



**UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE**

**Nutritional capabilities of young people not in employment, education or training
(NEETs) in Langa, Western Cape, South Africa**

by

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master's degree in the
Institute for Social Development, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University
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February 2022

<http://etd.uwc.ac.za/>

Abstract

Background

The opportunities and challenges faced by young people who are not in any kind of employment, education or training (NEETs) are under-reported by scholars in the field of development. In this regard, what NEETs in South Africa know about nutrition and how they pursue nourishment are neglected areas of research. Yet they are important considerations for policymakers. The majority of young people in the age group 18–24 are, strictly speaking, no longer their parents' responsibility, with the child support grant that their caregiver may have received having terminated when they turned 18. However, many young people have not found jobs and are therefore not financially independent. As a result, they are constrained in being able to access food (or at least the food that they particularly enjoy). This study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of young adult NEETs in terms of food and nutrition, what they do to ensure that they are nourished, and the kinds of nutritional achievements that they have to choose from.

Methodology

This study explored the nutritional capabilities of young adult NEETs, where nutritional capabilities were examined according to the capability approach, which was used as a theoretical framework. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in the study, which was a mixed-methods, sequential, exploratory study. The analysis of secondary data from young NEETs who had participated in an earlier, door-to-door household survey in Langa (representing a total population of consenting NEETs aged 18–24 years) complemented the analysis of new inputs from focus group sessions comprising purposefully selected participants from the same cohort. The quantitative data were analysed using STATA software, and descriptive statistics were represented in tables and graphs. The qualitative data were organised into themes and codes, which supported the quantitative findings, using phenomenology. Ethics clearance was obtained from the university's Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee and the Senate Higher Degrees Committee. The study adhered to the necessary ethical standards regarding informed consent, confidentiality, de-identification, permissions, and freedom of choice to withdraw from the study.

Findings

Among the findings from this study were that the school completion rate and the educational levels of young adult NEETs are very low. In addition, the NEET participants mostly lived in households in which no one received a grant and the household income was less than R3001. However, <1% of NEET participants reported severe hunger, while anthropometric results showed that less than half (47.3%) of participants were normal weight (BMI 19–25). Among the challenges reported by NEET participants, which impeded their nutritional capabilities, were restrictions on food, a decline in allowances, a shortage of food and the loss of access to a school feeding programme once they had left school. Social capital, casual jobs, transactional sex, illegal activities and entrepreneurship were reported as ways in which NEETs gained access to food. Moreover, the study found that family influence, demographic factors, and NEET participants' nutritional knowledge and beliefs influenced their food choices.

Conclusion

This study revealed that young adults face multiple food-related challenges which suppress their nutritional capabilities, including food shortages, limited access to food, and limited or no decision-making powers in respect of food purchases. However, the study also identified positive steps and strategies that young adult NEETs embark on to ensure that they secure access to food. Poor educational attainment is strongly associated with young people's unemployability, which in turn negatively affects their nutritional capabilities. Therefore, priority should be given to rolling out education and skills programmes that will empower young people to take charge of their personal development and nutritional capabilities, while also affording them more opportunities to pursue their desired forms of nourishment and to enhance their wellbeing.

Key words:

Nutritional capabilities; not in employment, education or training; NEET; young adults; Langa; qualitative methods; quantitative methods; food access; food security; quality of life

Declaration

I declare that 'Nutritional capabilities of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in Langa, Western Cape, South Africa' is my work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been acknowledged and fully referenced.

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Signed:



28 February 2022



Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to give thanks to the Almighty for the strength and courage he has given me throughout this paper. Without his presence, I wouldn't have completed this paper.

Secondly, I would like to thank my Supervisor Prof Rina Swart for her time, effort, and understanding. Your guidance and constructive comments have contributed a great deal to the level of confidence in this thesis. Thank you for sharing your professional knowledge and training opportunities with me. It was an honour being supervised by you and thus your help is immensely and sincerely appreciated.

A heartfelt thank you to my participants from Langa Township, Cape Town your contributions carry a lot of weight in this paper.

I wish to thank the DSI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security (FS) bursary for funding my postgraduate studies with special thanks to Ms. Elaine Petersen for handling the process with so much care. To Ms. K (Priscilla Kippie) thank you for the courtesy you extended during my days at ISD, your kindness is sincerely appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends. To my mother, MamKhomazi your prayers kept me throughout this journey. I will forever be grateful. To my friends and colleagues, your social support throughout this research paper is immensely appreciated, thank you.

Makwande, Kukhanye!!

Acronyms and abbreviations

BMI	Body Mass Index
BMREC	Biomedical Research Ethics Committee
CSG	Child Support Grant
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HHS	Household Hunger Scale
HLPE	High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
NEETs	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
UB	Urban Agriculture
WHO	World Health Organization



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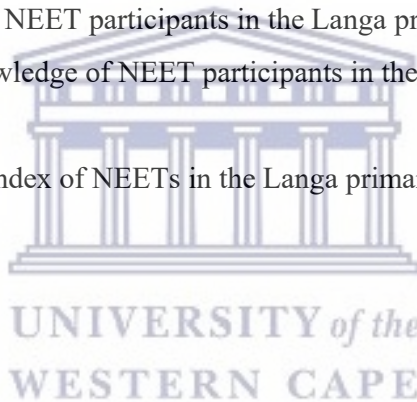
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Personal development and wellbeing are important goals that all individuals strive to achieve or enhance. Nutrition is one of the key elements contributing to people's wellbeing; thus the measures designed to ensure food security are central to the field of development. Often the assessment of food insecurity focuses on food availability within a population, specifically the balance between the population and food. For example, to maintain the correct balance, the population growth rate should not be higher than the growth rate of the food that is produced (Burchi and De Muro, 2016). However, such a model falls short in explaining the underlying factors within the population that determine access to food – particularly nutritious food. For example, different structures and hierarchies, such as gender, employment status, education, health and culture, can determine how easy (or otherwise) it is to access nutritious food. With regard to young adults, education and skills levels and employment status might also influence the types of food available to them (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019).

The majority of young people aged 18–24 years are no longer under parental care. Some have just graduated from the child support grant benefit and most face difficulties in finding employment (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019). This study aims to understand the nutritional capabilities of unemployed, unskilled youth in South Africa, taking into consideration their particular lived experiences. The study focuses on how these young adults access nutritious food despite their socioeconomic circumstances; the food choices they make; other survival strategies that they employ to ensure that they are nourished; the kinds of lives they lead, as impacted by food and nutrition; and the nutritional goals that are available to them.

1.2 Background

Among the goals of the South African government is ensuring the stability and wellbeing of the different groups making up the population (Kelly and Staff, 2014). One of the leading initiatives introduced by the South African government was the Child Support Grant (CSG). The CSG is a cash transfer administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) which is available to South African citizens who need financial support for children under their care up to the age of 18 years (Kelly and Staff, 2014). One of the criteria for receiving the CSG

is that an individual must be the primary guardian or parent of the child in question (SASSA, 2015). Additionally, the caregiver should not earn more than R34 800 per annum or be married to someone who earns more than R69 600 per annum (Kelly and Staff, 2014). However, this type of financial assistance expires when the young person reaches the age of 18 years, regardless of their access to employment, education or training.

It is estimated that around 1 million young people across South Africa drop out of school each year after Grade 10 and 11, including students who fail Grade 12 (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019). Dropping out of school disadvantages young people, as the number of unskilled people increases and the unemployment problem intensifies. However, admission to higher education and successful completion of qualifications still do not guarantee employment for the youth in South Africa, as demonstrated by increasing numbers of unemployed graduates (Graham et al., 2019). According to Ohei and Brink (2019), higher education and training institutions in South Africa are having to undergo radical transformation in the face of rapid technological changes sweeping the country and the world, but they are still not fully equipped to produce graduates who meet the standards and expectations of employers – particularly the information and communication technology (ICT) skills demanded by industry. The inability of industry and/or the labour market to absorb qualified and unqualified young people is a major contributor to the current economic crisis in South Africa, evidenced in large numbers of young people remaining unemployed. Unemployment, in turn, is associated with limited access to nutritious food (Ahn and Norwood, 2020)

The high (and growing) incidence of unemployed graduates, school dropouts and unskilled youth is exacerbating the immense global challenge of young people who are ‘not in employment, education or training (NEET)’ (Branson et al., 2019). The number of young NEETs in South Africa in the age group 15–24 years stood at 3.1 million in 2012; by the first quarter of 2021 this number had risen to 3.3 million (Matli and Ngoepe, 2021). Women are more likely than men to fall into the NEET cohort, which is a reflection of existing gender-based roles and biases (Gumbi, 2020).

1.3 Problem statement

According to De Lannoy and Mudiriza (2019), the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in South Africa is increasing. This group of young people is mostly under-reported by scholars in the field of development. Yet how young adult

NEETs access and make use of resources to enhance their wellbeing is of interest to policymakers (De Lannoy and Mudiriza, 2019) and professionals who render services to vulnerable populations. It should be borne in mind that the majority of young people older than 18 years are mostly no longer their parents' responsibility. Yet they may not have secured any stable source of income. It can therefore be presumed that young adults who are not in any kind of employment, education or skills training have different nutritional capabilities from those who are participating in some form of education or training and/or are employed.

Nutritional capabilities of NEETs cannot be separated from the global situations of food security and hunger. During 2019, it was estimated that some 25.9% of the global population experienced hunger, had limited access to nutritious food or did not have enough food (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). According to Statistics South Africa [STATS SA], (2019), the prevalence of food security declined from 22% in 2004 to 11% in 2017. Young black people who reside in informal settlements are still the most likely to be food insecure (Masa et al., 2020). Living in a family with many dependants and limited resources is also associated with food insecurity (Masa et al., 2020). South Africa is among those countries that are food insecure at the household level since not all South African households have access to adequate food (STATS SA, 2019). Access to food differs according to the size of household and the population group to which the household head belongs. Thus, black-headed and coloured households are more vulnerable to inadequate access to food, while Indian/Asian and white households are in a comparatively better position in terms of access to food (STATS SA, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to understand the underlying factors that affect the nutritional capabilities of young people who are not in any kind of employment, education or training (NEET). The findings will help to inform food system-related policies geared towards expanding food selection and eliminating the constraints that negatively impact young NEETs' nutritional capabilities.

1.4 Research questions

- What are the challenges that young adult NEETs face after their CSG stops or after they leave school?
- How and where do young adult NEETs gain access to food?
- What influences young adult NEETS' food choices?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of this study will contribute greatly to the food system related policies revealing that young adult NEETs have distinctive nutritional capabilities. This study acknowledges that even though young adult NEETs have access to food, there are still factors that improve or limit their chances of accessing the food that they value. Understanding the different dynamics and challenges that are experienced by young adults NEETs in accessing food uncovers possible solutions to improve young adult's NEETs nutritional capabilities. Moreover, this study also contributes to the existing knowledge on the realities of youth unemployment in South Africa and post-school experiences of young people.

1.6 Objectives

This study aims to understand the nature and extent of the nutritional capabilities of young people aged 18–24 who are not in any kind of employment, education or training. More specifically, the study seeks:

- To describe the sociodemographic contexts of young adult NEETs;
- To investigate activities in which young adult NEETs engage to ensure their nourishment;
- To investigate the constraints that young adult NEETs face in ensuring their nourishment;
- To examine the level of freedom (access and opportunities) that young adult NEETs have to attain the nutrition that they value.

1.7 Mini-thesis structure

Chapter Two outlines the capability approach and its fundamental components in relation to nutritional capabilities. It also justifies how and why the capability approach was used for this study. Chapter Three provides explanations of key terms that underpin the study and reviews the literature on the nutritional capabilities of young adults, using the components of the capability approach as a basis. Chapter Three also provides an overview of the global and South African food security situation. Chapter Four provides a detailed breakdown of how the study

was conducted, where the study was conducted and a justification for the study approach used. Chapter Four also outlines the study design, methods applied in data collection and the data analysis process.

