yes, we can work with foundations for the benefit of ourselves and we have understood that this is in us. We have joined effort and we are also corresponding in the counterpart that corresponds to us. We are corresponding to [them] so that this continues like this, so that [it] brings us benefits. (Translator for Participant 2, FG 9, La Guajira, 03 July 2018)

Women identified WFP's CBT program as a beneficial addition to their household and livelihood needs. Many FGs described *bonos* [CBT vouchers] as a form of economic security that contribute to their household food needs. FGs described the type of exposure to different food options and ability to have access to these foods due to the CBT program. Many participants' responses demonstrated an understanding to the exposure to various types of food items that determine their diet. Throughout the FGs, participants described inaccessibility to purchasing food items due to the cost or

financial constraints. The CBT program exposed participants to specific foods that enabled participants to explore various opportunities that enhanced their perceptions of diet diversity. Inclusively, participants described accessibility pertaining to the gamut and quantity of foods. The distinction between these two types of the term enabled participants to define accessibility to the interviewer.

Some participants claimed their economic resources as having the opportunity to *alcanzar* [reach] or *acceder* [access] to emphasize accessibility to larger food quantities for their households. Participants described the option of having access to afford different food options and accessing larger quantities of food for household consumption, something that participants described as difficult prior to the CBT program. Describing the overall ability to access different types of foods propelled some participants to describe their experiences with ranges of receptive emotions that were noted by the interviewer.

Through the CBT program, participants denoted their abilities to participate in savings practices that enabled their abilities to distribute their earned income towards other household priorities. The CBT program offered participants resources they claimed and redefined in their contexts. Some women claimed their participation in the program enabled the preservation of agricultural production practices. A few FGs had participants that earned income from agriculture production. They described their exposure to the program as having access in engaging local markets to sell their crops

and participate in multiple levels of economies. The participants noted that the program reshaped their livelihoods.

The economic resources that the CBT program provided shaped participants' narratives for claiming their understanding of food security. The accessibility to different food options that the program offered enabled participants to discuss their marginalized positions. Participants highlighted their limited access to foods as directly related to their limited income opportunities. Some participants involved in income generated activities such as artisanal goods described the hardships involved in selling their traditional designs and the market vulnerabilities faced when attempting to seek profit. Many participants described the process of unregulated competition that they faced and the how their artisanal goods are devalued in tourist areas. Many recognize the support it provided to access food and change their dietary behaviors. Some noted the direct health benefits as a result of the program through the perceived health benefits for their children. However, a few FGs discussed the need to engage in that type of support for economic activities that are prone to vulnerabilities. The contrast demonstrated participants' engagement concerning their rights to improved livelihoods. Their access to resources offered participants a way to discuss their needs that included improving their economic opportunities in the same capacity as their dietary needs.

Social

That we all were united - that is, that [we] did work as a team for the benefit of everyone in the community. And that all the values put into

practice that [are] also a model for children. That these values be inculcated also for children [so they] would respectful, organized [and] had that sense of relevance to the community, to have all the environment, the surrounding, clean. (Translator for Participant 2, FG 9, La Guajira, 03 July 2018)

Social resources facilitated participants' notion of community engagement. Participants described a sense of unity when detailing their support from the trainings offered. Other FGs described unity during the process of redeeming their CBTs by sharing transportation costs among beneficiaries to reduce the added burden. Many indicated the CBT trainings offered the opportunity to engage as community members and unionize towards collective improvement. Some described a sense of coexistence among their community to explain the benefits of the resources gained from the program. Women described the appreciation for trainings offered as it evoked a space to gather and learn. Some FGs denoted the ways that the CBT program offered shared learning. Participants often discussed the familiarity amongst community members as a way to describe the benefits of the CBT program.

Women from all FGs conveyed the health benefits the CBT program offered their children. All participants described the important nutritional benefits that their children received from the CBT vouchers. Participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing their children's health as optimal when discussing program benefits. Observations during these discussions rendered the importance of social protection on inter-

generational growth and well-being. Women overwhelmingly attributed the importance of improving their children's lives. Some participants indicated the importance to connect with the younger generations in their community to instill a sense of community belonging and ensure respectfulness among them.

Human

Putting it into practice. Teaching also people who did not have the knowledge and yes, putting it into practice. And also, to make known what we learned with the program, with the trainings, and we have also taught many people who did not know it. (Participant 3, FG 11, La Guajira, 04 July 2018)

Participants indicated increasing their capacity in different ways that they described as positively impacting their households. Trainings were largely described benefits impacting their families' nutrition and livelihoods. Participants received trainings from WFP as well as government and non-governmental organizations and trainings often coincided in themes and topics. All participants were expected to attend WFP trainings as a requirement for the CBT program. All but one FG received their nutritional training during the time of their discussion. Training topics included personal and environmental hygiene, agriculture practices, parenting techniques, tourism, community and household cohesion. Some participants favored the trainings for the overall support they offered them and their communities. Others described added benefits such as

learning, adapting, practicality, and application of skills and knowledge in their livelihoods.

The trainings provided participants capacity-building skills to support their livelihoods. Nutritional CBT trainings offered participants the skills to understand nutritional aspects of their household diets. These specific trainings provided participants the awareness to diversify their household diets. Some participants also reported their attitudes about learning skills and techniques that contributed towards their nutritional improvements. Many expressed their gratitude for being able to gain skills that improved their food consumption patterns and ultimately improved their livelihoods. Participants expressed the opportunity to gain new skills, such as learning how to make their own organic compost for their crops. Participants expressed the importance of practicing knowledge gained from the trainings.

Food agency elements

Intrinsic Agency

It is a joy to be able to provide a healthy diet– be able to provide a good diet one feels happy, and if there are [food] products much more.

(Participant 2, FG 10, La Guajira, 04 July 2018)

Overall, participants described the ability to provide nutritious meals to their families.

Many described their awareness to their lack of access to foods. A few participants

mentioned the impact the CBT programs had on addressing food insecurity in their communities. Some participants described prioritizing meals and foods based on affordability and access.

Participants described their economic limitations as one factor that contributed to their food consumption decisions. For many participants, decisions due to economic constraints defined many of their household diet behaviors that limited their access to nutritious foods. Some participants indicated their livelihoods defined their food decision behaviors. Many FGs described embodying their food decisions (Krieger, 2005b).

Whatever one can. What I am saying is that as a poor farmer we aren't going to eat well. So, we have the plot up there in the mountain and if you get a little pound of meat a week-you eat it. One pound of chicken- you eat. And from there the day that you don't have anything – one only eats yucca or an egg suddenly because that is what we have in the mountain. Thank God. (Participant 4, FG 11, La Guajira, 04 July 2018)

Food decisions were prioritized based on circumstances. Participants shared their perspectives on household dietary behaviors and food consumption. Access to the CBT program resources enabled participants to expand their food choices for their families. More than anything, participants described their food behaviors based on the foods

that were accessible to them. Decisions regarding quality and quantity of foods depended on household income and often times discussed as difficult to purchase diverse foods. Participants expressed awareness that their ability to make diverse food choices encompassed factors out of their reach or control.

