

Nutrition literacy in post-secondary students experiencing food insecurity

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Food insecurity in post-secondary students

- Includes students attending community colleges, colleges & universities
- Ranges from 20% to as high as 82% (Freudenberg et al., 2019; Jomaa et al., 2022; Martinez et al., 2020; Morgan et al., 2021; Nazmi et al., 2022; Olfert et al., 2021; Shi et al., 2021)
- Associated with:
 - Increased odds of having depression & anxiety (Coffino et al., 2021; Oh et al., 2022)
 - Lower chance of graduating (Wolfson et al., 2022)
 - Lower self-ratings of mental & physical health (Willis, 2022)

Food insecurity

- Limited access to food due to a lack of financial resources

(Frongillo et al, 2017; Tarasuk et al, 2018)

Nutrition literacy

- Ability to obtain, use & understand knowledge about nutrition to make decisions about what kinds of food to eat

(Silk et al., 2008)

Nutrition literacy

Food shopping

Meal preparation

Cooking

Self-efficacy

EXCHANGE



Food Insecurity and Community College Students

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Sample with high rate
of food insecurity

- 77.2% of students reported food insecurity
- 36.8% severe
- 40.4% moderate

Research question

What is the level of nutrition literacy among a group of postsecondary students that has been found to have a high level of food insecurity?



Methods

Survey (n=824)

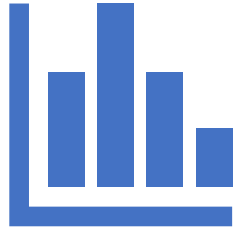
- Adapted questions from the Critical Nutrition Literacy Scale
- Measures engagement with information about nutrition as well as concerns with barriers to healthy eating

(Guttersrud et al., 2013; Guttersrud et al., 2015)

Focus groups

- Experiences with nutrition literacy, including how they obtained information about nutrition, healthy eating and how to make decisions regarding what to eat

Results



Survey responses

n = 334 (41% response rate)



Focus groups

6 focus groups, n=30
3-7 students per group

Results

Survey item	Agree to strongly agree
I am concerned that there is not a wide selection of healthy food at the college	17%
I believe my body tells me what it needs in terms of nutrients, regardless of researchers' opinions about this.	28%
I am influenced by the nutrition advice that I read about in newspapers, magazines, or the internet.	26%



Themes

- Interest in healthy eating
- Need for education to address nutrition & financial literacy

Need for nutrition literacy programs

Need for student programs that focus on planning, selecting, preparing & eating healthy foods

Programs can help alleviate food insecurity in students (Begley et al., 2019; Jomaa et al., 2019)

Nutrition literacy program found to impact food security behaviours (Morgan et al., 2021)

Semester-long nutrition course that incorporated lectures with kitchen lab sessions associated with decreasing food insecurity by over 20% (Matias et al., 2021)



Need for nutrition literacy programs

More research is needed on impact of nutrition literacy programs

Researchers need to consider using a participatory action approach that includes students, to ensure that student needs are being addressed

Need for economic support

- Food security is an economic issue as well
- Schools could ensure healthy & affordable options are available
- Focusing on education only does not address high cost of food, lack of income supports for postsecondary students (Spoel & Derkatch, 2022)
- Postsecondary students may need additional financial supports
- In the United States, students have limited access to SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) (Landry et al., 2022)

Questions?

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