Chapter Five presents the findings from the study, with reference to the research questions. Chapter Six discusses the findings in detail within the context of the capability approach and other themes uncovered in the literature. Chapter Six also compares its findings with those of previous studies found in the literature. Chapter Seven concludes the mini-thesis and provides a number of recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Theories provide a fundamental basis for understanding a social phenomenon and often draw researchers' attention to important research questions. Sen (1989) argues that to successfully analyse human development, it is important to assess the advantages and achievements of members of society. This chapter provides an overview of the fundamental components of the capability approach, which constitutes the theoretical framework for this study. The chapter justifies the use of this framework by showing the practical application of each fundamental component to the food and nutrition context of individuals, and specifically youth. These aspects are summarised in an adapted diagram that reflects the components relating to nutritional capabilities (Figure 2.1).

2.2 Capability approach

The capability approach is a theoretical framework that is mostly used to analyse, evaluate and assess people's wellbeing (Robeyns, 2005) within a given social context. It is not sensitive to, nor does it seek to explore or understand, the causes of poor wellbeing.

According to the capability approach, the measure of wellbeing should be based on what people can do and should take into consideration those things that people regard as valuable (Robeyns, 2003). The capability approach values people more than resources. This is confirmed by Alkire (2005) who explains that in the capability approach individuals are active participants in their wellbeing, not passive bystanders. Furthermore, according to the capability approach, the nature of an individual's wellbeing depends on a combination of lifestyle options. These options comprise the choices individuals have, the things they can do, the types of lives they lead and the kinds of achievements to which they can aspire. These factors, according to Robeyns (2003), sum up the information that capability theorists need in order to make judgments or arrive at decisions about people's wellbeing.

To understand the nutritional capabilities of young NEETs, the same questions should be explored regarding food and nutrition. For example, what are the challenges or social constraints experienced by young NEETs since their CSG stopped or since they left school? How and where do young NEETs gain access to food? What influences young NEETs' food

choices? And what are the outcomes of these food choices with regard to the nutritional status of young NEETs (as one of the functionings)?

According to Sen (1989), wellbeing also relates to the identification and removal of social constraints and obstacles in people's lives so that they have more freedom to live the life they desire or value. This notion of freedom to live in a certain way was well captured by Karl Marx who referred to 'replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances' (Marx, 2000:207). In other words, human beings need to have power and control over their circumstances, and when this is achieved, wellbeing is attained. Similarly, the nutritional capabilities of the youth can be constrained by their poor employment status and/or inadequate education and training achievement levels as these factors interfere with young people's freedom to live the nutrition-enhanced life that they desire. The capability approach helps to illustrate the dominant role played by the above-mentioned factors on the youth's nutritional choices.

Sen (1989) rejects the idea that resources are of paramount concern in the assessment of wellbeing, calling instead for attention to be given to the relationship between resources and people. Following this view, Robeyns (2005) argues that it is important to take note of human diversity – that people are not the same and need different types of resources to achieve the same levels of wellbeing (Robeyns, 2006). The link between resources and the functioning to achieve certain 'beings' and 'doings' is influenced by three types of conversion factors, namely personal conversion factors, social conversion factors and environmental conversion factors (Robeyns, 2005).

Personal conversion factors, as explained by Robeyns (2005), include variables such as sex (gender), intelligence, reading skills and physical condition. These variables determine how an individual converts the characteristics of a particular resource into a functioning asset or attribute. For example, if a person is uneducated and has little or no knowledge of nutritious food, there is very little chance that the person will choose or eat nutritious food that is available. Similarly, social conversion factors, including societal norms, social policies, power relations and gender roles, determine how an individual converts the characteristics of a particular resource into a functioning asset or attribute (Robeyns, 2005). For example, if the youth have limited decision-making powers in society, their participation in nutrition-based decisions and activities, such as choosing or eating nutritious food, will be adversely affected. Environmental conversion factors are the third category of conversion factor. For example,

climate and geographical location influence how an individual converts the characteristics of a resource into something that is functional (Robeyns, 2005). Climate change may reduce people's ability to use available land (a resource) to produce stable access to food (a functioning attribute). As much as Sen (1989) rejects the idea of resources being used as a measure of analysis, he acknowledges that resources serve as a basis for claims of capability.

The core components of the capability approach focus directly on the quality of life that individuals can achieve (Robeyns, 2005) (see Figure 2.1). Functioning is a component of how a person lives, which incorporates the doings and beings of that person (Gasper, 2007). 'Beings', in Sen's (1989) view, include being healthy, being nourished and being educated. 'Doings', according to Sen (1989), are what people do, such as eating, caring and travelling. Simply put, this means that individuals partake in activities – that is, 'doing' to achieve their 'being'. For example, the action of obtaining nutritious food can be regarded as the means, while being nourished can be classified as an end (being). According to Robeyns (2005), functionings can either be achieved functionings or potential functionings. Being educated, according to Robeyns (2005), is an example of an achieved functioning.

The second core component of capabilities is the set of alternative functions that an individual can choose from (Gasper, 2007). In this regard, one's capability signifies one's freedom to select from a variety of functions of doing and being that they value the most. Gasper (2007) also describes capability as the valuation of the set of life paths that a person could follow. In his view, the manner in which these life paths are evaluated is based on a person's abilities, a person's values and the values of others around them. Thus, this model can be useful in accessing the nutritional choices of the youth, the things they can do to ensure that they are nourished, the kinds of lives they lead in terms of nutrition and the kinds of nutritional achievements that they have to choose from.

The framework can therefore be used to understand those life paths that the youth can or cannot follow in pursuit of nourishment. It can also be used as a basis for expanding the youth's choices and determining the ways in which they use available choices.



Figure 2.1: Components of the capability approach (with examples)

Source: Adapted from Robeyns (2005: 98)

2.3 Chapter summary

This chapter outlined the capability approach and its fundamental components in relation to nutritional capabilities. The chapter also justified how and why this approach was chosen for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The chapter provides a review of the literature on the nutritional capabilities of young adults, using the components of the capability approach as a basis, and provides an overview of the food security situation across the globe and in South Africa.

3.2 Freedoms afforded young people in the capability approach

Sen (1989) argues that freedoms within the capability approach relate to the opportunities that people have and the processes involved in accessing these opportunities. In the case of nutritional capabilities, a person's level of education has been identified as providing some indication of the 'freedom' of young adults (Alkire, 2005). When comparing young adults of today with those of prior generations, a huge shift in educational attainment is evident. Young adults in the current generation are far better educated (Bialik and Fry, 2019). However, there is still a sharp divide between the economic opportunities open to those with a post-matric qualification and those who lack such a qualification (Bialik and Fry, 2019). The proportion of those who pursue post-matric education in South Africa is very small by international standards, as only 45% of young adults aged 20–24 complete their matric (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Similarly, of those 20–24-year-olds who embark on tertiary education, only about 6% successfully complete their tertiary studies (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

Young adults with poor schooling at both the primary and secondary levels are significantly disadvantaged when it comes to available opportunities, such as employment (Monyai, 2018). Young adults with a college education earn a higher income than those without a college education (Salisbury, 2016) and are thus able to achieve a higher level of household food and nutrition security (Nwokolo, 2015). Attaining a higher level of education therefore potentially broadens the scope of young adults living a nourished life.

Compared with previous generations, the current generation of young adults seems to be in no rush to set up their own households and get married (Bialik and Fry, 2019). This delay, Bonnie et al. (2015) explain, is the result of young adults' exposure to various freedoms and the fact that there is less of a social stigma attached to non-marital childbearing. As young adults delay moving out of their parents' homes and establishing their households, they end up renegotiating

parent–child roles (Teipel, 2013). Honwana (2012) refers to this transition stage as ‘waithood’, when young adults are ‘expected to be independent from their parents but are not yet recognized as social adults’ (Honwana, 2012: 20). During this period, young adults need to continuously strike a balance between considering their parents’ perspective and creating space for adult relationships (Teipel, 2013). Moving backwards and forwards from one role to another may restrict young adults’ freedom of choice and freedom to lead the life they want in terms of their own nourishment.

Absolute independence is hardly ever experienced by young adults, especially young girls. In fact, they generally experience little individual freedom and self-determination because of societal expectations of them in the areas of caring, food preparation, and production for themselves and others (Glover and Sumberg, 2020). Moreover, society today is at ease with young adult females falling pregnant outside of marriage (Bonnie et al., 2015). These factors may prevent young girls from accessing available opportunities.

Living independently is one of the ways in which young adults could acquire greater freedom regarding their nourishment. Young adults who are independent and live on their own are more likely than those who still live with their parents to be responsible for making their own household decisions in terms of planning, money management and budgeting (Masa et al., 2020). The freedoms and opportunities that young adults have are often positive, but some studies also report that freedoms can be used in a negative sense. This is evidenced, for example, in young adults engaging in risky behavior, such as illegal activities or sex in exchange for food (Popkin et al., 2016).

Young adults who live around cities and are close to economic nodes are reported to have better opportunities than those living in rural areas (De Lannoy et al., 2018). However, despite these alleged advantages, young adults in urban areas still struggle to access employment and learning opportunities because of the unaffordability of inner-city accommodation and other utilities and services, and the unreliability of urban transport (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

3.3 Young adults’ resources (physical and social)

Resources are important components of the capability approach. According to Hidrobo et al. (2018), households with low levels of asset ownership are at risk of long-term poverty and generally struggle to escape unexpected shocks. Young people in South Africa own few resources and, with many having recently moved into their own houses (Masa et al., 2020),

have limited ability to grow their resources and use them as a shield against food insecurity (Masa et al., 2020).

However, access to networks is one of the social resources that can help young adults achieve nourishment. Owen and Goldin (2015) state that good social networks establish the basis for trust among people, as getting together with others contributes to an understanding of what works and what does not work when it comes to food. A study by Owen and Goldin (2015) revealed that 83% of youth in Dwaleni and 81% of youth in Luphisi (both situated in the province of Mpumalanga) had feelings of togetherness and a sense of belonging within their neighbourhoods. This feeling of togetherness is undoubtedly a social resource that young adults can leverage for their individual nutritional wellbeing. Similarly, the informal but significant support forthcoming from young families and their friends prompts the sharing of food in an informal setting – activities that Nebbitt et al. (2016) refer to as ‘reciprocal economies’.

In addition to the above-mentioned social resources, Tiraieyari and Krauss (2018), in a case study on Malaysia, identified urban agriculture (UA) as presenting a new opportunity for young people to engage in activities related to their nourishment. In their study on UA, Tiraieyari and Krauss (2018) highlighted that young people often felt a greater sense of ownership in urban agriculture initiatives than in traditional agriculture, which they often regarded as agriculture of their parents and grandparents.

Similarly, participants in a study by Mtengwane (2019) agreed that agricultural co-operatives have an economic benefit and also contribute to household food security. However, other studies reported that young people are not participating in agriculture as they associate farming with working physically on farms (Cheteni, 2016). Moreover, the unavailability of land as a resource can create uncertainty as to whether community gardens and youth training gardens serve as a reliable food source for low-income households (Kantor, 2001). Land can be classified as a type of resource, the absence of which helps to explain why young people may be deterred from participating in urban agricultural programmes.

Electricity and household appliances are some of the leading resources that can enhance young adults’ nutritional capabilities. However, no studies have been conducted that directly report on these resources driving nutritional capabilities.

3.4 Young adults' ability to convert their resources into achieved functionings

According to the capability approach, resources alone are not effective if they are not converted into actual functionings. The relationship between resources and functionings in achieving certain beings and doings is influenced by three groups of conversion factors, namely personal conversion factors, social conversion factors and environmental conversion factors (Robeyns, 2005). In this regard, Larson et al. (2008) examined the intake of fruit and vegetables during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood and concluded that fruit and vegetable intake is closely linked to personal, behavioural and socio-environmental factors. The personal factors identified by Larson et al. (2008) included a taste preference for fruit or vegetables. However, the strongest factors in their study were socio-environmental factors, including parental support for healthy eating, family meal frequency, and fruit and vegetable availability at home. In this case, the use of available fruit and vegetables (resources) was determined both by taste (personal conversion factor) and family or parental support (social conversion factor).

Furthermore, it is important to take human diversity into account. People are not the same and therefore need different types of resources to achieve the same levels of wellbeing (Robeyns, 2006). Slater et al. (2018) explored food literacy levels as a factor influencing the choices of youth in Canada. The study revealed that young adults require much more than basic nutritional knowledge. They also need critical knowledge and skills to minimise the risk of their succumbing to obesity and contracting other chronic diseases, as well as to help them navigate the highly complex food environment (Slater et al., 2018). Food literacy represents a personal conversion factor, as every individual has different knowledge and skills relating to food.