Perceptions of participants' food choices often reflected their attitudes for improving their children's health. Many of these decisions revealed contextual implications that comprise the choices and behaviors women performed in their daily experiences.

These experiences denoted women's awareness to their food consumption practices as it related to perceptions of access to food and diet diversity. Further, participants expressed the ways in which the CBT program supported their intention to act and change their food behaviors.

Instrumental Agency

[...] but now if they do consume what is the fruit, vegetable, egg and meat. That is why they have noticed a lot of the difference that has brought support has brought with the [CBT] vouchers because, uh, sometimes they did not have to give breakfast to the children before school and the same happened when [the children] returned for lunch, they did a little of lunch. If there was not [lunch], they spent the day in hunger. But now that has improved, food security, because with these foods and they can prepare breakfast for the child, when they return from school, they [the children] find their lunch already prepared. So, they say they are very grateful for

this program because they say it has been very beneficial for them and for all the families in general. (Translator for Participant 3, FG 8, La Guajira, 02 July 2018)

Participants discussed characteristics for defining their perceptions of diet diversity. The focal theme amongst FGs described how the CBT program supported their decision-making towards food preparation, consumption and selection. Women throughout FGs described the CBT voucher as a form of support for their households. Participants referred to the word, *apoyo* [support], to describe receptive opinions and attitudes towards the support they experienced towards their diet. Participants indicated support described as providing different foods to their children. Participants expressed the support received from the CBT program directly improved their children's health. A few participants mentioned that CBT vouchers addressed the need to act against the food insecurity affecting in their communities. Some FGs discussed their changes in food consumption behaviors and mentioned how CBT program offered them access to diverse foods. Participants described access to resources that ignited active participation to their food decisions. Many expressed the options and availability to diverse food choices as a way they felt supported. The intent to act with the available resources to prioritize their children's health provided participants with access to engage in their own food behaviors.

FGs expressed their decisions to balance their household meals as an integral factor towards nutritional benefits. Participants expressed their perceptions of a healthy meal

by using *balancear* [to balance] to describe household meals. Balancing described a continuum of providing diverse foods to different meals for their families. Perceptions of food behaviors denoted accessibility to construct food behaviors using the resources provided by the CBT program.

Participants' perceptions of their decision-making capabilities led to discussions about modality preferences. Their views on CBT modality preference reflected their awareness to decide where to purchase the most affordable foods in the area by using a cash option. Others described the ability to choose where to purchase the same foods using the current CBT voucher option. Participants described their preferences to receive their CBT vouchers in the form of cash to allow for prioritizing foods as well as saving habits to invest in their economic pursuits. Many described using their resources helped pursue activities that benefit their livelihoods, such as investing in additional materials for their artisanal products to generate income or growing different crops for consumption. Discussions pertained to investing in livestock and seeds for specific crops to provide a source of steady food supplies for their families. FGs expressed their enthusiasm for the CBT voucher as their preference in modality, but participants highlighted the ability to practice their autonomy through different mechanisms to use the CBT voucher without preconditions.

Participants perceived their abilities to provide nutritious foods to their families using the CBT program resources. Their capabilities to provide nutritious meals through access

to food choices facilitated changes in their diets. The trainings and vouchers offered through the program strengthened participants' awareness to their individual capabilities to improve their food access.

Collective Agency

They [the lessons] have been very good messages because we are already seeing it in our daily life, in the coexistence that we have among ourselves. This has united us more as a community. There is that harmony. We already work very closely with authority. When he summons us he says, "there is a meeting that day", and that has allowed us to unite with each other, work as a team, and the benefits that have brought us [...] We have joined efforts and we are also corresponding in the counterpart that corresponds to us. (Translator for Participant 2, FG 9, La Guajira, 03 July 2018)

Participants described a sense of solidarity in their community due to their CBT trainings that taught them lessons on collective action. Participants expressed their understanding of what it meant to be a member in their community from the knowledge gained from the trainings. FGs described CBT programming that highlighted community-oriented activities that supported collective participation. Participants also expressed travelling together to redeem CBT vouchers to alleviate transportation costs. Themes for the trainings were described as a collective process to enable community members to improve their nutrition in solidarity. Many

participants discussed the solidarity felt from the knowledge gained from the CBT programs. Others discussed the opportunities offered by the CBT trainings that improved their livelihoods. Some participants described trainings as introducing conversations that engaged their partners and the entire community on food decision-making behaviors not often discussed. Participants denoted the importance of familiarity between community members after training sessions. Some FGs described a sense of dependability towards their community members when collective projects were discussed. FGs discussed their awareness of improved community interactions among members. Participants expressed the importance of advocating for their community needs from the trainings implemented by the CBT program.

In general, women denoted the improvements they witnessed as a collective from the CBT trainings. Group membership among women created a space to interact differently to aid in food making decisions. The trainings offered participants the ability to engage socially and address community issues through collective participation. Enabling community building efforts provided shared accountability to empower one another towards group decision-making that leads to collective action (Kabeer, 2005).

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived impacts and benefits of the CBT program as a way to achieve food security. This study conducted a process evaluation that explored the attitudes and beliefs of food decision-making. This research propels the need to explore the impact of CBT programs on diet diversity and food insecurity in La Guajira, Colombia. Participants discussed the ways the CBT program assisted with their household decision-making for their dietary choices to improve their household nutrition. Findings suggest that CBT program resources influenced participants' food agency to improve their food security.

Resources as a pathway to food agency

WFP CBT programming is a social protection activity designed to reduce food insecurity through nutrition empowerment interventions that operate as transformative change (World Food Programme, 2017). Resources that are offered through the social protection program serve as the first stage towards women experiencing empowerment (Huis et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999). The resources offered women the ability to exercise decision-making that actively includes them in the process. Economic, social and human resources are defined by social relationships that enhances women's ability to exercise choice (Kabeer, 1999). Women interviewed in the study expressed positive impacts by the CBT program. They described the notable improvements of their household diets by using the CBT vouchers and participating in the trainings offered. Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of nutritional benefits for their children. Participants recognized food insecurity as a serious problem due to the history of chronic malnutrition in the area. Many participants referred large number of children dying as a

result to malnutrition in the region (Daniels, 2017). Furthermore, studies on CBT interventions demonstrated that increasing resources to women improve food insecurity outcomes and child malnutrition (Barber & Gertler, 2008; Baye et al., 2014; de Groot et al., 2017; Martins & Monteiro, 2016; Morales Ruán et al., 2018).

