

## **Influence of Engaging Female Caregivers in Households with Adolescent Girls on Adopting Equitable Family Eating Practices: A Quasi-Experimental Study**

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**Abstract :** Background: In patriarchal societies, female caregivers decide on food allocation within a family based on prevailing gender and age norms, which may lead to inequality that does not favor young adolescent girls. This study evaluated the effect of a community-based social norm intervention involving female caregivers in West Hararghe, Ethiopia. The intervention was engaging female caregivers along with other adult influential community members to deliberate and act on food allocation social norms in a process referred to as Social Analysis and Action (SAA). Method: We used data from a large quasi-experimental study to compare family eating practices between those who participated in the Social Analyses and Action intervention and those who did not. The respondents were female caregivers in households with young adolescent girls (ages 13 and 14 years). The study's outcome was the practice of family eating together from the same dish. The difference in difference (DID) analysis with the Mixed effect logistic regression model was used to examine the effect of the intervention. Result: The results showed improved family eating practices in both groups, but the improvement was greater in the intervention group. The DID analysis showed an 11.99 percentage points greater improvement in the intervention arm than in the control arm. The mixed-effect regression produced an adjusted odds ratio of 2.08 (95% CI [1.06-4.09]) after controlling selected covariates, p-value 0.033. Conclusions: The involvement of influential adult community members significantly improves the family practice of eating together in households where adolescent girls are present in our study. The intervention has great potential to minimize household food allocation inequalities and thus improve the nutritional status of young adolescents. Further studies are necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention in different social norm contexts to formulate policy and guidelines for scale-up.

**Keywords :** family eating practice, social norm intervention, adolescence girls, caregiver

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