

# **MATERIAL DEPRIVATION AND FOOD INSECURITY**

## **PERCEIVED EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

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November 29th, 2017

# Agenda

1. Theoretical framework
  - a) Food insecurity, sustainability and material well-being
  - b) Effects of food insecurity on mental health and well-being
2. Poverty and food insecurity in Portugal
3. The present research
4. Implications of food insecurity on parents' emotional well-being
5. Final remarks

# 1. Theoretical framework

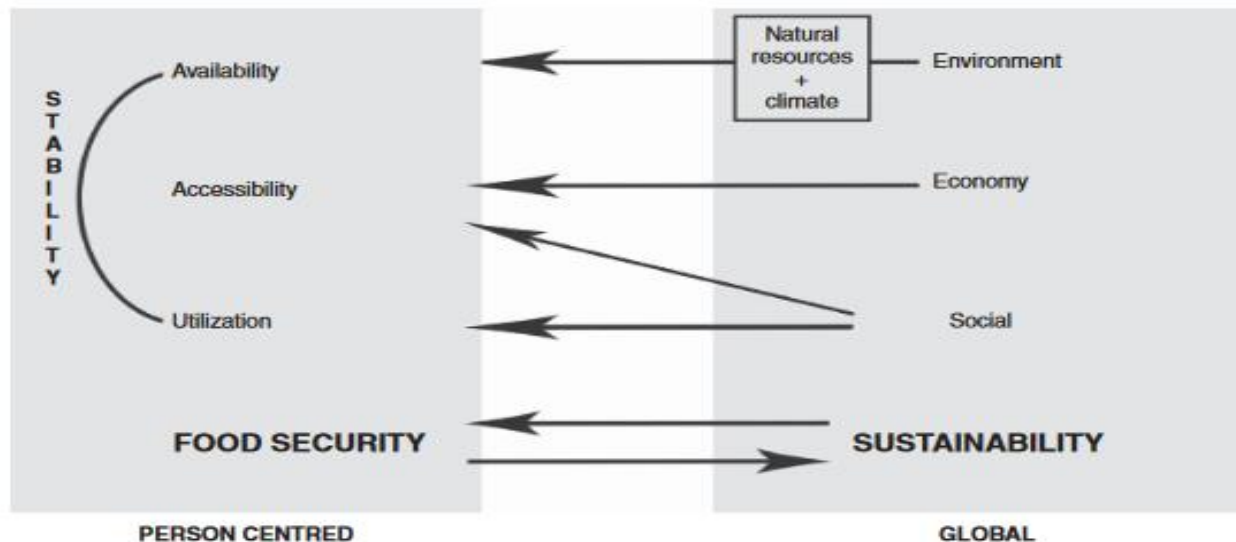
## Food insecurity, sustainability and material well-being