Participants built new skills as an asset that defined their decisions and improved their diets and food choices. The trainings facilitated knowledge that participants applied in different facets of their livelihoods. These skillsets offered opportunities for capacity building that influenced their awareness on food decisions and behaviors (Kabeer, 1999). Studies on CBT program activities demonstrated improvements on nutrition and women's empowerment through skills-based trainings (Kabeer, 1999; Malapit, Kadiyala, Quisumbing, Cunningham, & Tyagi, 2013; Morgan, 2016; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Social protection programs offer strategies to address some of the causes of food security. The CBT program provided participants the necessary support given the limited resources in the region. Low levels of income directly affect access to food, as hunger and poverty are directly correlated (Espitia et al., 2018b). As such, participants noted the multiple factors associated with food access (Dover & Lambert, 2016; Morgan, 2016; Yudkin, 1956). Many participants discussed increased accessibility to nutritious foods through the CBT program. Food accessibility is often compromised in the region, where the average dietary energy intake is 1,000 kcal less per person per day than in Bogota (World Food Programme, 2017). WFP's intervention efforts provided participants the

accessibility to food systems often excluded from them, as vulnerable ethnic groups residing in La Guajira have been historically marginalized by the country (P. Jaramillo, 2014). Furthermore, these programs offer temporary protection to its participants from structural oppressive systems that exert forms of power that hinder women to adequately engage in conscious food decision-making behaviors (Collins, 2000; P. Jaramillo, 2014; Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018).

Resources offered by the CBT program enabled participants to engage in relational experiences that increase their access to improved livelihoods. Economic, social and human resources operate as multifaceted relationships that are embedded within domains of society (Kabeer, 1999; Lin et al., 1981). These domains offer participants opportunities for integration and inclusion who are disproportionately affected by marginalization (Buller et al., 2018; Hidrobo, Hoddinott, Peterman, Margolies, & Moreira, 2014). Access to these resources enable women to examine their food choices and operate based on decisions that embody their individual agency (Freire, 1972; Kabeer, 1999; Krieger, 2005a).

Food agency as a driver for food security

This study offers the concept of food agency as a pathway towards food security. The data suggested that participants explored the ways that food served as a central tenet to their livelihoods and everyday experiences. Throughout the FGs, participants described the decision-making processes experience through access to nutritious and diverse foods was offered through the CBT program. Participants described perceived

impacts of decision-making when foods and resources were available with the assistance of the CBT program. Participants also described the support that enabled the feasibility of accessing nutritious meals for their families. The CBT program supported participants' ability to strengthen the three different levels of agency proposed by this study to achieve food agency.

Participants recognized their limited access to nutritious foods and described their food behaviors defined by their livelihoods and low income. These conditions highlighted the limited potential in their agency that demonstrated the complexities that are found in the intersections between environment, intention, and action for individuals that experience food insecurity (Trubek et al., 2017). Social protection programs like WFP's CBT program offer participants the resources so that women can gain awareness of their capabilities and emerge to action to address food insecurity. The program provided resources that captured women's abilities to act and offer diverse foods to their households. The last component towards food agency is collective cooperation that women described as acting in solidarity towards improving the state of their household food insecurity.

Food agency offers a lens to understand women's empowerment to attain food security. Resources offered by WFP operate to engage women's individual agency. Studies support the notion that CBT programs impacted women's decision-making and agency in households (Buller et al., 2018). Moreover, food agency examines women's abilities

to participate in the process of transformative change (Huis et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999). It offers a consciousness embedded in women's empowerment discourse to challenge social structures that perpetuate inequalities among contextual factors that marginalize indigenous and afro-Colombian women seeking to achieve household food security (Freire, 1972; Kabeer, 1999).

Finally, WFP's CBT program empowered women to describe their experiences that are often unheard by political actors. Resources enabled participants to describe their autonomy directly related to the skills gained and behaviors practiced. Our qualitative findings suggest positive impacts towards food decision-making behaviors as a result of the skills gained to change food behaviors. Previous research displayed similar impacts that denoted improved food behaviors (Martins & Monteiro, 2016; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Moreover, introducing resources in populations experiencing multiple levels of marginalization enable beneficiaries to participate in local market economies (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Women's livelihoods in La Guajira depend directly on the environment as subsistence farmers and climatic shocks have led to disabling their income-generating activities (Dankelman, 2010). Notwithstanding, while cash transfers have adversely affected participants through fluctuating market prices, it does allow for re-integration for populations affected by displacement (Buller et al., 2018; Hidrobo et al., 2014). Systemic barriers demonstrate a paradigm reflecting colonization and militarism that disproportionately affect women (Sieder, 2015). Thus, continuing a national agenda inherently ingrained in racism, social exclusion, and poverty-induced

policies (Sieder, 2015). WFP fills these gaps by injecting resources to increase resilience and adaptability to these vulnerabilities (World Food Programme, 2017).

Limitations

It is important to note the limitations for this study. There were many discrepancies during field work activities, specifically during the FGs. First, limited translating staff during the data collection phase posed difficulty in understanding the nuances between Spanish and the Wayuu language generated from FG discussions. Moreover, the outdoor location for the discussion groups proved to be difficult to properly listen and ascertain what participants were discussing due to environmental factors that were captured during the recording of the discussions. Additionally, the interviewer was often introduced as a member of the WFP team that possibly led to biased responses due to power dynamics between participants and WFP. Participants may have generated specific answers to reassure the redistribution of WFP CBTs. Additionally, this may have contributed towards possible power differentials between participant and interviewer. Moreover, the purposive design of the study limits the ability to generalize assessment findings.

Further, data exploration led the qualitative analysis of understanding food agency. While an important avenue to pursue, this concept should be measured quantitatively to complement qualitative findings. Studies suggest that measuring diet diversity and food security should incorporate anthropometric indicators and recall metrics to ensure valid estimates for these outcomes (Headey & Ecker, 2013; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002;

McDonald et al., 2015; Sheela Selin Sinharoy et al., 2017; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Thus, the study could not collect these metrics to provide quantitative outcomes measuring diet diversity and nutritional outcomes. Lastly, the study only collected qualitative findings during the data collection phase. A best practice would apply a mixed-methods approach in order to conduct an evaluation to triangulate evaluation findings (Buller et al., 2018). Yet, it is important to acknowledge the public health implications this study denotes for future directions for research.

Implications for further research and policy

This study generated possible suggestions for future research. First, it is important for food security and nutrition interventions to include program design that embedded in measuring food agency. The current literature on this topic solely provides guidance from a Western perspective. A need to expand its definition to a global setting is imperative for future evaluation of food security interventions. Moreover, qualitative research can easily generate perceptions of food agency to help interventions address food insecurity and shape CBT program priorities. Food agency as a conceptual pathway towards food security can offer effective program design and improve the ways that activities better serve its beneficiaries. Lastly, food agency can help CBT programmatic activities generate a tailored approach towards monitoring and evaluating CBT program outcomes that are measured during evaluation.