Similarly, food literacy in the form of good nutritional knowledge assists young people to make healthier choices (Azman and Sahak, 2014). Nutritional knowledge is defined as the knowledge of concepts relating to nutrition and health as well as knowledge about diet and diet-related diseases (Miller and Cassady, 2015). In a nutshell, food literacy refers to an awareness of food choices and their impact on one's health and capability to make healthy food choices in different settings (Poelman et al., 2018).

A study conducted by Xazela et al. (2019) on the nutritional knowledge of university students revealed that nearly 61% of students were unaware of the contents of food labels and that there was no significant relationship between education and nutritional knowledge. Similarly, in a study conducted in Sydney, Australia and Glasgow, Scotland, Howse et al. (2018) discovered that the youth who are food literate know that the food they enjoy eating is less healthy. This

could illustrate the limited ability of youth to convert their resource (education) into functioning (eating healthily) because, despite having the right information and knowledge, they still fail to use their knowledge to improve their nourishment levels. The physical environment was identified as one of the factors influencing young adults' food choices. In particular, the convenience associated with nearby supermarkets dictated their food choices (Howse et al., 2018).

Owen and Goldin (2015) assessed the relationship between youth capabilities and food security. Young people from two villages in the Ehlanzeni District Municipality in Mpumalanga province displayed some important capabilities (social resources), such as self-esteem, trust, inclusion and co-operation, which could assist them in securing both food and water for themselves (Owen and Goldin, 2015). However, Owen and Goldin (2015) reported that young people were unable to convert these capabilities into functionings, which would enable them to address food and water insecurity. A successful conversion would require young people to establish support groups or community projects aimed at addressing their food and water insecurity. The formation of support groups would encourage the social conversion of self-esteem, trust, inclusion and cooperation into a usable function that would facilitate food and water security.

The use of social media by young adults is another illustration of the functionality of social conversation factors. Young adults are receptive to tips on healthy eating and recipes shared on social media (Klassen et al., 2018). This shows their ability to convert social media as a resource into a useful function to improve their nourishment. However, as much as there are good opportunities to source healthy recipes on social media, most of the featured recipes were found to involve unhealthy foods (Vaterlaus et al., 2015).

3.5 Young adults' achieved functionings/beings

Bonnie et al. (2015) report that there is a massive deterioration in young adults' health, caused by behaviours that pose a risk to their health. The authors explain that young adults are less likely to eat breakfast and go for regular medical check-ups, and are more likely to eat fast food and engage in unprotected sex and drug/alcohol abuse. In addition, young adults who cook for themselves typically consume a higher-quality diet than those who eat commercially prepared meals (Thorpe et al., 2014).

Overweight and obesity are more prevalent among young adults transitioning from adolescence to adulthood in developing countries than in developed countries (Poobalan and Aucott, 2016). According to a meta-analysis performed by Hassan (2017), 95% of the young female participants aged 18–25 years in five African countries were at greater risk of obesity than males in the same age bracket. Factors associated with young adults' body mass index (BMI), as discussed by Poobalan and Aucott (2016), include socioeconomic status, environmental/geographical area and maternal factors. For example, urban males were found to be more overweight than their rural male counterparts, with the easily accessible, 'ready-to-eat' foods offering a potential explanation. Similarly, in a study conducted by Mchiza et al. (2015), it was found that the BMI of participants aged 15+ years who lived in urban areas in, for example, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape was significantly higher (27.5 kg/m²) than that of their counterparts living in rural informal (26.3 kg/m²) and rural formal (25.3 kg/m²) areas.

Perceptions about body weight and desirable body sizes are also affected by social and cultural factors (Hassan and Dioso, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2020). A study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2020) reported a distortion between body weight perceptions and reality, with 55.7% of overweight/obese young adults participating in the study viewing themselves as 'normal fat', lean or thin. Nutritional transition, referring to the shift from traditional diets to a more western diet, characterised by the high consumption of salt, sugar and fat, has been identified as one of the leading causes of non-communicable diseases (Tydeman-Edwards et al., 2018). Emerging from the literature reviewed by Do Amaral E Melo et al. (2020) was the fact that family meals are positively associated with nutritional status in the youth as they encourage healthier diets.

Hunger and food insecurity are also among the nutritional capability outcomes referred to as functionings. One of the Sustainable Development Goals is to achieve zero hunger by the year 2030. The results of a study conducted by Otekunrin et al. (2020) suggest that, despite African countries recording a steady decline in child mortality, there is still a high prevalence of undernourishment and stunting, which is hindering the achievement of the zero-hunger target. Food insecurity is one of the challenges that young people in South Africa are currently facing in the wake of escalating socioeconomic challenges.

In South Africa, the current poverty levels and unemployment rate, the latter mostly affecting young people, are the result of past apartheid policies which economically disadvantaged black people (Arko-Achemfuor, 2016). For instance, Stuart (2013), cited in Arko-Achemfuor (2016),

points out that young people are under threat of food insecurity because the average age of commercial farmers is 60+ in South Africa. This means that the youth are not part of the conversation about food production and related issues. Unemployment is a major contributor to hunger and food insecurity. Van Eck (2020) asserts that once individuals who work in the informal sector stop working, they will go hungry. Furthermore, those youth who are living with their extended family, have exited the social grant programme or are living in youth-headed households all have limited resources and are vulnerable to hunger and food insecurity (Ntuli et al., 2020).

3.6 Food security

It was announced at the World Food Summit of 1996 that food security would come into being ‘when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life’ (World Food Summit, 1996). The concept of food security relates to both physical and economic access to food that satisfies an individual’s dietary needs and nourishment preferences (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009). There are many approaches to measuring whether or not people are food secure. Among the approaches proposed by Burchi and De Muro (2012) to assess food security are: 1) food availability; 2) income or resources to access food; 3) basic needs; 4) entitlement; and 5) sustainable livelihoods.

In terms of the food availability approach, there must be a balance between available food and population growth. For example, the growth in the population should not exceed the growth in food supply and availability (Burchi and De Muro, 2012). The income/resource-based approach infers that if people are to be food secure, they need an income or resources; insufficient income potentially leads to food insecurity (Dmitrievna, 2019). The basic needs approach looks beyond economic dimensions when assessing food security and stresses the importance of all individuals’ basic needs being fulfilled (Burchi and De Muro, 2016).

The basic needs approach assesses food security through direct food-related observations and food frequency assessments in which participants are asked how many meals they ate per day and how often they consumed different types of food. The entitlement approach, in turn, focuses on an individual’s entitlement to alternative resource bundles, including food, from which an individual is free to choose (Sen, 1981). For an individual to be food secure, they need to have personal endowments that include resources such as a house, land, livestock and non-tangible goods (Burchi and De Muro, 2016).

Lastly, the sustainable livelihoods approach suggests that financial, human, natural, physical and social capital are important agents in addressing individuals' household needs. When these needs are met, benefits accrue at both the local and global levels (Jessup-Varnum, 2018).

The definition of food security, as explained by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (HLPE) (2020), has progressed to a point where it emphasises the importance of agency and sustainability, in addition to availability, accessibility, utilisation and stability. Agency is the capacity or ability of people to engage and make their own decisions in processes concerning the food they eat, produce, distribute and process (HLPE, 2020). Furthermore, agency is achieved when individuals acquire control over the procedures that shape their food system policies and governance procedures (HLPE, 2020). The sustainability dimension focuses on the long-lasting nature of food systems (HLPE, 2020). For example, can food security and nutrition be achieved for future generations without compromising economic, social and environmental imperatives? Sustainability can be enforced through food systems that have in-built environmental, social, economic and political conditions, which determine how such systems function in particular areas of interest (Grant, 2015).

3.7 Situations of food security

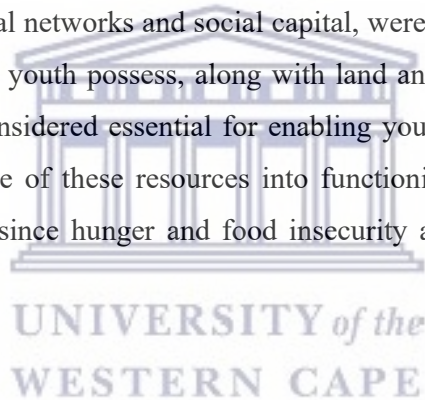
Different regions and population groups in South Africa are affected differently by hunger. For example, in a study by Walsh and Van Rooyen (2015), 81% of urban households were found to be vulnerable to hunger and food shortages, compared with 46% of rural households. A study by Rudolph and Kroll (2016) revealed a strong relationship between health, poverty and food security. Rudolph and Kroll (2016) suggested that Gauteng has a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and TB, which mostly affects the economically active population, thus leaving them with limited or no means to buy food for their families. A study conducted by Akinboade et al. (2018) in the City of Tshwane likewise found that the group most severely affected by food insecurity comprises those who have not secured employment.

Different continents and regions are also affected by food security in different ways, in response to varying economic, environmental and social conditions. For example, scholars regard both agriculture and employment income as important vehicles for reducing poverty in Africa. Conceição et al. (2016) state that employment in small, intensive farming operations makes a difference to poor households because they have easy access to the produce grown. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the economically active population in Sub-Saharan

Africa are employed in agriculture (Conceição et al., 2016). However, not all countries in Africa have adequate agricultural capacity or cultivable land. Gollin (2010) argues that some African countries have substantial resources of an extractive nature, such as oil and minerals, which lead to improvements in food security because of the income generated from employment in multinational oil and mining operations.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided definitions for young adults and NEETs. It also explored various studies on the freedoms that young adults experience and the factors that restrict their freedom to access the food that they desire. Living in urban areas was identified as a factor that assisted or broadened young adults' freedoms, while a lack of educational attainment was identified as a significant drawback to their being able to access available opportunities, such as employment. Social resources, such as social networks and social capital, were highlighted as being among the leading resources that the youth possess, along with land and agriculture. The resources that were mentioned were considered essential for enabling young adults to access food, as they are able to convert some of these resources into functionings. However, the reported outcomes (beings) are poor, since hunger and food insecurity are still extremely prevalent among young adults.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides detailed information on how the study was conducted, where it was conducted and a justification for the participants selected for the study. The chapter also outlines the research design as well as the methods used for data collection and data analysis.

4.2 Research design

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a research design provides information on how the research will be conducted. The research design should be effective, with such effectiveness dependent on the ability to gather relevant information that enables the researcher to answer the research question (Abbott and McKinney, 2013). The research design is also understood to be ‘a plan or a structured framework of how you intend conducting the research process to solve the research problem’ (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 104).

This study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data collection helped the researcher to capture in-depth, original and relevant information about the nutritional capabilities of young people directly from the young adults who were not in employment, education or training in the study location. The analysis of secondary data provided information on the context within which young NEETs lived in the study location.

The social sciences field mainly uses two types of design, namely qualitative and quantitative designs. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data in a sequential, exploratory design. Cresswell and Cresswell (2017) define a mixed-method approach as follows:

‘[A]s a method, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone’ (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2017: 19).

Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in this study assisted the researcher in establishing social facts about the nutritional capabilities of NEETs. For example, the study participants expressed themselves in words when relating their nutrition-related experiences.

The qualitative approach was helpful in making sense of the words expressed during the focus group sessions and assisted the researcher in arriving at a meaningful interpretation of the expressed words. The quantitative approach, in turn, assisted the researcher in establishing broad patterns and the context of young adult NEETs, particularly their personal, household and hunger/nutritional status and income-related characteristics. The quantitative approach also allowed the NEETs' body weight perceptions and health behaviour and status to be established. Moreover, it assisted the researcher in drawing general associations between employment, education, training and young adult NEETs' nutritional capabilities.

Both the quantitative and qualitative approaches have shortcomings when it comes to data collection and analysis. For example, quantitative research methods fail to solicit the thoughts and feelings of participants, but they do yield information that is quantifiable and thus easy to analyse. Qualitative research methods are unable to produce quantifiable results, but they are well suited to soliciting participants' thoughts and feelings. It is beneficial to use both methods, as the weaknesses of the one can be compensated by the other.

