

The association between food insecurity and depressive symptoms among caregivers of adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) during COVID-19 in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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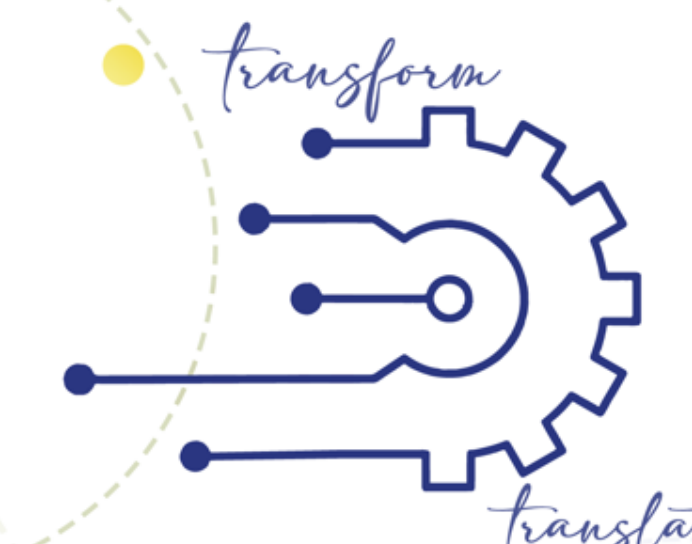
South African Medical Research Council



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TRANSFORMING RESEARCH
TRANSLATION-
REIMAGINING
PUBLIC HEALTH EVIDENCE,
POLICIES, AND PRACTICE



BACKGROUND

- Burden of caregiving coupled with socio-economic issues during COVID-19 affects caregiver mental health.
- Identifying mental health predictors can inform COVID-19 recovery plans.
- Household food insecurity (HFI) strongly predicts depression.
- Scarce evidence of HFI-depression link among South African carers during COVID-19.

OBJECTIVES

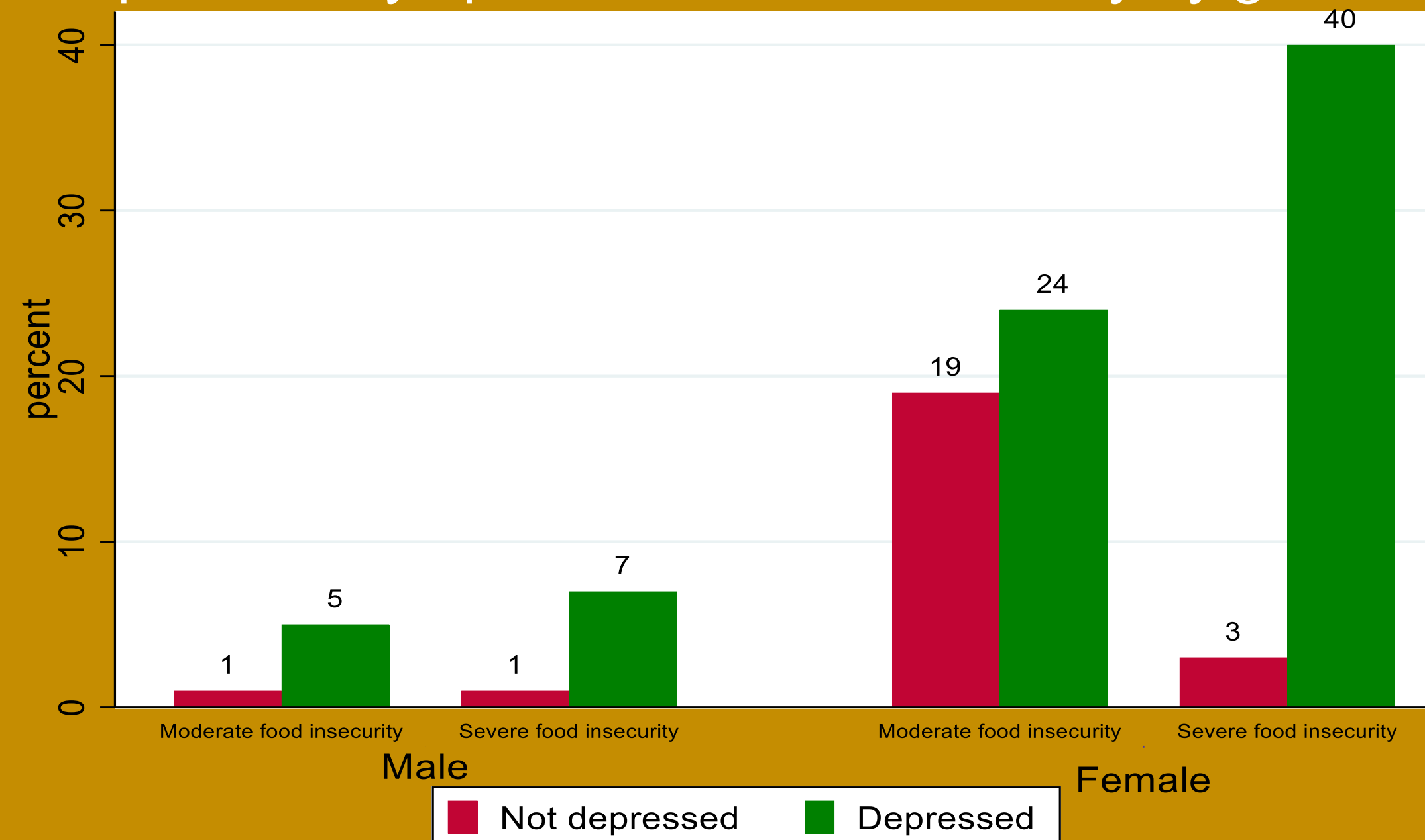
To examine the association between household food insecurity and depressive symptoms among caregivers of adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) in KwaZulu Natal during the COVID-19 pandemic

METHODOLOGY

- Secondary data analysis from baseline data of N=100 participants in the CWEL trial (Nov-Dec 2021) in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Depressive symptoms assessed using CESD-10 (≥ 12 indicates depression).
- Severe food insecurity assessed using FIES (≥ 7 indicates severe HFI).
- Data explored using descriptive stats; robust Poisson regression model used, adjusting for gender, relationship, and income (STATA V17).