Conclusion

CBT programs that strive to mitigate and improve nutritional outcomes and reduce food insecurity should consider implementing food agency in their program design. This aids an added level of understanding to the impacts that CBT programming can have on its beneficiaries. Additionally, this concept can introduce additional avenues to consider when designing programs that address food decision-making behaviors and women's empowerment.

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Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceived impacts and benefits of the CBT program as a way to achieve food security. This study conducted a process evaluation that explored the attitudes and beliefs of food decision-making. This research propels the need to explore the impact of CBT programs on diet diversity and food insecurity in La Guajira, Colombia. Participants discussed the ways the CBT program assisted with their household decision-making for their dietary choices to improve their household nutrition. Findings suggest that CBT program resources influenced participants' food agency to improve their food security.

Resources as a pathway to food agency

WFP CBT programming is a social protection activity designed to reduce food insecurity through nutrition empowerment interventions that operate as transformative change (World Food Programme, 2017). Resources that are offered through the social protection program serve as the first stage towards women experiencing empowerment (Huis et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999). The resources offered women the ability to exercise decision-making that actively includes them in the process. Economic, social and human resources are defined by social relationships that enhances women's ability to exercise choice (Kabeer, 1999). Women interviewed in the study expressed positive impacts by the CBT program. They described the notable improvements of their household diets by using the CBT vouchers and participating in the trainings offered. Moreover, participants highlighted the importance of nutritional benefits for their children. Participants

recognized food insecurity as a serious problem due to the history of chronic malnutrition in the area. Many participants referred large number of children dying as a result to malnutrition in the region (Daniels, 2017). Furthermore, studies on CBT interventions demonstrated that increasing resources to women improve food insecurity outcomes and child malnutrition (Barber & Gertler, 2008; Baye et al., 2014; de Groot et al., 2017; Martins & Monteiro, 2016; Morales Ruán et al., 2018).

Participants built new skills as an asset that defined their decisions and improved their diets and food choices. The trainings facilitated knowledge that participants applied in different facets of their livelihoods. These skillsets offered opportunities for capacity building that influenced their awareness on food decisions and behaviors (Kabeer, 1999). Studies on CBT program activities demonstrated improvements on nutrition and women's empowerment through skills-based trainings (Kabeer, 1999; Malapit, Kadiyala, Quisumbing, Cunningham, & Tyagi, 2013; Morgan, 2016; Van Den Bold et al., 2013).

Social protection programs offer strategies to address some of the causes of food security. The CBT program provided participants the necessary support given the limited resources in the region. Low levels of income directly affect access to food, as hunger and poverty are directly correlated (Espitia et al., 2018b). As such, participants noted the multiple factors associated with food access (Dover & Lambert, 2016; Morgan, 2016; Yudkin, 1956). Many participants discussed increased accessibility to nutritious foods through the CBT program. Food accessibility is often compromised in the region, where

the average dietary energy intake is 1,000 kcal less per person per day than in Bogota (World Food Programme, 2017). WFP's intervention efforts provided participants the accessibility to food systems often excluded from them, as vulnerable ethnic groups residing in La Guajira have been historically marginalized by the country (P. Jaramillo, 2014). Furthermore, these programs offer temporary protection to its participants from structural oppressive systems that exert forms of power that hinder women to adequately engage in conscious food decision-making behaviors (Collins, 2000; P. Jaramillo, 2014; Nygren & Wayessa, 2018; Peng et al., 2018).

Resources offered by the CBT program enabled participants to engage in relational experiences that increase their access to improved livelihoods. Economic, social and human resources operate as multifaceted relationships that are embedded within domains of society (Kabeer, 1999; Lin et al., 1981). These domains offer participants opportunities for integration and inclusion who are disproportionately affected by marginalization (Buller et al., 2018; Hidrobo, Hoddinott, Peterman, Margolies, & Moreira, 2014). Access to these resources enable women to examine their food choices and operate based on decisions that embody their individual agency (Freire, 1972; Kabeer, 1999; Krieger, 2005a).

Food agency as a driver for food security

This study offers the concept of food agency as a pathway towards food security. The data suggested that participants explored the ways that food served as a central tenet to their livelihoods and everyday experiences. Throughout the FGs, participants

described the decision-making processes experience through access to nutritious and diverse foods was offered through the CBT program. Participants described perceived impacts of decision-making when foods and resources were available with the assistance of the CBT program. Participants also described the support that enabled the feasibility of accessing nutritious meals for their families. The CBT program supported participants' ability to strengthen the three different levels of agency proposed by this study to achieve food agency.

Participants recognized their limited access to nutritious foods and described their food behaviors defined by their livelihoods and low income. These conditions highlighted the limited potential in their agency that demonstrated the complexities that are found in the intersections between environment, intention, and action for individuals that experience food insecurity (Trubek et al., 2017). Social protection programs like WFP's CBT program offer participants the resources so that women can gain awareness of their capabilities and emerge to action to address food insecurity. The program provided resources that captured women's abilities to act and offer diverse foods to their households. The last component towards food agency is collective cooperation that women described as acting in solidarity towards improving the state of their household food insecurity.

Food agency offers a lens to understand women's empowerment to attain food security. Resources offered by WFP operate to engage women's individual agency. Studies

support the notion that CBT programs impacted women's decision-making and agency in households (Buller et al., 2018). Moreover, food agency examines women's abilities to participate in the process of transformative change (Huis et al., 2017; Kabeer, 1999). It offers a consciousness embedded in women's empowerment discourse to challenge social structures that perpetuate inequalities among contextual factors that marginalize indigenous and afro-Colombian women seeking to achieve household food security (Freire, 1972; Kabeer, 1999).

Finally, WFP's CBT program empowered women to describe their experiences that are often unheard by political actors. Resources enabled participants to describe their autonomy directly related to the skills gained and behaviors practiced. Our qualitative findings suggest positive impacts towards food decision-making behaviors as a result of the skills gained to change food behaviors. Previous research displayed similar impacts that denoted improved food behaviors (Martins & Monteiro, 2016; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Moreover, introducing resources in populations experiencing multiple levels of marginalization enable beneficiaries to participate in local market economies (Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Women's livelihoods in La Guajira depend directly on the environment as subsistence farmers and climatic shocks have led to disabling their income-generating activities (Dankelman, 2010). Notwithstanding, while cash transfers have adversely affected participants through fluctuating market prices, it does allow for re-integration for populations affected by displacement (Buller et al., 2018; Hidrobo et al., 2014). Systemic barriers demonstrate a paradigm reflecting colonization and

militarism that disproportionately affect women (Sieder, 2015). Thus, continuing a national agenda inherently ingrained in racism, social exclusion, and poverty-induced policies (Sieder, 2015). WFP fills these gaps by injecting resources to increase resilience and adaptability to these vulnerabilities (World Food Programme, 2017).