4.3 Study area

The study was conducted in Langa in the Western Cape province in South Africa. Langa is one of the oldest black African townships in Cape Town, established in 1927 and situated 11 km south-east of Cape Town (see Figure 4.1). According to the 2011 Census (STATS SA, 2011), the population of Langa that year was 52 401, straddling 17 400 households. The average household size (the number of people living in the house) was 3.01 people (STATS SA, 2012).

Langa is an urban African, segregated residential township which highlights the African struggle in the city (Musemwa, 1993). The majority of South Africans reside in townships and informal settlements, and Langa is regarded as one of the most vulnerable townships in Cape Town because of its poor housing and low standard of living (Kerr, 2019). The study area was chosen on the basis of the common features that Langa shares with other South African townships. In many ways, the vulnerabilities and stark realities of Langa township are a microcosm of the many challenges faced by townships throughout South Africa.



Figure 4.1: Map and location of the study area, Langa, in the Western Cape province

Source: GeoTerraImage (Pty) Ltd

4.4 Study sample

4.4.1 Young adults

Although there is no consensus in terms of a definition of young adults, societies the world over recognise young adults as occupying a transition stage between childhood and adulthood. In 2019, as reported by the United Nations, there were around 1.2 billion young adults in the world aged 15–24 years, constituting 16% of the global population. In South Africa in 2018, there were 9.5 million young adults (16% of the population) aged 15–24 years (Hall, 2019). Furthermore, during the first quarter of 2019, the unemployment rate among young people in South Africa aged 15–24 stood at 55.2%, while 33% of unemployed young people fell into the NEET category (Baldry et al., 2019).

4.4.2 NEETs

NEETs are defined internationally as young people aged 15–24 years who are not employed and who are not in education or training (Bardak et al., 2015). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2015) points out that the state of NEETs in South Africa points to a deterioration in the quality and mobility of human capital. This is alarming in itself, but even more so considering that NEETs are mostly youth with low education attainment levels and little or no work experience. Although males and females in South Africa attend education programmes in equal numbers, there are more female NEETs than male NEETs (Hall, 2019). NEETs generally lack coping mechanisms for dealing with spells of unemployment (OECD, 2015). Moreover, not being in any kind of employment, education or training can negatively impact their ability to access resources (OECD, 2015).

This study used purposive sampling for the qualitative component. Etikan et al. (2016) describe the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, as the deliberate choice of a participant in view of the qualities that they possess. In this study, the participants who were purposively selected from Langa township were young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs). The sample comprised 27 young people from different households in the age range 18–24. A total of four focus groups had been conducted when saturation was reached. The purposive sample was collated through a snowballing technique which allowed already-identified participants to recommend other potential participants who met the research criteria. Snowballing, as discussed by Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), is a non-probability sampling technique in which existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances.

The quantitative data for the 18–24-year-old NEETs were extracted from the results of a door-to-door household survey ('Evaluation of the implementation of the health promotion levy') conducted in Langa among 18–39-year-old participants in February and March 2019. Permission to use the data from this survey (reference number for ethics clearance BM18/6/2) was granted (see Appendix A). The variables that were anonymised, extracted and made available for analysis in this study were sociodemographic variables (age, gender, education, household assets, marital status and income sources in the household) and NEETs' body weight perceptions, health behaviour and status, and lived poverty indicators. In addition, the anthropometric nutritional status of the participants was assessed by trained fieldworkers.

Information on all the participants in the primary study who met the inclusion criteria for this (current) study was extracted by the principal investigator of the primary study and the supervisor of this study, for the purpose of analysis. As the primary study was a door-to-door survey, it is assumed that the participants in this (current) study constitute a reasonably representative profile of young adult NEETs aged 18–24 years living in Langa.

4.5 Data collection tools and process

4.5.1 Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods permit the researcher to perform a deeper analysis of the phenomenon under consideration, as participants have the autonomy to identify and express their priorities and concerns independently of investigators' assumptions and limitations (Krishna and Shrader, 2000). The qualitative method used in this study was focus group discussions.

Morgan (1996) describes a focus group as a group of purposely selected participants who participate in a planned research discussion that is intended to reveal participants' perceptions about a particular topic in a safe and receptive environment (Morgan, 1996). All COVID-19 protocols were observed (see Appendix B). In this regard, the number of participants in each group was reduced to ensure adherence to social distancing rules. In addition, all study participants were temperature screened and hand sanitised before being allowed to enter the venue. Disposable masks were made available to the participants and the no-mask/no-entry rule was applied.

The gender composition of the focus groups was purposely arranged so that one group comprised males only, one group comprised females only, and the other two groups were mixed. The groups were intentionally selected to stimulate free and natural discussions.

4.5.2 Quantitative methods

Quantitative methods put more emphasis 'on objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques' (Labaree, 2009: 23). The section below describes the research technique and sampling strategy used in the primary study.

A structured questionnaire was used to capture demographic and socioeconomic information from the participants. Further to that, participants' body weight and height were recorded using standardised equipment and applying a standardised methodology. BMI was calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of height in metres. Four categories of nutritional status were used for the data analysis, i.e. undernutrition (BMI <19), normal weight (BMI 19–25), overweight (BMI >25 < 30), and obesity (BMI ≥30) (WHO, 2013). Additionally, each young adult's weight perception and health status/outcome were captured and recorded.

Food insecurity was assessed and categorised according to the Ballard et al. (2011) household hunger scale (HHS). The HHS captures the experiences of household food deprivation through the use of three questions, with frequency-of-occurrence sub-questions reflecting the situation over the previous four weeks (30 days): rarely, sometimes or often (Ballard et al., 2011). Categories of food insecurity were used for the data analysis, i.e. little to no hunger in the household, moderate hunger in the household, and severe hunger in the household.

4.6 Data analysis

Kruger and Neuman (2006) define quantitative data analysis as a systematic approach to research in which information is transformed into numerical data. In this study, the researcher arrived at descriptive statistics using STATA software and presented them in the form of frequencies and percentages expressed as tables, charts and graphs. This allowed the researcher to describe the context within which the young NEETs in Langa lived and to provide possible explanations for the findings emanating from the qualitative data.

According to Anfara et al. (2002), qualitative data analysis entails searching for general statements about relationships within the categories of data. In this study, the researcher arranged the collected data into themes and codes that would support the quantitative findings (Sundler et al., 2019). The type of qualitative analysis used in the study was phenomenology. Phenomenology seeks to provide a very detailed description of the core of a phenomenon by exploring it from the standpoint of those who have experienced it (Neubauer et al., 2019). Phenomenology was a beneficial approach to use in this study as it explored NEETs' experiences/challenges with nutrition and the impact thereof.

In analysing the qualitative data, the researcher followed the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) categorise six phases in thematic data analysis, as explained below.

The first phase is concerned with becoming familiar with the data. The phase involves transcribing, reading to understand the data, and writing down important notes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researcher in this study was the main facilitator and was actively involved in the qualitative data collection process. This allowed the researcher to familiarise himself with the data by taking notes during the focus group discussions. The researcher also transcribed all the focus group discussions, ensuring that he became even more familiar with the data.

The second phase involves generating initial codes. Coding involves the identification of interesting features of the data and grouping the data in an organised manner throughout the dataset, i.e. combining related sets of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this study, the researcher identified important and interesting features of the data that related to young people's experiences with food.

The third phase involves searching for themes. During this phase, the researcher combined different codes into themes. Themes are broad, and all similar or related codes are grouped under one theme (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this study, the researcher identified themes based on their significance to the research questions and the quantitative data.

The fourth phase, which begins when the themes have been identified, entails a process of refinement (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Refinement means that the researcher reviewed all the identified themes and double-checked that there were enough codes to support them. During this phase, the researcher also assessed whether there were themes that could potentially be overlapping and/or needed to be broken down further (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The fifth phase is concerned with defining and naming themes. During this phase, themes are further refined and presented for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Refining the themes involved the researcher in this study identifying 'the essence of what each of them is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 92). To this end, all the themes were verified against the codes and their compatibility with the overall dataset was checked to ensure that they were relevant and addressed the study's research questions.

4.7 Data verification and trustworthiness

4.7.1 Validity and reliability

A quantitative survey was conducted by trained IsiXhosa-speaking fieldworkers. Fieldworkers underwent comprehensive training before going into the field to ensure accuracy and uniformity in the application of the survey instrument. The general household survey questions were based on instruments such as the South African Demographic Health Survey and the General Household Questionnaire to allow for comparability and to improve validity. Anthropometric assessments were done by two dedicated, trained fieldworkers following standardised methods in line with the guidelines provided by Lee and Nieman (2013). Equipment was standardised every day and each measurement was performed twice. If the difference in weight was >0.5 kg and the height difference was >0.5 cm, the measurements were taken a third time. The HHS is a validated instrument as it has been cross-culturally validated on seven datasets collected in different settings (Ballard et al., 2011).

4.7.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity was used in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Reflexivity, as explained by Jootun et al. (2009), concerns the amount of influence that the researcher holds intentionally and unintentionally throughout the research process. Finlay (2012) proposes five lenses that a researcher can use to evaluate the extent of their influence during the research process. These five lenses are strategic reflexivity, contextual/discursive reflexivity, relational reflexivity, embodied reflexivity and ethical reflexivity.

According to Finlay (2012), strategic reflexivity emphasises the methodological features of the research process; contextual/discursive reflexivity focuses on situational and cross-cultural components in the data collection process; and embodied reflexivity focuses on the non-verbal communication between the facilitator and participants. The other lens is ethical reflexivity, examines the ethical challenges that emerge during the data collection process.

4.7.2.1 Strategic reflexivity

It was crucial to be methodologically conscious during the focus group discussions. This is because the researcher had to ask questions in a way that the participants would understand but at the same time make sure that the questions solicited answers that revealed the nutritional capabilities of the participants. For example, if the term ‘capability’ was used, participants

would struggle a bit to understand the question. Therefore, to accommodate the participants, the researcher had to use words like ‘what enables you to ...?’ and ‘what prevents you from ...?’

Moreover, to prepare the participants and give them at least an indication of what the focus group would involve, the researcher began with an ice breaker where participants were asked what they would like to eat if it was their last day on earth. After the icebreaker exercise, participants easily answered the questions relating to food.

4.7.2.2 Contextual/discursive reflexivity

The researcher found that, as a 27-year-old Masters’s student, facilitating focus group discussions on the nutritional capabilities of young people (NEETs) had its challenges. One of the challenges was that some of the participants were in the same age group as the researcher and might have been intimidated by him, while others would try to impress by using ‘big’ English words. In addition, some female participants were shy and afraid to speak up during the focus group sessions; others tended to dominate the discussion. To overcome these challenges, the facilitator (researcher) tried to strike a balance between being strict and using more informal, familiar language to encourage participants to express themselves freely.

4.7.2.3 Embodied reflexivity

Non-verbal communication was not a crucial element in the data collection process. The researcher was familiar with the participants’ communication norms and traditions. There was no specific dress code that the researcher was expected to adhere to. However, he was mindful of participants’ body language and facial expressions during the sessions. For example, when participants shared sensitive information, the researcher maintained his composure and did not show shock or surprise through his own facial expressions. This strategy helped the participants to feel free to share how they went about ensuring that they ate the food that they valued.

4.8 Ethics

This study was conducted in line with the ethical research standards of the University of the Western Cape. The study was approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (reference number: HS19/10/36; see Appendix D). The requirements for anonymity and confidentiality were strictly adhered to in the interactions with participants during the qualitative data collection process. The researcher also made sure that the participants

understood their role and rights. As all the participants in this study were over the age of 18 years, there was no need for parental consent. An information sheet (see Appendix C) was provided to all participants during the qualitative component and their written consent was obtained.

The primary study was similarly conducted in accordance with the ethical research standards of the University of the Western Cape. The primary study was approved by the Biomedical Research Ethics Committee (BMREC) (reference number for ethics clearance BM18/6/2) and permission to use the data from this survey was granted (see Appendix A). Data were anonymised before they were made available to the researcher for analysis. Participants in the primary study also provided their informed, written consent before taking part.

