Reviewer's report

Title: Influence of gender and rising food prices on poor, pregnant women's eating and food provisioning practices in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Reviewer: Lisa Schubert

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The authors are to be congratulated for an interested piece of ethnographic research carried out in a demanding setting. This manuscript is an excellent example of research that adds a human face to food insecurity literature, and illustrates precisely what Pine & De Souza (2013) have recently called for when they said:

"it is incumbent upon scholars to frame food insecurity using a lens that accurately reflects the lived experiences of those experiencing hunger, and the most effective potential solutions. To do so, the research agenda of food scholars must be repositioned to focus squarely on forming partnerships with communities experiencing food insecurity and using their voices to guide activism."

Comments and suggestions are given below. Minor Essential Revisions are provided here.

1. This manuscript is a welcome addition to the food insecurity literature. Pregnant women's particular vulnerability to malnutrition is highlighted. That it addresses the problem of malnutrition in slum dwelling women in Dhaka, Bangladesh is important because this literature is currently dominated by literature that seeks to measure the problem rather than to understand it. This research provides local knowledge of pregnant women and other informants in order to better understand the interactions between micro level and macro level factors in determining the level of food insecurity experienced.

2. As is the practice with ethnographic research, multiple complementary methods were adopted to allow for a deep understanding of the participants food insecurity-related experiences. Participant observation was mentioned, but it was not stated whether this included shopping, food preparation, meal times or other activities. This could be clarified.

3. The interpretation of data is well balanced. Quotations from the interviews have been used throughout to illustrate and support interpretation.

That the women were adept at repeating biomedically-based nutrition knowledge warrants further discussion. Did the authors consider any potential disadvantages for the privileging of the biomedically-orientated knowledge? What does the absence of traditional knowledge/health concepts in their conversations indicate? How do the women reconcile the 2 bodies of knowledge-biomedical and traditional? Could the presence of a Western researcher have
unintentionally stifled discussion or openness on traditional/lay beliefs?

While the dominant thesis of the paper - that the women are unable to follow nutrition advice because of the high cost of foods prevents their access- is sound, it cannot be assumed that the women might not have quite different ideas of a ‘good diet’ to those they have learnt about in health care settings.

4. Data collection and analytical methods are generally very well described. Little is said about how how rapport was developed with the women, or about the setting for the interviews.

Strategies used to ensure trustworthiness of the ethnographic data was detailed.

5. The study design was well suited to the purpose of the research.

6. The manuscript is well written, although a close reading picked up several places when clarity could be improved, or where explanations could have appeared earlier than they did. See suggestions below:

Title: The paper addresses ‘gender roles’ rather than gender per se, and it is suggested that the paper’s title be changed to reflect this.

Abstract: check for spelling. In the Results section “women are ‘less able’” needs to be modified [‘less able’ than what? Or simply say unable]

Page 7: ‘dias’ is mentioned for the first time, but the translation appears later on page 9

Page 10: misplaced apostrophe & missing comma: Participants’ knowledge of what to eat, according to general biomedical recommendations [7] to ensure a healthy pregnancy and childbirth, was universal.

Page 14: consider rewriting sentence: [Due to fear of being hurt, weakness, husbands requiring they leave work, and illness while pregnant, women left their jobs.] Would ‘injured’ be a more appropriate word than ‘hurt’? Is the fear of something happening in the workplace due to hazardous employment or simply from being outside the home? Surely not all women expressed all reasons?

Page 15: [One older dias claimed that acquiring high quality and adequate quantities of food was easier in rural areas and that this absence was impacting pregnant women’s nutrition in the urban slums:] Explain what ‘this absence’ refers to.

Page 16(1) : Clarify meaning […]rural people could be somewhat self-sufficient regarding food provisioning.] In this instance you are referring to a ‘food self-sufficient’ population.

Food provisioning refers, not only to acquiring foods, but the household planning, preparation and serving of meals. You sentence is referring specifically to the acquiring of foods.

Page 16 (2): Remove double quotation marks [Most respondents claimed the sentiment that “poor men cannot afford (things like) milk and fish everyday”]

Replace ‘claimed’ with ‘expressed’

Further comment (Discretionary revisions)
No mention is made of intra-household food distribution, despite this being a significant focus of nutritional anthropological studies. Any data that explores this dimension could potentially complement the details provided in the paper, but is not essential.

References

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Needs some language corrections before being published

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that i have no competing interests.