Limitations

It is important to note the limitations for this study. There were many discrepancies during field work activities, specifically during the FGs. First, limited translating staff during the data collection phase posed difficulty in understanding the nuances between Spanish and the Wayuu language that generated FG discussions. Moreover, the outdoor location for the discussion groups proved to be difficult to properly listen and ascertain what participants were discussing due to environmental factors that were captured during the recording of the discussions. Additionally, the interviewer was often introduced as a member of the WFP team that possibly led to biased responses due to power dynamics between participants and WFP. Participants may have generated specific answers to reassure the redistribution of WFP CBTs. Additionally, this may have contributed towards possible power differentials between participant and interviewer. Moreover, the purposive design of the study limits the ability to generalize assessment findings.

Further, data exploration led the qualitative analysis of understanding food agency.

While an important avenue to pursue, this concept should be measured quantitatively to complement qualitative findings. Studies suggest that measuring diet diversity and food

security should incorporate anthropometric indicators and recall metrics to ensure valid estimates for these outcomes (Headey & Ecker, 2013; Hoddinott & Yohannes, 2002; McDonald et al., 2015; Sheela Selin Sinharoy et al., 2017; Van Den Bold et al., 2013). Lastly, the study only collected qualitative findings during the data collection phase. A best practice would apply a mixed-methods approach in order to conduct an evaluation to triangulate evaluation findings (Buller et al., 2018). Yet, it is important to acknowledge the public health implications this study denotes for future directions for research.

Public Health Implications

This study generated possible suggestions for future research. First, it is important for food security and nutrition interventions to include program design that is embedded in measuring food agency. The current literature on this solely provides guidance from a Western perspective. A need to expand its definition to a global setting is imperative for future evaluation of food security interventions. Moreover, qualitative research can easily generate perceptions of food agency to help interventions address food insecurity to help shape CBT program priorities. Food agency as a conceptual pathway towards food security can offer effective program design and improve the ways that activities better serve its beneficiaries. Lastly, food agency can help CBT programmatic activities generate a tailored approach towards monitoring and evaluating CBT program outcomes that are measured during evaluation.

Recommendations

The qualitative study findings present feasible recommendations for public health intervention implementation related to improving food security measures.

Recommendations consist of evaluating CBT interventions using food agency metrics.

This can include quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure food agency as a viable pathway towards achieving food security. Additionally, incorporating community-based participatory research activities should be required to evaluate CBT interventions.

This can assist to further explain and examine any social ecological impacts the intervention can have at the community level.

Conclusion

CBT programs that strive to mitigate and improve nutritional outcomes and reduce food insecurity should consider implementing food agency in their program design. This add another level of synthesis for understanding the impacts that CBT programming can have on its beneficiaries. Additionally, this concept can introduce additional avenues to consider when designing programs that address food decision-making behaviors and women's empowerment. Qualitative methods should be used to incorporate these measures, as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions can allow researchers understand the programmatic impacts on participants' perceptions and experiences. Additionally, qualitative findings can further assist and be utilized to assess future quantitative studies on food security.

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Appendix 1

Translated Quotes

Quotes		
Participant ID	Spanish	English
Translator for Participant 2, FG 9	[...] por ejemplo, Funda Alianza nos donó una cabra a cada familia y eso nos ha permitido que sí, se puede trabajar con fundaciones en beneficio de nosotros mismo y que hemos comprendido que eso está en nosotros. Hemos unido esfuerzo y nosotros también lo estamos correspondiendo en la contrapartida que nos corresponde a nosotros.	[...] for example, [the] Alianza Foundation donated a goat to each family and that has allowed us to see that yes, we can work with foundations for the benefit of ourselves and we have understood that this is in us. We have joined effort and we are also corresponding in the counterpart that corresponds to us. We are corresponding to [them] so that this continues like this, so that [it] brings us benefits.
Translator for Participant 2, FG 9	Que todos fueran unidos- o sea que hicieran un trabajo en equipo para el beneficio de todos de la comunidad. Y que todos los valores puestos en práctica que fueran también modelo para los niños. Que se les inculcara esos valores también para los niños fueran respetuosos, organizados tuvieran ese sentido de pertinencia con la comunidad, de tener todo el ambiente, el entorno, limpio.	That we all were united - that is, that [we] did work as a team for the benefit of everyone in the community. And that all the values put into practice that [are] also a model for children. That these values be inculcated also for children [so they] would respectful, organized [and] had that sense of relevance to the community, to have all the environment, the surrounding, clean.
Participant 3, FG 11	Poniéndolo en práctica. Enseñándole también a personas que no tenían el conocimiento y si, poniéndolo en práctica. Y además dar a conocer lo que aprendimos con el programa, con las capacitaciones, y también hemos enseñado a muchas personas que no lo sabían.	Putting it into practice. Teaching also people who did not have the knowledge and yes, putting it into practice. And also, to make known what we learned with the program, with the trainings, and we have also taught many people who did not know it.
Participant 2, FG 10	Es una dicha poder uno suministrar una alimentación saludable- poder uno suministrar una buena	It is a joy to be able to provide a healthy diet– be able to provide a good diet one