4.8.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout this study. Confidentiality was achieved by ensuring that the information discussed stayed with the researcher and participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The participants in the focus groups were required to sign a confidentiality of information agreement (see Appendix E). This was easily achieved as the common language spoken in Langa, isiXhosa, is also the language of the researcher. In the discussion of the findings of the study (Chapter 5), participants' names were shown as pseudonyms; therefore, the connection between particular participants and their responses was concealed.

4.8.2 Informed consent

The researcher developed consent forms for the purpose of obtaining participants' written consent to take part in both components of the research. The researcher clearly explained the objectives of the study to the participants before they signed the consent forms to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study and the risks associated with participation. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage if they felt uncomfortable about proceeding with the survey or interview process (Burton, 2000).

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the study, based on the research questions that the study aimed to address. The chapter starts by providing a summary of the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample of young adult NEETs from Langa to explain the context and available freedoms of young adult NEETs living in the township. The chapter also provides a summary of characteristics and resources of young adult NEETs, including income, and personal and household characteristics. Health behaviour and outcomes, nutritional knowledge, lived poverty index results, hunger and nutritional status results are presented in this study, representing young adults' achieved functionings/beings.

This second part of this chapter presents the qualitative findings which are guided both by the quantitative results and the study's research objectives. The challenges experienced by the NEET participants, which impeded their nutritional capability, are also presented in this chapter, along with strategies/steps to enhance nutrition capability and the factors influencing young adult NEETs' food choices.

5.2 Quantitative findings

Quantitative data for 18–24-year-old NEETs were extracted from a door-to-door, household survey ('Evaluation of the implementation of the health promotion levy') conducted in Langa among 18–39-year-old participants in February and March 2019 (the primary study).

5.2.1 Sociodemographic context of young adult NEETs living in Langa

A total of 807 participants aged 18–24 agreed to participate in the primary study but only 485 participants met the NEET criteria. This section therefore focuses on the profile of the NEETs in the primary study. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the NEET participants were female (Table 5.1), 20 participants (4%) had completed matric, 253 (52%) had completed Grade 11 and 104 (21%) had completed Grade 10. Just over one in four of the participants (n=108; 22%) had left school before completing Grade 10. The majority of participants (n=442; 92%) were single, with 54 participants (11%) living on their own and 146 (30.1%) living with more than three

family members (Table 5.1). Almost three-quarters of the participants (n=382; 78.8%) reported not having any children of their own, while 92 (18.8%) reported having one child (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Summary of personal characteristics of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	181	38%
	Female	296	62%
Education	Grade 12 completed	20	4%
	Grade 11 completed	253	52%
	Grade 10 completed	104	21%
	<Grade 9 completed	108	22%
Marital status	Single	443	91.5%
	Married	12	2.5%
	Living together	29	6.0%
Number of household members	1	54	11.1%
	2	142	29.3%
	3	143	29.5%
	≥4	146	30.1%
Number of own children	No children	382	78.8%
	1 child	91	18.8%
	≥2 children	12	2.4%

5.2.2 Young adult NEETs' resources

The majority of the participants (n=477; 98.4%) had access to electricity in their households which they also used for cooking purposes. Just over one-third of the participants (n=177; 35.3%) reported living in a plaster-type house, followed by 140 (28.9) living in a corrugated iron-type house. Only nine NEET participants (1.9%) lived in households that owned land and only 20 (4.1%) lived in households that owned a computer (Table 5.2). Almost three-quarters (n=361; 74.7%) of the NEET participants lived in households with a fridge and 264 (54.7%) lived in households with a microwave. Twelve participants (n=12; 2.5%) reported not having a hot water geyser in their household (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Summary of household characteristics of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Demographic variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Electricity	With no electricity	8	1.6%
	With electricity	477	98.4%
Fuel to cook	Electricity	478	98.6%
	Paraffin	1	2%
	Gas	2	4%
	Firewood	1	2%
	Missing	3	6%
House type	Plastic/cardboard	23	4.7%
	Prefab	25	5.2%
	Brick/cement block	120	24.7%
	Corrugated iron	140	28.9%
	Plaster	171	35.3%
	Mud	1	0.2%
	Other	5	1.0%
Land	Owns land	9	1.9%
	Does not own land	473	98.1%
Computer	Yes	20	4.1%
	No	463	95.9%
Fridge	Yes	361	74.7%
	No	122	25.3%
Microwave oven	Yes	264	54.7%
	No	219	45.3%
Cell phone	Yes	468	96.9%
	No	15	3.1%

The majority of NEET participants 316 (65.3%) reported living in households with no one receiving a child support grant (CSG), while 457 (94.6%) lived in households with no one receiving a state old-age grant, 10 (2.1%) lived in households receiving a disability grant and one (0.2%) lived in a household receiving a foster care grant (Table 5.3). Information on household income was not available in the case of almost one-third of the young adult NEETs (n=178; 36,7%). More than half the NEET participants (n=271; 55.5%) reported that no one in their household earned an income (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Income-related characteristics of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Number of household members receiving child support grants	No one receives a grant	316	65.3%
	Only 1 person receives	102	21.1%
	2 people receive	47	6.7%
	3 people receive	13	2.7%
	4 people receive	3	6%
	5 people receive	3	6%
Number of household members receiving state old-age pensions	No one receives a pension	457	94.6%
	Only 1 person receives	20	4.1%
	2 people receive	4	0.8%
	3 people receive	2	0.4%
	Missing	2	0.4%
Number of household members receiving disability grants	No one receives a grant	475	97.9%
	Only 1 person receives	10	2.1%
Number of household members receiving foster care grants	No one receives a grant	482	99.8%
	Only 1 person receives	1	0.2%
Number of people contributing to the total income of the household	No one contributes	271	55.9%
	Only 1 person contributes	110	22.7%
	≥2 people contribute	16	3.3%
	Do not know	88	18.1%
Total household income per month before deductions (including wages, rent, grants, sales of vegetables, etc.)	Less than R3001	178	36.7%
	R3001–R4000	31	6.4%
	R4001–R5000	48	9.9%
	R5001–R7500	38	7.8%
	R7501–R10 000	18	3.7%
	R10 001–R15 000	6	1.2%
	R15 001–R20 000	2	0.4%
	R20 001–R30 000	1	0.2%
Do not know	163	33.6%	

5.2.3 Young adults' achieved functionings/beings

The HHS was calculated using the guidelines by Ballard et al. (2011). Accordingly, moderate hunger was reported by 15.1% of NEETs, with <1% of NEETs reporting severe hunger (Table 5.4). Results also showed that 222 (47.3%) of young adult NEETs were of normal weight (BMI 19–25) and 125 (57.1%) were male participants. Only 211 of the participants (45.0%) were overweight and obese combined (BMI>25). The anthropometric results differed from the weight perceptions of young adult NEETs. A total of 369 participants (76.9%) perceived their

weight to be normal and 207 (57%) of those participants were female. Only 63 young adult NEETs (13.1%) reported being obese (Table 5.4), with 62 (98.4%) of those being female.

Table 5.4: Hunger- and nutritional status-related characteristics of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Variables	Categories	Male	Female	Frequency	Percentage
Household Hunger scale	No/little hunger			407	84.1%
	Moderate hunger			73	15.1%
	Severe hunger			4	0.8%
Nutritional status	Underweight (BMI<19)	27 (15.9%)	8 (2.7%)	36	7.7%
	Normal weight (BMI 19–25)	125 (57.1%)	94 (42.9%)	222	47.3%
	Overweight (BMI>25<30)	15 (15.3%)	83 (84.7%)	99	21.1%
	Obese (BMI ≥30<40)	3 (3.5%)	83 (36.5%)	89	19.0%
	Severely obese (BMI≥40)	0 (0.0%)	23 (100%)	23	4.9%

Twenty-six percent (26%) of NEET participants (n=125) reported smoking (Table 5.6; Figure 5.1), 54% reported consuming alcohol and 44% reported exercising.

Table 5.5: Health behaviour of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Smoking among NEETs	Occasionally	7	1.4%
	No, but smoked previously	23	4.8%
	Yes	125	25.9%
	Never smoked	328	67.9%
Exercise	Yes	210	44.4%
	No	263	55.6%
Alcohol	Yes	225	46.4%
	No	259	53.4%

Almost all the NEET participants (n=476; 98%) reported that they had not been diagnosed with cancer, hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes or obesity.

Table 5.6: Health status of NEET participants in the Langa primary study

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Diabetes	Yes	2	0.4%
	No	480	99.6%
Heart disease	Yes	1	0.2%
	No	481	99.8%
High cholesterol	Yes	3	0.6%
	No	478	99.4%
Hypertension	Yes	17	3.5%
	No	465	96.5%
Cancer	Yes	1	0.2%
	No	481	99.8%
Overweight/obesity	Yes	8	1.7%
	No	473	98.3%

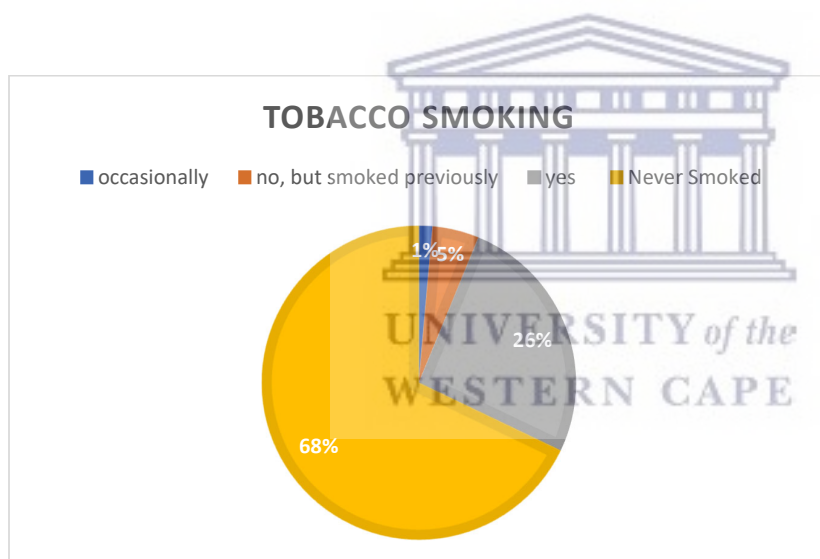


Figure 5.1: Smoking behaviour reported by NEETs in the Langa primary study

Although the majority of NEET participants (n=405; 83.7%) reported not paying attention to information on packaged food, 193 (40.0%) reported being aware that nutritional information is printed on the back of food packages, while 132 (27.4%) reported that they understood the nutritional information printed on the back of food packages (Table 5.6).

Table 5.7: Nutritional knowledge of NEET participants in the Langa primary study

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
I pay attention to information on a package, like 'no added sugar'	True	79	16.3%
	False	405	83.7%
I am aware that nutrition information is printed on the back of food packages	True	193	40.0%
	False	290	60.0%
I understand the nutrition information printed on the back of food packages	True	132	27.4
	False	349	72.6

Seventy-nine percent (79%) of NEET participants (n=379) reported that they never experienced food poverty and 59.7% (n=289) reported the same for fuel poverty. Similar results emerged for water poverty where the majority of participants (53.9%) (n=260) reported never experiencing water poverty. Although the majority of participants reported never experiencing water, food, fuel and medication poverty, 32.2% of participants (n=154) reported experiencing cash poverty at least once or twice a month.

