

## ISSUES IN FOOD SECURITY AT MUK AYUN VILLAGE, SARAWAK, MALAYSIA

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**ABSTRACT:** Food is essential to human well-being and development. Increase food production remains a key strategy for alleviating global food insecurity. But even though global food production has remained above demand in the last half-century, today around one billion people do not have enough to eat, and another billion lack adequate nutrition. Research has shown that villagers from Kampung Muk Ayun do not understand or in other words have failed to see that they are facing issues derived out of food security which are food consumption patterns, the diet that are both imbalanced and unhealthy. This study aims to evaluate the understanding of needs in accessing food security among Kampung Muk Ayun villagers. Based on a review of literature on food security, the researcher constructs semi-structured questions used in interviews in order to further address the issues in the study. Analysis of the responses shows that the villagers are indeed facing food insecurity problems that even they themselves are not aware of. It is recommended, on this basis, villagers should build awareness and that responsible agencies should also work together to improve the quality of life. Further research is needed to identify more factors that could lead people from rural areas to face food security issues.

**Keywords:** Food Security, Food Consumption, Nutrition, Unhealthy Diet

### INTRODUCTION

Food security, as described by the World Food Summit (WFS) and the Food and Agriculture Organization, exists when all people have physical and economic access to adequate, healthy, and nutritious food that meets their dietary and nutritional needs for an active life at all times [1]. Contrary to this is food insecurity, a condition that occurs when individuals, families, households, and nations experience the inability and failure to have a food supply that is constant and fixed.

The rising issue concerning food insecurity has been worrisome and this matter has often occurred in the rural areas [2]. The number of cases of food insecurity has been increasing since the past two decades from an average of 15 cases per year in the '80s to more than 30 cases per year from 2000 onwards [3]. Food insecurity may be long-term or temporary. It may be influenced by several factors and the factors are one that emerges out of the surrounding.

This study discusses the issue of food insecurity as a global societal dilemma that is prevalent across societies. It covers a small Bidayuh community within a village located in one of Sarawak's rural areas. The research explored food consumption patterns among the villagers to identify whether food insecurity issues exist among them. There is hope that the findings will provide important information that gives an insight as well as to create awareness among the public over the matter.

### Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

To analyze the indicators of food security

- To apply the correct classification for Kampung Muk Ayun villagers regarding food security issues faced.
- To analyze the differences of food consumption between Kampung Muk Ayun villagers with former villagers that have shifted to a new settlement.
- To understand the cultural aspect through food consumption and means to acquire food among villagers.
- To evaluate misconceptions among Kampung Muk Ayun villagers on having a balanced and healthy diet.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Food security is as a multidimensional concept, household food insecurity has also a social aspect, which includes food availability, affordability, and the culturally accepted means of acquiring food for the household [4;5].

Researchers [6] through 'Background Paper on Food Security and Nutrition' elaborated on the four indicators of food security; availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Availability focuses on the supply and refers to the extent to which sources of nutrition are physically available through local food production and trade. Accessibility indicates the ability of the household to obtain foods that are available. Utilization means the processing and preparation of food whilst stability is the temporal division of food security and includes the livelihood of stock and the ability to secure resources by the families. The state of being food secured depends on these four indicators and if one of these is unavailable, then it will be considered as food insecure.

In the research on household food security in the United States by researchers [7], for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), low food security is explained as to be used if a family meets the criteria when they are experiencing food insecurity however without the experience of being in hunger. Very low food security is used to label a family experiencing the case of food insecurity while being in hunger.

According to researchers [8], food security relates directly to nutrition and health and is also thought of as being related to availability and access of foodstuff. Researchers [9] also discussed the importance of food safety for the general health of humans and the need to improve food security through aspects such as preparations. Food security is related to the balanced nature of its protein, fat, carbohydrate, and micronutrient make-up.

Researchers [10] shared that the cultural perceptions of food sufficiency may differ between urban and rural households. A meal consisting of rice with eggs or anchovies may be enough for the rural households but not for the urban households, as these food items (eggs and anchovies) may be