Changes in Socioeconomic Status Indicators and Common Mental Disorders Among Mothers in

Rural Pakistan

Abstract

Previous research has established a strong link between low socioeconomic status (SES) and common mental disorders (CMDs), especially in low- or middle-income countries. This study explores how changing SES over time influences mental health outcomes by investigating the impact of changes in various SES indicators on common mental disorders (CMDs) among mothers in rural Pakistan. Using longitudinal data from the Bachpan study, the relationship between shifts in SES indicators (household assets, debt, and food insecurity) and changes in CMD symptoms (depression and anxiety) among mothers (n= 802) was assessed. Increases in assets were associated with decreases in depression symptoms, but solely among mothers in the lower SES group. Chronic debt and food insecurity were linked to elevated levels of depression and anxiety, with variations observed across SES groups. Surprisingly, getting out of debt or food insecurity did not immediately translate into positive mental health outcomes, indicating that the psychological effect of financial stressors is long-lasting and interventions that focus on prevention would be beneficial.