Table 5.8: Lived poverty index of NEETs in the Langa primary study

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Food poverty index	Many times	3	0.6%
	Several times	25	5.2%
	Once or twice	75	15.6%
	Never	379	78.6%
Poverty fuel to cook	Many times	2	0.4%
	Several times	61	12.6%
	Once or twice	132	27.3%
	Never	289	59.7%
Water poverty	Many times	6	1.2%
	Several times	101	21.0%
	Once or twice	115	23.9%
	Never	260	53.9%
Cash poverty	Often	4	0.8%
	Many times	21	4.4%
	Several times	83	17.4%
	Once or twice	154	32.2%
	Never	216	45.2%
Medication poverty	Many times	1	0.2%
	Several times	7	1.4%
	Once or twice	68	14.1%
	Never	407	84.3%

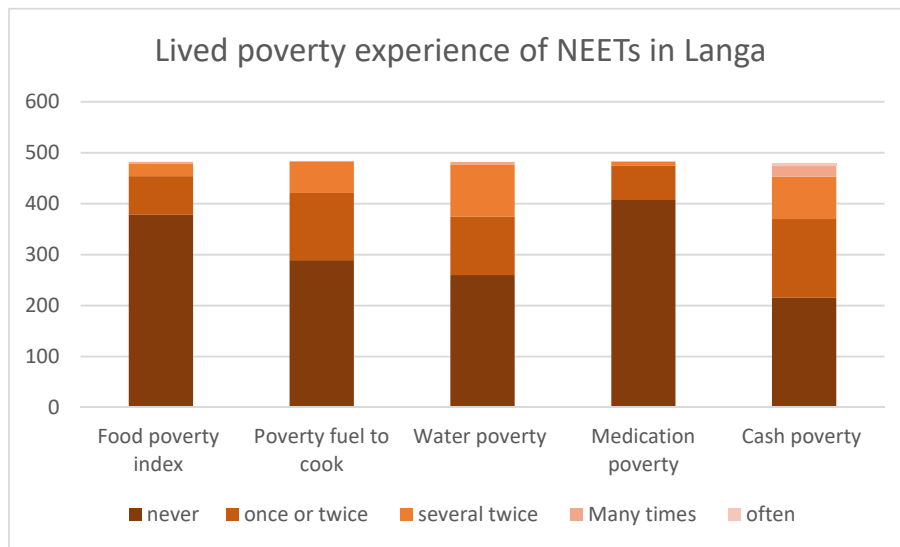


Figure 5.2: Lived poverty experience of NEETs in the Langa primary study

5.3 Qualitative findings

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this mini-thesis, this study aimed to explore the nutritional choices of the youth, the things they can do to ensure that they are nourished, the kinds of lives they lead in relation to nutrition, and the kinds of nutritional achievements that they have to choose from. To this end, the study set out to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that young adult NEETs face after their CSG stops or after they leave school?
2. How and where do young adult NEETs gain access to food?
3. What influences young adult NEETs' food choices?

The section below systematically presents the research findings according to themes based on the above three questions. These findings are taken from responses provided during the focus group discussions. The gender composition of the groups was purposively arranged to have one group with males only, one group with females only, and two mixed groups. The groups were intentionally selected to stimulate free and natural discussions.

5.3.1 Challenges to nutrition capability

What are the challenges that young adult NEETs face after their child support grant stops or after they leave school?

5.3.1.1 Restrictions on food

Restrictions at home when it comes to food were said to be one of the leading challenges that young adult NEETs in Langa township experienced. Participants reported that, since their CSG had stopped, they had a sense of guilt whenever they were about to make something to eat for themselves at home, knowing that they contributed nothing. This was highlighted in the following quote:

‘It’s the guilty conscious from yourself as you no longer contribute at home, so you will not eat certain food freely as you would if you were still receiving CSG.’ (FGD 1)

The guilt that young NEETs experience whenever they are about to make food for themselves in their homes results in their sacrificing their own nourishment for that of others.

‘Even if there’s some little bread left, you cannot eat it because you are thinking of those who are going to school, they need it more than you do.’ (FGD 1)

Some of the guilt and sacrifices experienced by young people (NEETs) are the result of the treatment they receive from family members in their households. One of the participants provided the following explanation:

‘When I used to get money from SASSA, at home no one was monitoring how many slices of bread do I take but now that I do not get the grant they are looking up to me as to when am I getting a job to assist at home. So they have their expectations and things are not the same anymore. I do not get the things that I used to get from them.’

Apart from the sense of guilt and the sacrifices that young people have to make, once the CSG stops, their access to certain foods is restricted. This was affirmed by one of the participants who said:

‘There are things that I am no longer allowed eat and I don’t even get near them for example, yogurts are strictly for kids at home as they use them for lunch at school. I even accepted that.’ (FGD 1)

Another participant concurred, explaining how certain foods were allocated to certain individuals, but not them.

‘Even burgers, French polony and Russians I do not have access to them at home, if I want them I will have to steal them. Because they are for kids. And if I get caught I will be asked why am I eating things that do not belong to me.’ (FGD 1)

5.3.1.2 Decline in allowances and an early shift from childhood to adulthood

Young people also report that once they leave school and their CSG stops, they no longer receive an allowance from their parents. The small amount they used to get would enable them to buy themselves something that they would love to eat. One participant described how the absence of an allowance restricted him from buying food that he loved:

‘When I was at school I used to get an allowance but now that I left school I no longer get any allowance at home. And I used to use my allowance money to buy *amagwinya* (fat cakes).’ (FGD 3)

Apart from young people not being able to buy what they liked to eat, not being in school and not receiving a CSG meant that they no longer received the daily allowance that they would normally get every day when they were still at school.

‘It is different now because when I was still at school, I used to get daily allowance for lunch but now that I am no longer at school I do not receive any allowance at home.’ (FGD 2)

Young people who are not in employment, education or training are not only deprived of an allowance but they are now treated like adults who can take care of themselves. One participant affirmed this:

‘The challenge that I would think of is that when I used to receive a grant, I knew that my mother would buy me something whether it’s a shoe or something and at home, there are too many of us so now that I do not get any grant I do not get anything, and I do not even expect to get something because I know I will be told that there are other young siblings that come after me who need them the most.’ (FGD 3)

The challenge of the early transition to adulthood is not only rooted in the expectation of the parents and other family members; some young adult NEETs are also forced by circumstances

to be adults and not indulge in a certain type of food. For example, one participant explained how having a child required him to sacrifice his nourishment:

‘Most of us in my age group will have children and you find that our children stay with us and our parents. So even if I want something in the fridge I sometimes have to think of my child; if I take that last thing in the fridge they won’t have anything to eat.’ (FGD 1)

5.3.1.3 Shortage of food

There is no doubt that the CSG, as little as it is, makes a difference in many low-income families. Grinspun (2016) confirms that child support grants contribute to household income and reduce poverty in the households of grant recipients. Participants referred to the shortage of food due to the loss of their CSGs. According to one participant:

‘When I used to get SASSA grant we were able to buy enough food. But now that I am no longer receiving the grant we have to cut on some food items that we used to have. For example, things like Weetbix will not be purchased and we will need to eat leftovers from last night for breakfast.’ (FGD 4)

Another participant reported being faced with the same challenge:

‘At home, we used to have sufficient food but now there is a huge shortage of food and now I have to go and hustle.’

A shortage of food is also linked to an inability to afford food. The absence of a CSG means that young people are unable to afford certain food that they like and value. The financial element of the child support grant means that its absence brings financial challenges. Participants clearly explained how the absence of child support negatively affected their ability to afford food:

‘To have food you need to have money first, so I would say the inability to afford food is one of the problems or challenges I experience regarding food. For example, in the middle of the month at home our grocery usually depletes and we don’t have money, it is obvious that you will not get the food that you want.’ (FGD 1)

‘One of the biggest challenges that I would say we face is not having money to buy the food that we want.’ (FGD 4)

5.3.1.4 Exiting the school feeding scheme

Many schools in Langa township have feeding scheme programmes which aim to improve children's capacity for active learning and also to address short-term hunger, thus ensuring that at least one meal per day is catered for. Leaving school means that young people no longer have access to the school nutrition programme. Participants cited the loss of the school nutrition programme as a challenge, as it removed one of the vehicles for acquiring food. One participant explained how not being part of the feeding scheme programme had compromised him:

'The difference I would say is that when I used to go to school at least we had feeding scheme at school. But now that I am no longer at school when I am left home while others are still at school I cannot eat or take more slices of bread because I have to think of those who are at school, making sure that they have something to eat when they get home.' (FGD 3)

The school nutrition programme not only addressed the problem of short-term hunger for some participants; it also reached their households. For example, one participant explained how the food she received from the school nutrition programme found its way to her home:

'Also at school, we knew that we will get porridge in the morning and get lunch so we were sorted for two meals in a day. And sometimes we were given food to take home especially if you were identified as one of the struggling students. So if we were still in school we would have been sorted in terms of food.' (FGD 4)

5.3.2 Strategies for building nutrition capability

How and where do young adult NEETs gain access to food?

Access to food generally depends on one's income, commodities and resources, the level of which may or may not put one in an advantageous position in terms of being able to access food. However, for income, commodities and resources to successfully result in wellbeing, they still need to be converted into functionings. According to Sen (1989), the conversion of resources and income into wellbeing relies heavily on contingent circumstances, both social and personal. Similarly, in terms of accessing food, the participants in this study discussed the contingent circumstances that they leveraged to gain access to food. The reported contingent circumstances were both social and personal, and provided important in-depth insights into how and where young adult NEETs gain access to food.

5.3.2.1 Social capital

According to Migheli (2011), social capital is found in a variety of interpersonal relationships and enhances one's ability to develop new capabilities or achieve new and valuable functionings. In this context, social capital can enhance young people's ability to access food. For example, participants in this study named family members and friends as their immediate sources of help when they needed food. One participant explained the importance of collaboration with friends:

'I usually ask my friend to add what we have and buy something to eat.' (FGD 2)

Over and above the assistance provided by friends, young people in a romantic relationship often find support from their partners. For example, two participants explained how their boyfriends helped them in times of need:

'Also my boyfriend is my other option, I know when he gets paid and I normally ask for money during those dates.' (FGD 3)

'My boyfriend also needs to help me when I am hungry and give me money to buy food.' (FGD 2)

Distribution within the family is one of the options that young people have when they need food.

'If I do not have money I like calling my aunt from Kraaifontein and ask for money, usually R200.' (FGD 1)

'I call my mother from the Eastern Cape and ask for money.' (FGD 1)

5.3.2.2 Household chores and casual jobs

Young people who are not in employment, education or training need to look for other ways to earn money. Some of the ways reported by the participants were helping with chores at home in exchange for food and earning cash to buy food. Doing chores was a way of accessing food in their homes and also dissolving feelings of guilt when they approached the fridge. One participant explained how he used chores as a means to obtain food in his home:

‘In order for me to gain access to food I always make sure that I make my mother happy by doing the chores at home. I am doing that to bribe her to allow me to eat anything that I want to eat at home anytime.’ (FGD 3)

Similarly, another participant explained how she received money to buy what she wanted to eat by doing home chores.

‘I usually help my aunt with cleaning and washing dishes, then after that, she normally gives me the money then I can buy what I want to eat at the time.’ (FGD 2)

According to the participants, young people were not limited to household chores; they could also look for other casual jobs in their community. Two participants explained how they made money that way:

‘At the flats that we live in now, there are foreigners that live nearby us who I know that they are lazy to wash their clothes. So I normally wash their clothes in exchange for cash so that I can buy food.’ (FGD 3)

‘I usually wash my neighbour’s carpets in exchange for cash, so that is how I get money to buy food.’ (FGD 4)

Finding casual work outside the home was not only the pursuit of female participants. Male participants also reported doing some external work to earn cash to buy food. For example:

‘When I do not have money to buy food I get food from my friends, and sometimes wash cars for some few people that I know and get money from that.’ (FGD 1)

‘I am helping another guy who makes build-in cupboards so he usually gives me money for assisting him. So, I would use that money to buy food.’ (FGD 3)

5.3.2.3 Transactional sex

Sexual vulnerability among women is often associated with food insecurity (Miller et al., 2011). According to Miller et al. (2011), because of the heavy reliance on men as providers in households, women are often compelled to engage in transactional sex in exchange for food and protection. However, few participants reported using transactional sex as a tactic to gain access to food. One participant explained how transactional sex worked:

‘I used to go to Goodwood in some of the clubs there and we would meet Nigerian man who would approach us and ask to leave with us and sleep with us then in the morning I would get money.’ (FGD 3)

Transactional sex is not simply an option for women; some men follow the same route to ensure that they can put something on the table. One of the male participants explained how he went about this:

‘At home, there are also other people that live in our yard, so sometimes for me to have money to buy food I sleep with someone’s wife from our yard when her husband is at work. I know that I will get money afterward.’ (FGD 1)

5.3.2.4 Illegal activities

Many factors contribute to the lack of access to food, prompting young people to use different measures to acquire food, whether they are morally right or wrong. Participants reported that illegal activities are among the options open to them to make money so that they can buy food. One participant reported:

‘I steal money at home to buy food when I am hungry.’ (FGD 2)

Apart from illegal activities in the household, one participant mentioned drug distribution as a way in which he made money to buy food:

‘I do not want to lie; I sell drugs to get some money for me to get food.’ (FGD 3)

5.3.2.5 Entrepreneurship

Besides young people engaging in illegal activities and/or risky behaviours, participants reported some positive measures, including entrepreneurship, to make money. For example:

‘I normally make people’s hair to get money to buy food.’ (FGD 3)

‘I am someone who sometimes sells stuff, so sometimes I make money from selling my products.’