### Food security

*FS exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. (FAO, 1996, 2001)*

### Revision of former definitions

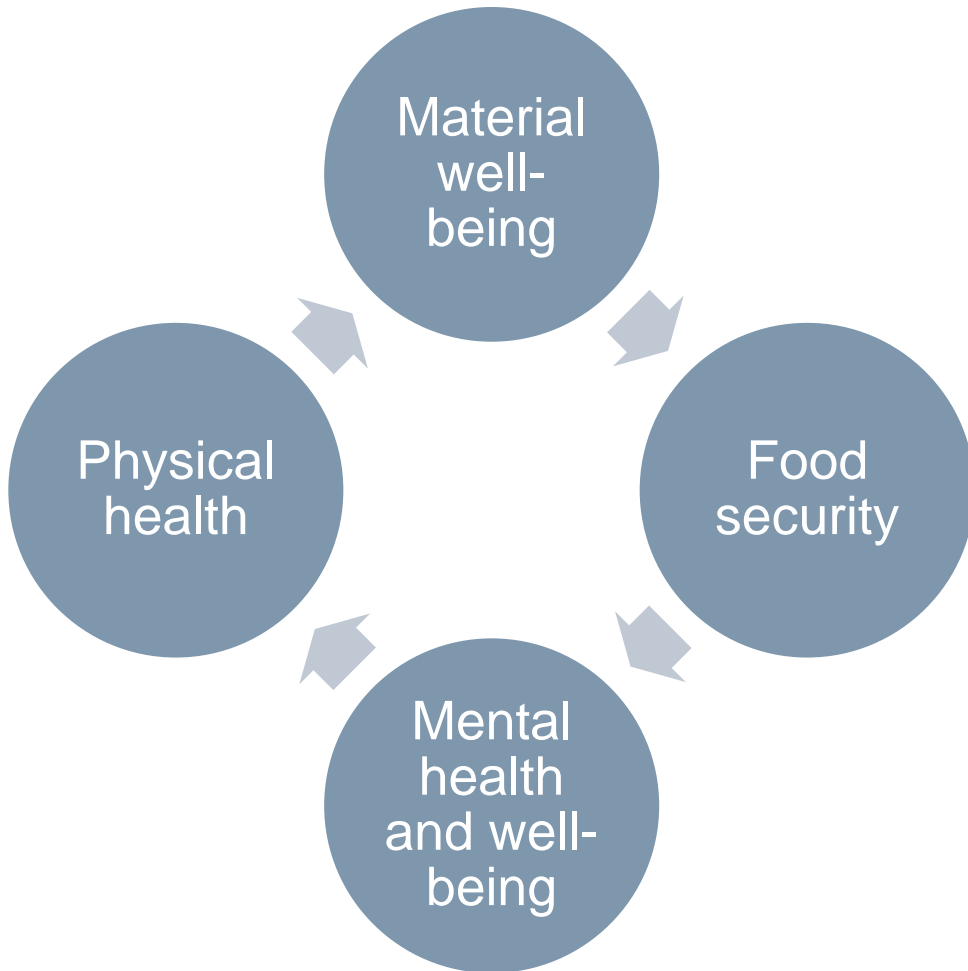
- Shifting scales, from the aggregate to the individual/familial level
- Including notions of sustainability (intergenerational justice) but not without tensions



(Berry et al. 2015)

# 1. Theoretical framework

## Effects of food insecurity on mental health and well-being

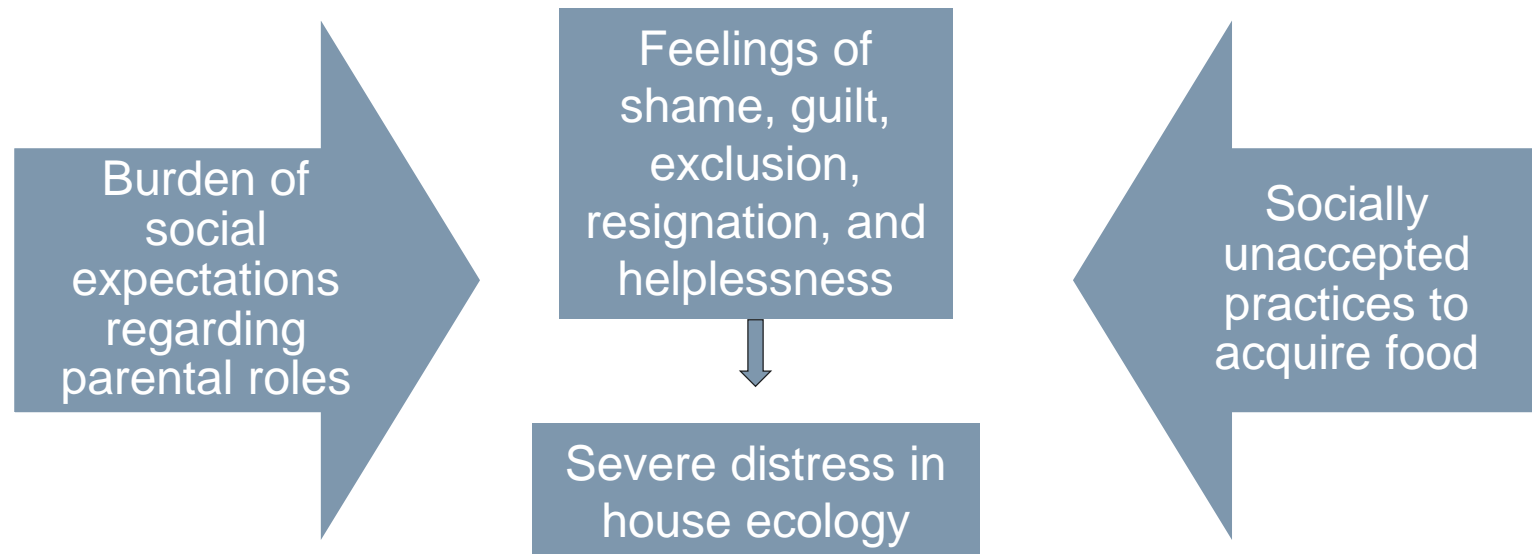
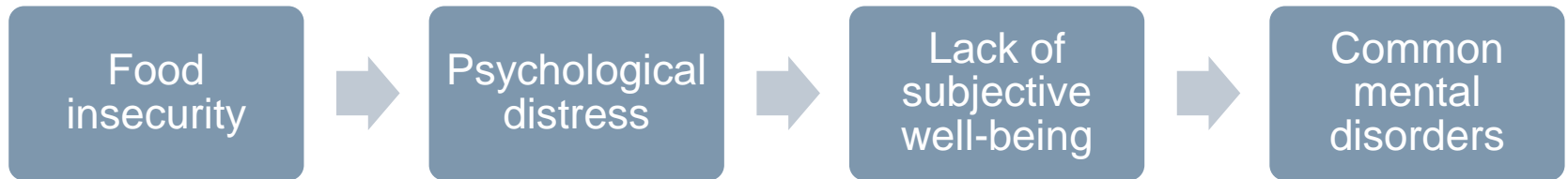