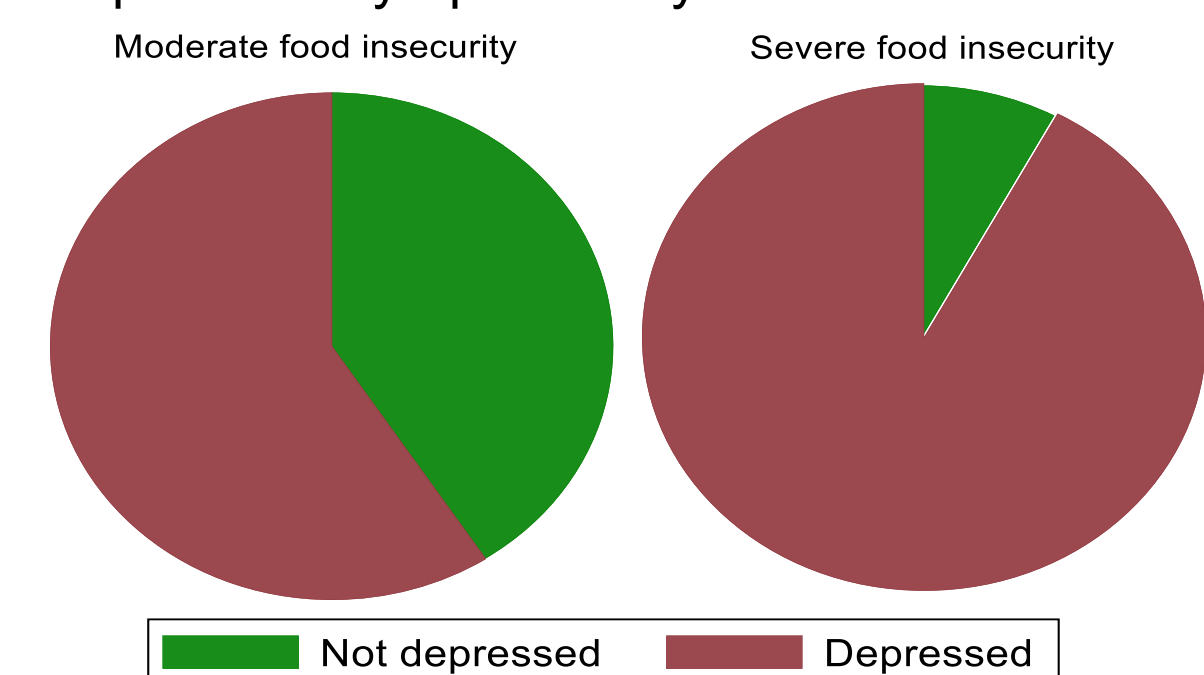
RESULTS

Depressive symptoms and food insecurity by gender



- Median age 43 (IQR 33-48), 84 female.
- 51% severe HFI and 76% depressive symptoms.
- Positive relationship between severe HFI and depressive symptoms (IRR = 1.431, $p = 0.002$).
- Those with severe HFI had higher depressive symptoms (61.84% vs. 38.16% with moderate).
- Carers in relationships had lower incidence rate (0.812, $p=0.043$) of depressive symptoms compared to those not in a relationship.

Depressive symptoms by level of food insecurity



Frequency table by Depressive symptoms

Variables	Category	Not depressed	Depressed
		24	76
Age median (IQR)		38 (29.5, 49.5)	44 (34.5, 49)
Race	Black/African	22 (92%)	74 (97%)
	Indian/Asian	1 (4%)	0 (0%)
	Coloured	1 (4%)	2 (3%)
Tertiary qualifications	No	14 (58%)	61 (80%)
	Yes	7 (29%)	15 (20%)
	N/A	3 (13%)	0 (0%)
Medical conditions	1 or 2 condition	22 (92%)	61 (80%)
	3 to 5 condition	2 (8%)	15 (20%)
Disability	No	21 (88%)	63 (83%)
	Yes	3 (13%)	13 (17%)
Food Insecurity	Moderate	20 (83%)	29 (38%)
	Severe	4 (17%)	47 (62%)
Gender	Male	2 (8%)	12 (16%)
	Female	22 (92%)	64 (84%)
HIV status	Negative	7 (29%)	8 (11%)
	Positive	17 (71%)	68 (89%)
Relationship	No	5 (21%)	36 (47%)
	Yes	19 (79%)	40 (53%)

CONCLUSIONS

- HFI screening as first step to identify caregivers at risk; need for referral to psycho-social support.
- Strengthen support networks, economic empowerment for positive mental health among caregivers.

ADVOCACY MESSAGE

Prioritize vulnerable caregivers in the government's COVID-19 economic recovery efforts.

Acknowledgement

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