5.3.4 Factors associated with young adult NEETs' food choices

What influences young adult NEETS' food choices?

Young people's food choices are influenced by multiple factors, including sociodemographic and physical factors (Davison et al., 2015). Young people who are not in any kind of employment, education or training are already at a disadvantage in terms of the food choices available to them. As much as individual preferences play an important role in determining what they will eat, other factors (external, household and sociodemographic) remain among the NEETs' leading determinants of food choice. For example, in this study, participants reported their food choices being less influenced by their own preferences and more influenced by factors beyond their control.

5.3.4.1 Household factors

The majority of participants were still living with their families and were still under their parents' or older siblings' care. This meant that their ability to choose what they preferred to eat was limited. Moreover, their unemployed status deterred them from making any food-related decisions. As young NEETs, they were subject to whatever their home situation was. For example, when participants were asked who purchased the food in their households and how the purchasing decisions were made, one participant answered:

'My mother and father decide, even if I do not like something I cannot even complain.' (FGD 4)

Other participants reported how they were subject to the breadwinner's preferences and had to compromise:

'Another thing is that my older sister likes meat, and she is the one who buys food. So sometimes even if we want to eat healthy but we can't because there is more meat at home than other healthy foods.' (FGD 1)

'Again, what I eat depends on what is available at home or what they like, so if they eat unhealthier food then I do not have much choice but to eat the available food bought at home. For example, at home vegetables are mostly eaten on Sundays.' (FGD 4)

Conversely, household members and parents can influence young people's choices positively. For example, two participants explained how their parents' health status and health consciousness helped them to eat healthily:

'I would say my mother helps me eat healthy because for example, I do not like vegetables and she is the one who forces me to eat them.' (FGD 3)

'My mother is diabetic so I usually eat according to her diet.' (FGD 3)

Parents and other household members deciding what to buy is not the only factor influencing the food choices of young people; the household's socioeconomic status also places restrictions on what young people can eat. One participant explained how his household's financial situation did not allow him to be selective when it came to food:

'Also at home, there are three of us boys and my mother, only one of us receives grant now and my mother is currently unemployed. So the grocery is not the same anymore as we only depend on my brother's social grant now. So now we cannot even complain when there is no bread or ask what we are going to eat for supper.' (FGD 3)

5.3.4.2 Demographic factors

Young people's food choices are also influenced by indirect factors, i.e. things over which they have no control. Demographics or the surroundings that young people find themselves in are some of these indirect factors. Participants reported that Lange, being a township in Cape Town, had many fast food outlets. Fast foods, they said, are easily accessible compared to other, healthier foods. For example, in response to a question about what hindered them from choosing (or eating) healthy food in their home and community, one participant reported:

'The places that sell fast food are all over and are easily accessible.' (FGD 2)

When asked what they would buy if they had R50 for food, and why they would buy it, participants replied that their choices were mostly influenced by what was available in their neighborhood. For example, one participant reported that:

'I would go to a place called Kwa Nandi and buy myself liver for R15, white loaf and Coke.' (FGD 4)

Distance to food outlets is another leading determinant of what young people choose to eat. For example, one participant said that he would typically go to a nearby place:

‘I would go to a place near Shoprite and buy fish and chips, white loaf bread and a 1.5 Stoney.’ (FGD 4)

Moreover, although young people seem to have their own ‘ideal’ varieties of food, their neighbourhood often prevents them from acquiring the food they like and value:

‘Other restaurants are far from us and that restricts us from having food that we want.’ (FGD 2)

‘Most of the shops that sell the food that we like are far from us.’ (FGD 4)

While young people might find their surroundings to be restrictive, some acknowledge that healthy food is easily accessible to them. For example, when participants were asked what enabled them to choose (or eat) healthy food in their home and community, one responded:

‘I would say healthy food are easily accessible because there are many fruit and vegetables in our community.’ (FGD 1)

5.3.4.3 Knowledge and beliefs about nutrition

Young people’s knowledge and beliefs about healthy and unhealthy food also emerged as a factor influencing their food choices. In other words, there is a correlation between the food that young people select and what they know and understand about the food. Their knowledge and belief system prompts young people to accept, reject or avoid trying certain foods. For example, one of the participants had the firm belief that healthy foods were expensive compared with non-healthy food:

‘Healthy food is expensive and not all of us afford to buy healthy food. What we afford is chicken, maize meal and sausage. So we do not have money for lettuce, and cucumber.’ (FGD 4)

This belief often results in young people postponing the adoption of a healthy diet to the future when they are financially stable:

‘Another thing is money; healthy food is expensive. For example, at Woolworths, you will find fresh healthy food at a very high price and here you would find not so fresh vegetables.’ (FGD 3)

In some cases, young people believe that healthy food is something that they cannot consider in view of their being unemployed. A few participants had the opposite view regarding healthy food. For example:

‘Healthy food is cheaper compared to unhealthy food. For example, cabbage is R7.’ (FGD 2)

Over and above different perceptions of the relative cost of healthy and unhealthy food, young people have their own views about what constitute healthy foods and unhealthy foods, respectively, which to some extent reflects what they eat. For example, some participants were convinced that whether or not certain foods are unhealthy depends on how often they are consumed:

‘I would say if you eat the same thing over and over for me that is not healthy you have to at least mix.’ (FGD 3)

‘Junk food is not healthy and fast food such as gatsby. Healthy foods are starch and spinach. You can drink acid but do not drink it all the time.’ (FGD 3)

Incorrect information about what represents healthy food not only slips into people’s belief systems, but it also determines what food they choose to consume, which could be to their detriment.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that the educational (especially school) achievement levels of NEETs are very low. NEET participants mostly lived in households with a household income of less than R3001 and with no one receiving a grant. However, <1% of NEET participants reported severe hunger, while anthropometric results showed that less than half (47.3%) the NEET participants were normal weight (BMI 19–25).

The challenges reported by NEET participants that hinder their nutritional capability included restrictions on food, a decline in or the removal of allowances, a shortage of food and the absence of a school feeding programme. Social capital, casual jobs, transactional sex, illegal activities and entrepreneurship were reported to be ways for NEETs to gain access to food.

Furthermore, this study found that family influence, demographic factors, and the nutritional knowledge and beliefs of NEET participants influenced their food choices.



CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This study aimed to establish the nature and extent of nutritional capabilities of young people in Langa township in the Western Cape province who were not in any kind of employment, education or training. This chapter discusses the findings from the study in detail within the context of the capability approach and other themes uncovered in the literature. The chapter also compares the study's findings with the existing literature, draws final conclusions and provides a number of recommendations.

6.2 Sociodemographic contexts of young adult NEETs

The sociodemographic contexts of young adult NEETs in Langa township were compared with other studies on young adult NEETs. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 2 (QLFS Q2), data for 2013 and 2018 showed that among all youth aged 15–29 years, only 36.5% were NEETs. The number of NEETs in this study was not compared with non-NEETs. Of the 807 participants aged 18–24 years who agreed to participate in the primary study, only 60% of participants (485) met the NEET criteria.

Akinyemi and Mushunje (2017) conducted a study to investigate NEETs' status. They found that there were more female than male NEETs and the majority of participants (95.8%) were not married. Likewise, 92% of the NEET participants in this (current) study were single and the majority (78.8%) did not have children.

6.3 Constraints to young adult NEETs achieving nourishment

6.3.1 Educational levels of young adult NEETs

The educational levels of young adult NEETs in this study were compared with those in other studies conducted among young people in South Africa who met the NEET criteria. National data recorded by Rogan (2019), together with De Lannoy and Mudiriza's (2019) discussion on the heterogeneous nature of NEETs in South Africa, revealed low educational attainment levels, with only 6% and 5.7% of NEETs, respectively, having a tertiary education. The proportion of NEET participants in this study who had completed Grade 12 was 4%. These results help to explain why many young NEETs are unemployable and why they have little

chance of being absorbed by the current competitive labour market. The unemployability factor exposes young adult NEETs to income vulnerability which then affects their capability to be food secure. Some of the income earned by young adult NEETs can be converted into an adequate amount of food. Not surprisingly, the unemployability of young adult NEETs not only costs them in terms of access to food but it also delays their independence and encourages an ongoing reliance on their parents.

A lack of independence prevents young people from having the freedom to live the kind of life they desire or value, which – according to the capability approach – is the basis of wellbeing. Their dependence on their parents is also accompanied by restrictions on food consumption. Young adult NEETs often feel guilty or undeserving when taking food, and sometimes this is reinforced by their parents. These restrictions mostly occur after young people's CSG stops and they no longer make a financial contribution because they are unemployed. Young adult NEETs are facing a crisis: they have limited opportunities to get into the labour market because of their educational shortcomings and are also under pressure at home to find employment so that they will acquire (or regain) full access to food in their households. Both these predicaments prevent young adult NEETs from achieving their desired nourishment.

6.3.2 Young adult NEETs' nutritional knowledge

Nutritional knowledge refers 'to the knowledge of concepts and processes related to nutrition and health, including knowledge of diet and health, diet and disease, foods representing major sources of nutrients, and dietary guidelines and recommendations' (Miller and Cassady, 2015: 209). The nutritional knowledge of young adult NEETs can either enhance or limit their capabilities, opportunities, freedoms and agency in respect of their own nourishment. For example, nutritional knowledge helps young adults to make healthier choices (Azman and Sahak, 2014).

The results of this study show that more than 70% of young adult NEETs did not understand or pay attention to the information printed on the back of food packages. These results are similar to those emanating from the study by Xazela et al. (2019) on nutritional knowledge and university students. That study revealed that almost 61% of youth were unaware of the contents of food labels and there was no significant relationship between education and nutritional knowledge. This could mean that young people generally pay less attention to and/or are unaware of the important nutritional information appearing on food packages. For example, in

a study by Romanos-Nanclares et al. (2018), the results confirmed that parents or adults have better nutritional knowledge than young people (and healthier attitudes towards food).

Moreover, young adult NEETs tended to be misinformed about healthy and unhealthy food as they firmly believed that healthy food (which they associated with Woolworths) is expensive. The same pattern of understanding was evidenced in a study by Pechey and Monsivais (2016) who explored the inequalities in the healthiness of food choices. They found that a higher social class is significantly associated with expenditure on better food which, in turn, is linked to healthier purchasing (Pechey and Monsivais, 2016). Young adult NEETs' misconceptions about what constitutes healthy and unhealthy negatively affect their food choices, thus reducing their nutritional capability. The limited nutritional knowledge of young adult NEETs can prevent them from choosing nutritious food which would enhance their wellbeing.

Apart from nutritional knowledge and education, a shortage of food is also one of the most acute challenges experienced by young adult NEETs. Food shortages are associated with the expiry of the CSG. In this regard, participants in this study reported that they were denied access to various food items at home after they had exited the CSG. Grinspun (2016) confirms this phenomenon, stating that child support grants contribute to household income and reduce poverty in grant recipients' households. However, the absence of certain food items or a shortage of food did not mean that they were experiencing severe hunger or had succumbed to extreme poverty. For example, according to the results of the HHS report for this study, no/little hunger was reported by 84.1% of NEETs, with <1% of NEETs reporting severe hunger. Similarly, the lived poverty index of young adult NEETs was satisfactory, as more than half the participants reported never having experienced food, fuel, water or medication poverty – only cash poverty.

However, cash poverty – as one of the most reported forms of deprivation – raises concerns and is a key challenge in food systems across the globe. With reference to the African continent, the latest Afribarometer report by Mattes (2020) reveals that the most commonly reported deprivation remains the lack of access to cash income, with 79% of respondents confirming this (Mattes, 2020). Similarly, 178 (37%) of the NEET participants in this study reported receiving less than R3001 in total household income per month (before deductions). Although money is not a basic need, food has a monetary value and therefore having money means that young adult NEETS are in a better position to avoid food shortages.