- **Common mental disorders**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alcohol abuse

# 1. Theoretical framework

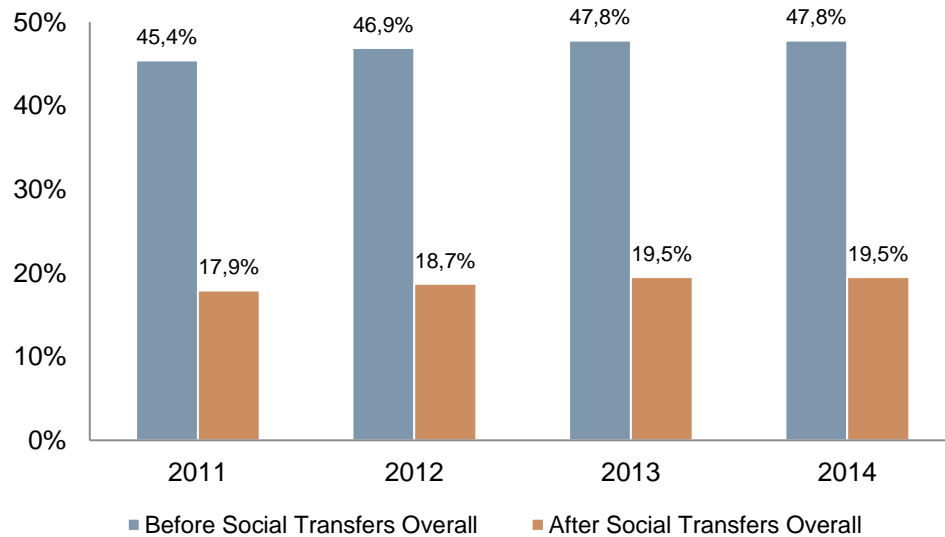
## Effects of food insecurity on mental health and well-being



