



FOOD INSECURITY AWARENESS, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, AND ACTIONS ON A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

Heather Adams, & Mary Olle, Ph.D.

Food, Nutrition, & Dietetics, School of Human Sciences, Stephen F. Austin State University



ABSTRACT

The purpose of this pilot study was to understand student awareness of food insecurities. Subjects for the study were students enrolled in a Foundations in Human Sciences course at a university located in East Texas (n=55). Students were asked to complete an online survey concerning knowledge of food insecurities, impacts of budgeting on food buying, previous personal food insecurity, skipped or had less nutritious meals due to the cost, and the food pantry on campus.



INTRODUCTION

Food insecurities are prevalent around the globe, and universities and college campuses are not immune. The College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) conducted research indicating that food insecurity among college students is a greater problem than it is in the general population (Henry, 2017). Rising tuition and textbook costs, rent, and food costs may leave students vulnerable to food insecurity. Borelli found across the country, 59 percent of college students may suffer from malnutrition (Borelli, 2014).

There is a negative social stigma that accompanies food insecurities. This stigma acknowledges the need for food pantries, yet the talk of food insecurities along with the need of spreading awareness about the issue may be subtle. In a UCLA research group some of the college students referred to this stigma as an invisible issue on campus that was not openly discussed, and they expressed a desire for spaces to openly discuss food insecurities (Watson, Malan, Glik, & Martinez, 2017). This “invisible issue” is what lead researchers to explore this topic further in a classroom setting.

REVIEW

Food Insecurities

Characteristics of food insecurity include reduced caloric intake, not having access to healthy food, lack of variety in diet, hunger without eating, and reduced weight due to not consuming enough calories. (Henry, 2017). It is not the matter of being able to buy food, but being capable of buying food that contains variety, the necessary macro- and micro- nutrients, and is satisfying. Without these components, the results have been associated with lower academic achievements, behavioral and attention problems, and adverse psychosocial development among students (Payne-Sturges, Tjaden, Calderia, Vincent, & Arria, 2018).

In the past 50 years, the gap in earnings between those with and without a degree has grown (O’Neill & Maguire, 2017). Researchers have found that when low-income households are unable to meet their survival needs (i.e., food, housing, health, heating, and transportation), food budgets are sacrificed first (O’Neill & Maguire, 2017).

Food Pantries on Campuses

The main resource helping to battle food insecurity on college campuses is the on-campus food pantry. Food pantries are typically nonprofit organizations open to serving meals or providing food to students who are in need. Many pantries are confidential and reject no one. They run on volunteers and donations and may be affiliated with local or regional food pantries. The need for food pantries is found by the fact of the average cost of tuition and fees has increased more than 95 percent statewide since 2004. (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board).

At least 14 colleges across Texas have opened a food pantry. The food pantry offers canned food and staples along with fresh produce and dairy when available.