6.4 Activities in which young adult NEETs engage to ensure their nourishment

Although young adult NEETs are faced with many challenges with regard to their nourishment, they still find creative ways to ensure that they are nourished. Participants during the focus group discussions reported working with what they had. For example, as much as there were restrictions on food in their homes, some participants performed household chores to convince their parents or elders to give them access to certain food items. This is a common strategy employed by young adult NEETs to acquire access to food.

Furthermore, in the face of food restrictions at home, young people have friends and other family members who often assist them either with money or with food. The young adult NEETs participating in this study reported that when they had no food, they would go and ask their friends, neighbours and others for money. This type of informal support from friends and family, as portrayed by the participants in this study, is similar to what Nebbitt et al. (2016) call 'reciprocal economies' or sharing of food in an informal setting. This finding is corroborated in a study by Owen and Goldin (2015), which showed that 81% of young people experienced a strong sense of togetherness with other people in their community and this had a strong impact on food security. This is mirrored in some black communities in South Africa where relationships are guided by the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Although their educational attainment levels are low, young adult NEETs still find innovative ways to put food on the table. Some reported using their entrepreneurial initiative and skills to ensure that they could feed themselves. Efforts in this regard reported include doing people's hair, performing casual work (laundry for neighbours) and engaging in small business activities (selling things). However, more direct approaches by young adult NEETs were also adopted, such as farming or agricultural production. NEET participants in the study by Mtengwane (2019) cited agriculture as a source of economic benefit and household food security. However, the NEETs in Langa might have a different view as the majority did not own any land. Moreover, in Langa, each house has only a small piece of land and any space available is generally used to build an extra room since there is a perennial housing shortage in Cape Town due to the steady influx of migrants from other provinces who are looking for work.

Apart from using their entrepreneurial talents, skills and social capital, some young adult NEETs in the focus group discussions reported pursuing some unsafe and/or illegal routes in their quest to acquire food, such as transactional sex (both sexes), drug dealing and stealing money at home. In the exploratory study conducted by Mampane (2018), it would found that

young women's willingness to engage in transactional sex in rural South Africa can be explained by the fact that it enables them to secure food.

Mmari et al. (2019) reported a similar result when exploring how adolescents cope with food insecurity in Baltimore City in the USA. That study's findings showed that while young girls offered sex in exchange for money to buy food, young boys sold drugs and stole. Other factors, such as smoking and alcohol consumption, can also prompt young adult NEETs to participate in nefarious acts to satisfy their addictions. However, the results of this study revealed that only 32% of participants reported being smokers and only 54% reported drinking alcohol. These results suggest that the need for food, rather than the need to support their smoking or drinking habits, is the predominant driver of NEETs engaging in illicit or undesirable behaviour.

6.5 Opportunities open to young adult NEETs to acquire their desired nutrition

The steps that young adult NEETs take to ensure that they are nourished represent their agency. Agency is the capacity of individuals to make independent decisions and choices, and to be able to act on them. Similarly, young adult NEETs display agency with regard to their nourishment as they independently identify and select ways to acquire food. However, it was evident from the NEET participants' responses in this study that their freedom, access and opportunities were limited in their quest for nutrition.

The young adult NEETs participating in this study (especially male participants) reported that they were less likely to participate in decisions regarding what food to buy in their households. Generally, the person who decides what food to buy is the person who pays for the food. Their unemployed status puts young adult NEETs at a disadvantage, as they are not in a position to express their own food preferences. However, cooking and serving food provides opportunities for young adults to take control of the foods that they eat as well as portion sizes. Such opportunities, though, are mostly available to young women and those who cook in their households. Even if they have some freedom or opportunities to be selective in terms of food consumption, young adult NEETs' nourishment comes with conditions (such as chores) attached. One can conclude that young adult NEETs need to engage in creative ways to take control (or partial control) of their own nourishment.

Apart from the social dynamics underpinning and possibly constraining young adult NEETs' access to food, NEETs still have valuable resources at their disposal to facilitate their desired level of nutrition. For example, 98% of young adult NEETs in this study reported having

electricity, which enabled them to cook and put them in a potentially advantageous position. Similarly, 74.7% of the NEET participants reported owning a fridge in their homes, which potentially gave them access to fresh food and the means with which to store food longer. The resources that the NEET participants possessed ultimately added value to their nutritional capability when converted into functionings.



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

This study adds to the discourse on the nutritional capabilities of NEETs. The research looked beyond food availability, providing a broader analysis of basic capabilities. This study recognised that even though young adult NEETs have access to food, there are still factors that improve or limit their chances of accessing the food that they value. Young adult NEETs have limited decision-making powers in terms of food in the household and also poor nutritional knowledge. Their educational attainment levels and unemployed status put them in a disadvantageous position when it comes to food choices. However, the study revealed that young adult NEETs do possess some agency as they often find creative ways to circumvent the disadvantageous position they find themselves in.

The results of this study suggest that young adult NEETs have limited opportunities and freedoms in relation to food and nourishment and have to find and navigate different ways of assuming control over their own nourishment. How NEETs go about this constitutes valuable information as it will inform food system policies and how these can be used to remove the constraints impeding NEETs' nutritional freedoms and capabilities. Future research could extend this study by exploring the nutritional capabilities of young adult NEETs living in different geographical locations and/or in urban and rural areas, respectively.

7.2 Limitations

This study had some limitations. It only covered young adult NEETs residing in Langa township in the Western Cape. As the study was location-specific with a small sample size, it is difficult to generalise the results at a national level. In addition, the study focused only on young adult NEETs, with no comparisons made with non-NEETs.

7.3 Recommendations

As young adult NEETs are distinct from other groups of young people in terms of available opportunities and access to food, they require a more direct policy approach. For example, young people exit the social grant programme when they turn 18, with no plans or programmes in place to help them make the transition. A programme that empowers young people to take

charge of their own development and nutrition is needed. The rising number of NEETs in South Africa could potentially be reduced through the introduction of relevant education and skills programmes. Education and skills programmes specifically directed at NEETs can lead to greater sustainability and independence, which in turn will expand their freedoms and opportunities in relation to food.

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) could play a crucial role in improving the current circumstances of young adult NEETs by recruiting selected development agencies from both government and the private sector to collaborate in the provision of tailored education and skills programmes. Moreover, agriculture offers much scope for directly addressing hunger and food security. In this regard, more agricultural programmes administered by young people will be a crucial step towards broadening young adults NEETs' knowledge and nutritional capabilities.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of permission to use existing data

Appendix B: Covid-19 protocols observed during focus group data collection.

Appendix C: Information sheet

Appendix D: Ethics clearance letter

Appendix E: Confidentiality binding form



Appendix A: Letter of permission to use existing data



FACULTY OF COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF DIETETICS AND NUTRITION

10 October 2019

The Chairperson
Higher Degrees Committee
Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences
University of the Western Cape
Robert Sobukwe Road
BELLVILLE
7535


Dear Sir

PERMISSION TO DO SECONDARY DATA ANALYSES ON EXISTING DATA

I am the PI on the research project "Association of the implementation of the South African Health promotion levy (HPL) with dietary intake and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) in adults aged 18-39 years living in Langa." (BMREC 18/6/2).

Hereby I grant permission to Akhona Rasmeni (student number 3457216) to use the data generated by this survey towards his Masters mini-thesis. He will be provided with an extraction of anonymized data for selected variables identified in his proposal, pertaining to participants aged 18-25 years. The primary study included participants aged 18-39 years.

Kind regards


RINA SWART
Supervisor

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A place of quality,
a place to grow, from hope
to action through knowledge

Appendix B: Covid-19 protocols observed during focus group data collection.

South Africa is currently under Level-1 COVID-19 lockdown.

Please note the updated UWC advisory for community-based research.

Researchers should adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Before engaging with any community-based research, researchers should complete the UWC COVID-19 screening (<https://uwc.wizzpass.com>); this is to be done daily for the duration of the research period.

UWC WIZZPASS COVID-19 Screening (staff/fieldworkers)

Question	Yes	No
i) Have you tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 10 days?		
ii) Have you had close contact with or cared for someone diagnosed with Covid-19 within the last 14 days?		
iii) Do you have any of the following new or worsening symptoms:		
Fever		
Cough		
Shortness of breath		
Sore throat		
Unexplained fatigue		
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhoea/abdominal pain		
Body aches		
Loss of smell or taste		
Severe redness of eyes		
iv) Temperature reading (degrees C)		

2. Study participants should (preferably) be screened for a fever before the start of the interview and the COVID-19 screening questions completed.

UWC COVID-19 Screening (participants)

Question	Yes	No
i) Have you tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 10 days?		
ii) Have you had close contact with or cared for someone diagnosed with Covid-19 within the last 14 days?		
iii) Do you have any of the following new or worsening symptoms:		
Fever		
Cough		
Shortness of breath		
Sore throat		
Unexplained fatigue		
Nausea/vomiting/diarrhoea/abdominal pain		
Body aches		
Loss of smell or taste		
Severe redness of eyes		
iv) Temperature reading (degrees C)		

3. Maintain physical distancing (1.5-1.8m) when visiting your research site. Do interviews outdoors if possible (whilst maintaining confidentiality requirements)
4. Maintain physical distancing with interviewees. We advise that you interview one person at a time. If focus groups are to be interviewed, adhere to physical distancing guidelines.
5. Wear a mask and replace masks after each participant.
6. When required, make disposable masks available to the interviewees.
7. Use a hand sanitizer for both the interviewer and interviewee(s) and wipe surfaces/equipment and chairs with sanitizer before and after use.
8. When physical measurements are to be taken, surgical gloves may be worn – depending on the nature and clinical practice guidelines; replace after each participant.

--
 Prof Burtram C. Fielding *Ph.D., Pr.Sci.Nat*
 Director: Research Development
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Appendix C: Information sheet



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INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Nutritional capabilities of the youth

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Mr Akhona Rasmeni, a registered Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a young adult in the age group 18-25 years and living in Langa. The purpose of this research project is to understand the nutrition capabilities of youth (aged 18-25 years of age) who are not engaged in employment, education or training (NEETs).

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to make yourself available for a focus group discussion where we will talk about the food situation in your community, and how you decide on what food to eat as well as what you think is necessary to make healthy food choices.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researchers undertake to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, we will place a code on the forms so that we can link the different forms of one individual to each other, but your name will not be recorded on these forms. To ensure your confidentiality, all paper copies of questionnaires will be stored in a locked cabinet, the consent form (with your name) cannot be linked to the code on the forms, and the computerised information will be stored using password-protected computer files. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

This study will use focus groups therefore the extent to which your identity will remain confidential is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

What are the risks of this research?

There may be some risks from participating in this research study. All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about the nutrition situation in Langa. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the nutrition situation and nutritional capabilities of youth. We hope to inform policies that may help ensure healthy food environments for all.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by *Prof Rina Swart from the Department of Dietetics and Nutrition* at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact my supervisor Prof Rina Swart at 0834824113 or rswart@uwc.ac.za.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof Mulugeta Dinbaba
Acting Director
Institute for Social Development
School of Government
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535



This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Research Development, UWC, Tel : 021 959 2988, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

WESTERN CAPE

REFERENCE NUMBER: HS19_10_36

Appendix D: Ethics clearance letter



OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR: RESEARCH
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION DIVISION

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14 February 2020

Mr A Rasmeni
Institute for Social Development
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: HS19/10/36

Project Title: Nutritional capabilities of young people not in employment, education and training (NEETs) in Langa, Western Cape.

Approval Period: 07 February 2020 – 07 February 2021

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report in good time for annual renewal.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape*

NHREC REGISTRATION NUMBER - 130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

Appendix E: Confidentiality binding form



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FOCUS GROUP CONFIDENTIALITY BINDING FORM

Title of Research Project:

Langa: Nutritional capabilities of the youth

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone by the researchers. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits. I understand that confidentiality is dependent on participants' in the Focus Group maintaining confidentiality.

I hereby agree to uphold the confidentiality of the discussions in the focus group by not disclosing the identity of other participants or any aspects of their contributions to members outside of the group.

Participant's name.....

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee
University of the Western Cape,
Private Bag X17
BELLVILLE
7535