	alimentación uno se siente contento, y si hay los productos mucho más.	feels happy, and if there are [food] products much more.
Participant 4, FG 11	Lo que uno pueda. Lo que digo es que uno como pobre campesino no vamos a comer bien. Entonces nosotros tenemos la parcela allí arriba en el monte y si uno consigue a la semana una librita de carne- se lo come. Una libra de pollo- se come. Y de ahí el día que no tengas nada- yuca solo se come o un huevito de pronto porque eso es lo que tenemos en el monte gracias a Dios.	Whatever one can. What I am saying is that as a poor farmer we aren't going to eat well. So, we have the plot up there in the mountain and if you get a little pound of meat a week-you eat it. One pound of chicken- you eat. And from there the day that you don't have anything – one only eats yucca or an egg suddenly because that is what we have in the mountain. Thank God.
Translator for participant 3, FG 8	[...] pero ahora si ellos consumen lo que es la fruta, verdura, el huevo y la carne. Por eso que ellos han notado mucho la diferencia que ha traído el apoyo con los bonos porque, eh, a veces no tenían para darle de desayuno a los niños antes del colegio y al igual que de regreso si había para el almuerzo, hacían un poquito de almuerzo. Si no había, pasaban el día en vano. Pero ahora eso ha mejorado, la seguridad alimentaria, porque con estos alimentos ya ellos pueden preparar desayuno al niño, cuando regresan del colegio encuentran su almuerzo ya hecho. Entonces ellas dicen que están muy agradecidas con este programa porque dicen que ha sido de mucho beneficio para ellos y para todas las familias en general.	[...] but now if they do consume what is the fruit, vegetable, egg and meat. That is why they have noticed a lot of the difference that has brought support has brought with the [CBT] vouchers because, uh, sometimes they did not have to give breakfast to the children before school and the same happened when [the children] returned for lunch, they did a little of lunch. If there was not [lunch], they spent the day in hunger. But now that has improved, food security, because with these foods and they can prepare breakfast for the child, when they return from school, they [the children] find their lunch already prepared. So, they say they are very grateful for this program because they say it has been very beneficial for them and for all the families in general.
Translator for Participant 2, FG 9	Han sido mensajes muy buenos porque ya lo estamos viendo en nuestro diario vivir, en la convivencia que tenemos entre nosotros mismos. Esto nos ha unido más como comunidad. Hay esa armonía. Ya nosotros trabajamos muy de la mano con la autoridad.	They [the lessons] have been very good messages because we are already seeing it in our daily life, in the coexistence that we have among ourselves. This has united us more as a community. There is that harmony. We already work very closely with authority. When he summons us he says, "there is a meeting that day", and that

	<p>Cuando él nos convoca dice “Hay reunión tal día” ya eso ha, nos ha permitido la unión entre nosotros, trabajo en equipo, y los beneficios que nos han traído a nosotros [...] Hemos unido esfuerzo y nosotros también lo estamos correspondiendo en la contrapartida que nos corresponde a nosotros.</p>	<p>has allowed us to unite with each other, work as a team, and the benefits that have brought us [...] We have joined efforts and we are also corresponding in the counterpart that corresponds to us.</p>
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Appendix 2

Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion (in Spanish)

Understanding Conditional Cash Transfer Experiences for Ethnic groups in Colombia: An Observational Study

Introducción:

[LEA LAS SIGUIENTES PALABRAS EN VOZ ALTA A LOS PARTICIPANTES]:

Hola, mi nombre es _____ y soy un estudiante realizando investigaciones para el Programa Mundial de Alimentos (PMA). El propósito de este estudio es entender y describir la relación entre los beneficiarios que reciben transferencias basadas en efectivos (CBTs) y el impacto que el programa tiene en la diversidad de dieta y nutrición de las mujeres de diferentes grupos étnicos.

Durante nuestra conversación, las invito a compartir sus experiencias y asegurarles que su nombre y los datos recopilados serán confidenciales. Su información es anónima y se mantendrá confidencial. Los hallazgos agregados que se recopilarán y compartirán de forma anónima con el PMA, servirán para mejorar el programa actual de los bonos alimentarios en el que participa, en función de cómo se están mejorando la diversidad de la dieta y la nutrición, pero le aseguro que la información privada suya de todos se mantendrá confidencial. También quiero recordarles que su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria, por lo que no es necesario que responda ninguna pregunta si no se siente cómodo respondiendo. Con eso dicho, quiero agradecerles por su compromiso de estar con nosotras hoy. Si en algún momento durante esta entrevista se siente incómodo con una pregunta, podemos omitir esa pregunta y enfocarnos en otra. También puede abandonar la discusión en cualquier momento por cualquier motivo. Anticipo que esta entrevista demorará aproximadamente 1 hora. ¿Qué preguntas tienen para mí?

Si es posible, me gustaría pedirles a todos los participantes que acepten no discutir los comentarios compartidos durante esta conversación con alguien que no pertenezca a este grupo para mantener un espacio seguro y confidencial. Esto es para garantizar la privacidad del grupo y permitir que todos compartan las opiniones honestas sin sentirse juzgados. También es importante que creamos un espacio seguro y respetemos las opiniones e ideas compartidas hoy en día. Discutiremos algunas reglas básicas para el grupo antes de empezar, y las animo a que comparta las reglas que le gustaría tener a lo largo de nuestra conversación.

Durante la discusión de hoy, estoy muy interesado en conocer sus experiencias personales, perspectivas y opiniones sobre los temas que discutimos. Sus puntos de vista son muy valiosos y estoy aquí para aprender de cada una. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

Antes de empezar, me gustaría pedirle a cada persona que acuerde verbalmente si está bien participar en nuestra conversación hoy. También tendremos un tomador de notas (apunte a quien toma la nota) para que podamos asegurarnos de no perder nada que se dice durante la conversación. Les aseguro que estas notas serán para el uso interno y no se compartirá con nadie que no sea nuestro proyecto de investigación.

Ahora leeré el consentimiento verbal antes empezar nuestra conversación:

[Leer el consentimiento verbal para las participantes de este estudio]

¿Tengo su permiso para continuar con esta entrevista?

¿Qué preguntas tienen para mí antes de empezar?

¿Tengo su permiso para grabar nuestra conversación?

[COMIENZA A GRABAR AQUÍ]

Ahora, pasando a las reglas básicas, el propósito de las reglas es para mantener respeto en el espacio y dejar que todas tengan la oportunidad de hablar y decir su parte. Queremos establecer el tono de nuestra conversación.

¿Alguien quisiera decir algunas reglas básicas antes de empezar?

[Permita que las personas respondan primero, luego sugiera algunas propias. Aquí hay algunas reglas básicas para agregar si no se mencionan: (1) Todos los participantes no deben discutir temas después de la conversación de hoy; (2) Este es un espacio seguro donde el respeto se asume automáticamente; (3) Por favor no hable por encima de otro; (4) Si alguna vez se siente incómodo con nuestra conversación, puede retirarse en cualquier momento].

Comenzaremos con algunas preguntas para que todas puedan familiarizarse.

Preguntas de introducción:

Como introducción, ¿podemos todos darnos la vuelta y decirnos cómo son cada uno de ustedes y qué tipo de trabajo hacen?

1. ¿Qué define como una comida saludable?
 - a. ¿Cuáles son los componentes de su definición de una comida saludable?

2. ¿Cuáles son las actividades en las que participa para generar ingresos al interior de su hogar?
3. ¿Qué tan conocido es el programa de **bonos** en su comunidad?
 - a. ¿Cuál es el porcentaje aproximado de participantes que usted conoce que utilizan bonos para redimir sus alimentos dentro de la comunidad?

Tema # 1: Selección de nutrición y dieta y las decisiones de la nutrición usando los bonos alimentarios

Para la primera sección, les daré un par de minutos para que piensen en sus experiencias con los bonos y las capacitaciones y cómo contribuyen estos a mejorar sus necesidades hacia su alimentación y su dieta.

