

Food Insecurity Among Afghan Women Refugees in Pakistan

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Abstract : This study on Afghan refugee women living in Punjab, Pakistan, shows a strong relationship between poor socio-economic status and lower nutritional health status. Pakistan is one of the significant countries accepting refugees from the Afghan war. Universally, refugees are vulnerable to food security and basic life necessities. The in-hand study aimed to investigate food insecurity among afghan refugees who recently migrated to Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was employed to collect the data from afghan women refugees settled in refugee camp settled in Capital city Islamabad, Pakistan. Data was collected through an interview tool. It revealed from data that the majority of women were underweight, about 74.7% in their reproductive years, which is an alarming situation for the forthcoming children and families. It is also shown that There's a strong impact of their income level, education, dietary habits and food insecurity on their overall health status. It can also be observed in their Body Mass Index and in their physical appearance; they also show extremely poor levels of hemoglobin which is directly indicated anemic condition, especially iron deficiency anemia among the young Afghan refugee women. The illiteracy rate is about 93.33% among the selected participants as well as a majority of this population has 10-12 family size in comparison with their income level of about 10,000-15,000 Pakistani rupees per month, which can hardly meet their daily food expenditure. Adequate food is rarely accessible to young girls and women due to fewer national and international food aids program available in Pakistan. The majority have pale yellowish skin color (due to low iron content) along with clear white eyes (low hemoglobin level), thin hairs (protein deficiency) and spoon-shaped nails (a direct indicator of low iron level). Data showed a significant relation between appetite and BMI as their appetite is very low, which is directly indicated in their underweight body condition. About 56.67% of the participants had Urinary Tract Infections. The main causes included personal unhygienic conditions and lack of washrooms as well as drinking water facilities in their refugee camps. It is suggested that National and international food aid programs should cater to the nutritional demands of women refugees in the world to protect them from food insecurities as well as future researchers should find out better ways of analysis and treatment plans for such kind of communities who are highly prone to nutritional deficiencies and lack of basic supplies.

Keywords : food insecurity, refugees, women, vulnerable

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