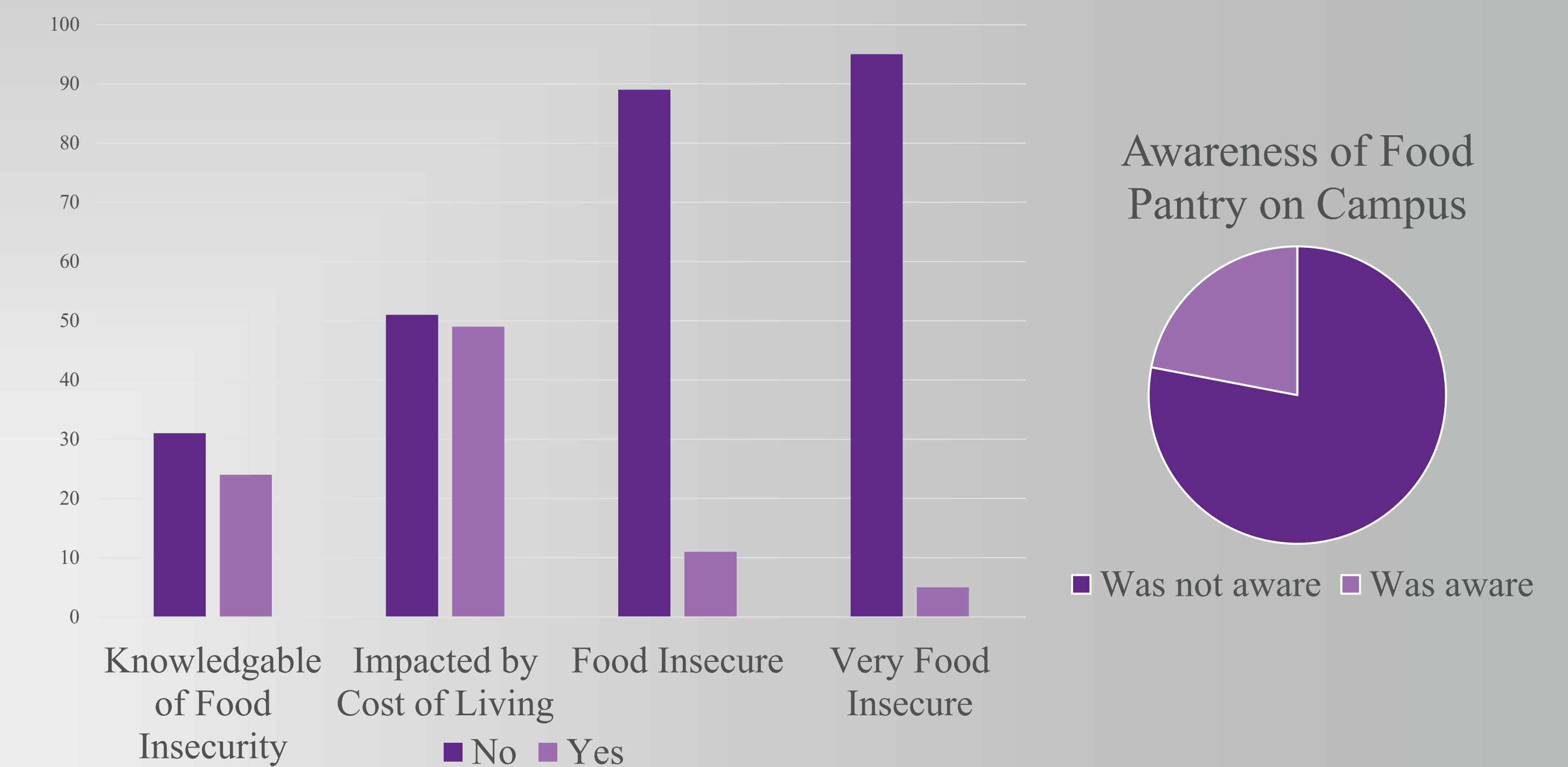
METHODOLOGY

A voluntary, anonymous, online survey was presented to students within the Foundations to Human Sciences class. This survey contained 15 questions about their knowledge of food insecurities, impacts of budgeting with college, if they have been food insecure, skipped or had less nutritious meals due to the cost, and the food pantry on campus.

Participant Inclusion Criteria	Participant Demographics
Both residential and nonresidential students	Total n=55
Students currently attending Stephen F. Austin State University	Residential undergraduates: 39 Nonresidential undergraduates: 16
Students within Foundations of Human Sciences (HMS-100)	Over the age of 18

RESULTS

Data Results



Food insecure: reducing the quality, variety, and desirability of their diet, but the amount of food intake and normal eating patterns were not disrupted.

Very food secure: eating schedules are disrupted due to lack of resources to provide for food.

CONCLUSION

As a result of this survey, students in the class gained awareness of this invisible issue and the results were shared relayed to the food pantry. This information will help by further developing the way the food pantry on campus reaches out to students. As college tuition rates rise food insecurity will be on the rise as well. While tuition rates and family incomes are mostly out of the students’ control, colleges can help by providing information about the food pantry.

REFERENCES

- Borelli, L. (2014). Food insecurity: Why 59% of college students may suffer from malnutrition. Medical Daily. Retrieved from <https://www.medicaldaily.com/food-insecurity-why-59-college-students-may-suffer-malnutrition-268109>.
- Henry, L. (2017). Understanding food insecurity among college students: Experience, motivation, and local solutions. *Annals of Anthropological Practice*, 41(1), 6-19.
- O’Neill, M., & Maguire, J. (2017). College students self-reported food insecurity and correlations with health and academic performance. *Journal of Behavioral and Social Sciences*, 4, 34-40.
- Payne-Sturges, D., Tjaden, A., Calderia, K., Vincent, K., & Arria, A. (2018). Student hunger on campus: Food insecurity among college students and implications for academic institutions. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 32(2), 349-354.
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2015). Overview: Tuition deregulation and tuition set asides. Retrieved from <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/reports/pdf/6487.PDF>.
- Watson, T., Malan, H., Glik, D., & Martinez, S. (2017). College students identify university support for basic needs and life skills as key ingredient in addressing food insecurity on campus. *California Agriculture, University of California*, 71(3), 130-138.