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Intrahousehold Power Dynamics and the Willingness to Pay for Fortified Maize Flour and Biofortified Beans in Rwanda

Abstract

This study investigates how intrahousehold power dynamics affect spouses' willingness to allocate resources and purchase relatively expensive fortified maize flour and biofortified beans in informal settlements in Rwanda. It also assesses how increased intrahousehold power dynamics in relation to income influence mothers' and fathers' willingness to purchase the (bio)fortified products for their under-five aged children. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the purchase behaviour of pregnant women and lactating mothers, majority of whom are presently consuming conventional unfortified maize flour and beans. It does this by assessing their willingness to pay for the (bio)fortified versions of these products, and how increased monetary bargaining power relative to their spouses and access to decent or living wages influence their inclination to pay for such products. In general, we find evidence that intrahousehold power dynamics lead to engendered purchase outcomes. Women with higher economic resources and are food purchase decision makers exert more bargaining power and willingness to pay for the (bio)fortified food. An exception is pregnant women and lactating mothers who revealed significant unwillingness to pay except those who earn decent income. However, men reveal a disconnection between nutrition and masculinity as they are less willing to pay for the (bio)fortified products, even when they have higher economic resources than their spouses, or when they are sole food purchase decision makers. In contrast to women, men tend to allocate monetary resources away from their under-five aged children, which result from discriminatory gender norms that are in disconnection with improved household nutritional outcomes. We advocate for community-level interventions that incorporate men in nutrition intervention programmes to help in reshaping or eliminating patriarch and discriminating gender norms, and allowing the evolution of better societal norms that can propel household nutrition security and outcomes.

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