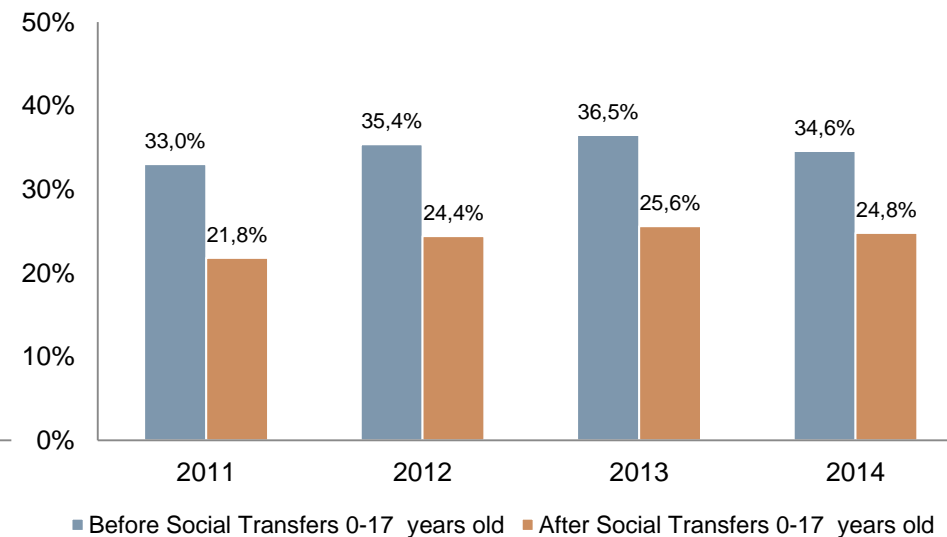
## 2. Poverty and food insecurity in Portugal

### Risk of poverty (60% median) before and after social transfers

#### Overall population



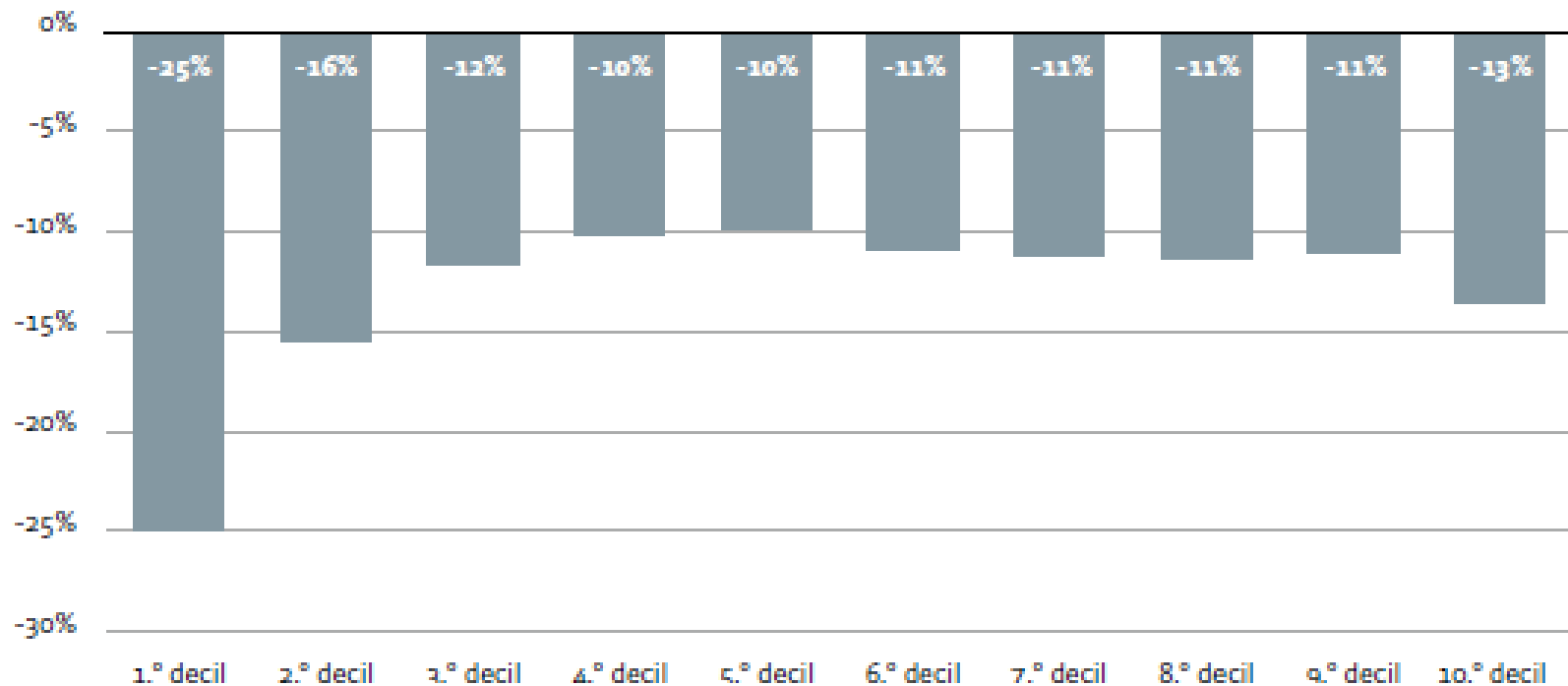
#### Population 0-17 years old



Source: EU-SILC 2011-2014

## 2. Poverty and food insecurity in Portugal

Change in Available Income per Equivalent Adult  
(% per decile 2009-2015)