- P.1 ¿Cuándo empezaron a participar en el programa de entrega de bonos?
 - a. ¿Cómo se sienten al recibir esta ayuda para mejorar la dieta y la nutrición de ustedes mismas y de sus familias?

- P.2 ¿Cuántas veces al mes van al mercado(s) para comprar alimentos para sus hogares? (Probe: cantidad, diversificación de fondos)
 - a. ¿Cuántas veces al mes van al mercado(s) para redimir alimentos usando sus bonos?
 - b. ¿A que distancia le queda el supermercado donde redimen sus **bonos**?

- P.3 ¿Díganme los principales (los tres o cinco principales) productos que redimen con los **bonos**? (Probe: tipos de alimentos, tipos de comidas y cuántas / día, prácticas de alimentación)

- P.4 ¿Han recibido las capacitaciones condicionadas que ofrece el PMA?
 - a. ¿Cuáles han recibido?

- P.5 ¿Cuáles son algunos de los requisitos del programa para recibir sus bonos? (Probe: actividades que contribuyen a los requisitos, asistencia, frecuencia / mes, formalidad de asistencia)
 - a. ¿Cómo se han sentido al asistir a las capacitaciones del programa?
 - b. ¿De qué manera les ayudan las capacitaciones a identificar alimentos nutritivos para la dieta de su hogar?
 - c. ¿Qué han aprendido específicamente sobre su dieta y nutrición?
 - d. ¿Cómo han ayudado estas capacitaciones en sus hábitos diarios en sus hogares?

- P.6 ¿Qué alimentos compraban antes de recibir los **bonos**? (Probe: tipos de actividades de ingresos realizadas para obtener ingresos)

- a. ¿Era sus ingresos suficientes antes de recibir los **bonos** para obtener los alimentos nutritivos para su hogar?

P.7 ¿Usan otras formas de dinero de sus actividades para generar ingresos para pagar los alimentos cuando se terminan sus **bonos**? (Estrategias de supervivencias)

Tema # 2: Capacitaciones condicionados (cambiar al principio—hablar con las suboficina para clarificar que han recibido)

Ahora me gustaría hablar sobre su comprensión de las capacitaciones en las que participa como condición para recibir los bonos alimentarios.

P.8 De las capacitaciones que hayan recibido, ¿cuáles son los temas que han abordado?

- a. ¿Cómo reciben las capacitaciones? (estilo de aprendizaje y modalidad)
- b. ¿Cuánto tiempo duran las capacitaciones? (longitud)
- c. ¿Con qué frecuencia suceden las capacitaciones? (frecuencia de entrenamientos)
- d. Mencione cada una dos aprendizajes clave de las capacitaciones. (Diferentes)

P.9 ¿Cómo han ayudado las capacitaciones a la selección de sus alimentos?

(Probe: tipos de alimentos, cómo preparar comidas)

- a. ¿Cómo han ayudado las capacitaciones para cambiar su dieta o sus hábitos alimentarios/alimenticios?

(Probe: ejemplo de cómo han cambiado, si han cambiado)

P.10 ¿Qué le han enseñado las capacitaciones sobre la alimentación saludable?

(Probe: preparar alimentos saludables, alimentos específicos que los participantes consideren no saludables / saludables)

Tema #3: Fijación de precios en alimentos locales/Limitaciones de acceso/Acceso al mercado

P.11 ¿Qué piensan sobre la cantidad mensual que reciben para redimir sus alimentos?

- a. ¿El dinero es suficiente para redimir todos los alimentos necesarios para ustedes y sus familias?

P.12 ¿Han notado variaciones significativas en el precio de alimentos específicos que redimen mientras usan sus **bonos**?

- a. ¿Qué hacen cuando ven que un producto es más caro un mes que otro y no le alcanza los bonos para ese mes?

P.13 ¿Qué limitaciones enfrentan actualmente al redimir sus **bonos**?

- a. ¿Cuál otros limites se enfrentan? (Limitaciones por temas de distancia)
- b. ¿Crees que la cantidad de sus bonos es suficiente y le alcanza para sus necesidades nutritivas?

P.14 ¿Qué alimentos son más difíciles de redimir con sus **bonos**?

- a. ¿Qué alimentos son más fáciles de redimir con sus **bonos**?
- b. ¿Qué alimentos comprarían con sus **bonos** si no habrían limitaciones de productos específicos mientras redimen sus bonos?

Tema #4: Creencias culturales y normas que afectan la diversidad de la dieta entre los participantes que reciben los bonos alimentarios

En este tema me gustaría preguntarles como han incorporado las capacitaciones a sus dietas teniendo en cuenta sus patrones culturales y ancestrales. Quiero entender como han podido juntar sus enseñanzas de las capacitaciones con sus ritos culturales de la cocina.

P.14 ¿Cómo han usado lo que aprendieron en las capacitaciones a través de sus hábitos culturales?

- a. ¿De qué maneras específicas ayudan a capacitarlas sobre cómo preparar sus alimentos?
(Probe: un ejemplo específico de comidas preparadas culturalmente)

Actividad – construir su propio plato saludable— (si hay tiempo):

Ahora me gustaría que ustedes me ayuden a determinar cómo definen un plato nutritivo usando estas fichas que dejare en el centro del círculo. Usando los platos vacíos, por favor elige cada producto para poner en el plato y podemos discutir los que eligieron después de 5 minutos.

P.15 ¿De qué manera han ayudado las capacitaciones para preparar sus comidas dentro de su hogar teniendo en cuenta su patrones culturales y ancestrales?
(Probe: las capacitaciones demuestran formas culturalmente específicas de educarlo sobre cómo preparar comidas alimenticias)

Tema # 5: CBT y empoderamiento de las mujeres con respecto a la nutrición y la diversidad de la dieta

P.16 Empoderamiento de la economía familiar:

- a. ¿Quiénes toman las decisiones sobre las preparaciones de la comida en sus familias?

b. *Opcional*: ¿Cómo se siente al tomar decisiones sobre la dieta de tu familia usando sus **bonos** de las transferencias basada en efectivo del PMA?

c. ¿Quiénes toman las decisiones sobre los que se compra para las dietas de sus familias?

P.17 Empoderamiento de la economía local/Empoderamiento colectivo:

a. ¿Ustedes se sienten excluidas o discriminadas por recibir este tipo de ayuda?

b. ¿Qué estrategias utilizan ustedes (las mujeres) de su comunidad para que el bono sea más eficiente y le alcance más (rinda mas)?

c. ¿Cómo comparten las demás en su comunidad sobre sus experiencias de redimir diferentes alimentos para sus dietas?

Q.18 ¿Cuál es la percepción en su comunidad sobre los participantes que usan sus **bonos** en los mercados locales/punto de venta?