Source: EU-SILC 2009-2014,  
Farinha Rodrigues et al, 2016

### 3. The present research

#### Method

- Subsample of cases collected in the *Families and Food Poverty* research project
- In-depth interviews in food insecure households with parents of young people (11-15 years-old) from the Greater Lisbon Area
- Recruitment through schools/NGO's
- Thematic analysis: (a) life story and current living conditions; (b) work and living standards; (c) food (in)security; (d) physical problems and diseases; (e) emotional well-being; and (f) depressive and anxiety symptoms.

Case identification	Gender	Age	Family structure	Employment status	Location
Sara	Female	29	Mother, father, children: 11(f), 2(f)	Part-time store operator	Shantytown outside Lisbon
Carla	Female	39	Mother, children: 15(m), 5(f)	Unemployed	Flat in rural area (rented)
Eva	Female	46	Mother, father, children: 12(f), 10(m), 2(f)	Bakery assistant	Detached house in rural area (mortgage)
Ana	Female	42	Mother, father, grandmother children: 13(f), 10(m), 2(f)	Unemployed	Flat in rural area (mortgage)



## 4. Implications of food insecurity on parents' emotional well-being

### Sara - *Feeling the squeeze*

“(...) right now I am not well psychologically, and that also takes a toll, it does, people don't have any notion but its really, really bad, we are working and I have always worked and don't have any savings, don't have any money to take a trip, to buy a gift for my daughters, or, even to buy everyday essentials, which I really, really struggle to afford...”

“I can't and referring to food, yes, buying meat, I started to buy less, in everything, I reduced in everything, really.”

“I did it and I arrived with my shopping bag full, that is to say, it allowed to eat yesterday and today, obviously now, then I will have to find another way, isn't it, it won't be enough, but I did it.”

## 4. Implications of food insecurity on parents' emotional well-being

### Carla – *Money isn't enough*

“It's not enough, Money is not enough. Sometimes we get to the middle of the month and I ran out money, I have to...Sometimes I ask for an advance from my boss, sometimes, it's like it is – I ask for help. I have asked for help from many friends.”

“And so I buy, for example, if I am shopping for meat, fish....(...) and fruit, then I can't buy fruit. I will only buy meat, fish, potatoes, rice. (...). Sometimes fish is missing, and that is something they miss but sometimes fish is missing because it is too expensive and we don't buy fish.”

“I didn't even went hungry...that would be better my mother was hungry many times, many times I ate bread with butter or bread with cheese. She wouldn't eat to have something for us. (...) I also didn't...well...If I realize that I don't have enough to feed my children I will go without food to give them.”

## 5. Final Remarks

### Food insecurity and emotional well-being

- Economic hardship hampers parents' management of everyday life, making it hard to accomplish social expectations related to parental roles.
- Food insecurity seems to negatively affect parents' emotional well-being
- All narratives share similar features concerning the experience of negative feelings by the caregivers
- Being unable to appropriately feed their children is seen by parents as a failure in fulfilling their social roles as caregivers.
- Metaphor of "Food as love"

## 5. Final Remarks

### Collective and individual narratives

- Some experiences of poverty and hardship are recursive, resulting in lower expectations towards the future and perpetuating the cycle of poverty.
- By contrast, those for whom austerity and economic crisis meant a radical change to their living conditions seem to be more responsive and resilient, although fluctuating between sadness and revolt.
- On the one hand, material deprivation leading to food insecurity may exacerbate previously existing mental health problems and disorders.
- On the other hand, individuals without preexisting problems may become mentally unhealthy due to the lack of emotional well-being deriving from material deprivation and food insecurity.

# Thank you!

More info @ [www.foodinhardtimes.com](http://www.foodinhardtimes.com)

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