(Probe: miedo a usarlo, las emociones circulan alrededor de usarlo en los mercados)

d. ¿Qué alimentos han visto en sus capacitaciones que no pueden comprar con sus **bonos** por razones afuera de su control?

e. ¿Cómo se sienten los demás acerca del uso de sus **bonos** en la comunidad?

Preguntas finales:

Estamos llegando al final de la discusión. Mi última pregunta se trata de sus sugerencias para recibir sus bonos en otra forma. Queremos preguntarle su forma preferida para recibir su modo de asistencia donde ustedes eligen como lo reciben.

P.19 Si pudieran elegir otro mecanismo para recibir la ayuda, ¿cuál sería? (Teniendo en cuenta que ahora todo es virtual—en efectivo, en forma de bono, u otra forma distinta?

b. ¿Mediante qué otros métodos preferirían recibir la ayuda de PMA, si fuesen elegir sus propios métodos (En especie-in kind, voucher o en efectivo)?

P.20 ¿Qué tipo de productos, fuera de los productos alimentarios, les gustaría redimir si no existieran restricciones?

a. Si la ayuda fuera a través en efectivo en que categorías priorizarían? (categorías de salud, mercado, educación, negocios, vivienda, ahorros)

Appendix 3

Participant Consent Form (in Spanish)

Título: Comprender las experiencias de las transferencias basadas en efectivo condicionadas a capacitaciones para grupos étnicos en Colombia: un estudio observacional

Investigadora: Jamiee Gomez, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University

Fuente de financiamiento: Global Field Experience Award, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University

Introducción y resumen del estudio: Gracias por su interés en nuestro estudio de investigación del programa de transferencias basada en efectivo (CBT) del Programa Mundial de Alimentos (PMA). Nos gustaría decirle todo lo que necesita pensar antes de decidir a participar en este estudio. Es completamente su elección. Si decide participar, puede decidir más adelante y retirarse del estudio de investigación.

- 1) El objetivo de este estudio es basadas en efectivo condicionadas a capacitación del PMA y su influencia en la dieta y la nutrición. Además, nos gustaría hacerle preguntas sobre cómo redime el bono de la transferencia basada en efectivo en lo que se refiere a la dieta de su hogar. Está invitado a participar en este estudio porque es una mujer entre 18 y 60 años, se identifica como mujer, vive con un compañero o esta casada y es participante del programa de transferencias basadas en efectivo condicionadas a capacitación del PMA.
- 2) Esta entrevista tardará aproximadamente una hora en completarse. Si acepta participar en este estudio, participará en una discusión de grupo focal, que es una entrevista grupal que tendrá como objetivo reunir diferentes ideas, opiniones y percepciones de personas con antecedentes y experiencias similares. Cada grupo constará de 6 participantes del mismo origen étnico de diferentes edades para discutir sobre su participación en el programa de transferencias basadas en efectivo condicionadas a capacitación del PMA. Si se une a participar en esta investigación, se le pedirá que comparta sus perspectivas y opiniones sobre los temas que discutimos en un entorno grupal. Sus puntos de vista son muy valiosos y estoy aquí para aprender de usted. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas.
- 3) Alrededor de **36** mujeres de diferentes comunidades étnicas se harán preguntas similares en un entorno grupal.
- 4) Tomar parte en este estudio es voluntario. Puede elegir no participar en la entrevista grupal, y si acepta ser entrevistado, puede detener la entrevista en cualquier momento si lo desea u omitir cualquier pregunta que no desee responder. Además, después de terminar la entrevista, puede negarse a que se incluyan sus respuestas en el estudio.
- 5) Este estudio no pretende beneficiarlo directamente, pero esperamos que esta investigación beneficie a las personas en el futuro que participen en el programa de transferencias en efectivo del PMA.
- 6) Su privacidad es muy importante para nosotros.

7) Todas sus respuestas se mantendrán privadas en la medida permitida por la ley. No compartiremos sus respuestas con ninguna persona que conozca ni con funcionarios del gobierno. Utilizaremos un número de estudio para cada grupo en formularios de estudio, donde podamos. Su nombre y otros hechos que podrían identificarlo no serán utilizados cuando presentemos este estudio o publiquemos sus resultados. Sus respuestas se mantendrán en un cuarto o gabinete cerrado para uso exclusivo del equipo de estudio. El nombre y las direcciones reales se usarán solo para llegar a usted en los estudios de seguimiento. Se lo incluirá en estos estudios solo con su consentimiento. Si bien tengo un plan para mantener en secreto las respuestas de sus grupos, existe un pequeño riesgo de que no se pueda mantener la confidencialidad y el anonimato. Para proteger su confidencialidad, respetaremos las leyes de privacidad federales y estatales norteamericanas, incluidas la Ley de portabilidad y responsabilidad del seguro médico (HIPAA).

8) Divulgaremos su información cuando así lo exija la ley en el caso de denunciar abuso infantil o abuso de personas mayores, además de citaciones u órdenes judiciales.

9) Usted puede revocar su autorización en cualquier momento.

10) Si los identificadores (como su nombre, dirección y número de teléfono) se eliminan de los datos, entonces la información restante no estará sujeta a las Reglas de privacidad. Esto significa que la información puede ser utilizada o divulgada con otras personas u organizaciones, y / o para otros fines.

11) El grupo de enfoque será grabado en audio para capturar con precisión lo que se dice. Si participa en el estudio, puede solicitar detener la grabación en cualquier momento. Puede optar por tomar descansos durante nuestra conversación. También puede optar por abandonar el grupo de enfoque si en algún momento se siente incómodo durante nuestra conversación. El propósito de la grabación de audio es garantizar la precisión de lo que se dice. Nadie fuera del equipo de investigación escuchará lo que dice. Toda la información que comparta durante nuestra conversación no incluirá ninguna de su información personal o la información personal identificable del grupo.

Información del contacto

Si tiene preguntas sobre este estudio, su participación, sus derechos como participante en la investigación, o si tiene preguntas, inquietudes o quejas sobre la investigación, puede contactar a los siguientes:

Jamiee M. Gomez, investigador principal: +1 978-885-2293

Patricia Nader, Programa Mundial de Alimentos: +57 1 346 0611

Junta de Revisión Institucional de Emory: +1 404-712-0720 o llamada gratuita al +1 877-503-9797 o por correo electrónico a irb@emory.edu

Consentimiento

¿Tiene alguna pregunta sobre algo que acabo de decir? ¿Había partes que parecían poco claras?

¿Aceptas tomar parte en el estudio? El participante acepta participar: **SI** **NO**

¿Tengo su permiso para grabar nuestra conversación?

El participante acepta grabar en cinta: **SI** **NO**

En caso afirmativo:

Nombre del participante:

Firma del participante:

Nombre de la persona conduciendo la discusión para el consentimiento informado:

Fecha y Hora:
