

“Feed My Sheep”: A literal mandate?

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Brief Presentation Description / Abstract:

This presentation will outline the results of a quantitative, non-experimental study conducted with students at a faith-based university in the US to explore the levels of food insecurity on its campus. The presentation will include implications for policy and practice applicable to other faith-based institutions of higher education.

Presentation Proposal

Access to proper food and nutrition has been of increased interest in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Historically, the issue of food insecurity was linked to developing countries' lack of resources; however, most recently, the issue of hunger and access to foods for healthy development and living has been spotlighted in our communities. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports yearly on household food in/security (Coleman-Jensen et al, 2021). Food insecurity is defined as the lack of access to healthy food options that would permit a healthy life (Paslakis, Dimitropoulos & Katzman, 2021). Furthermore, food insecurity has health and mental health implications, with links to obesity, diabetes, depression, and anxiety (Moradi, et al, 2019a; Moradi et al, 2019b; Moradi, 2018; Gundersent & Ziliak, 2015), and among college students, it has been linked to lower GPA and poor academic performance (Owens, 2020; Weaver, et al, 2020).

According to the 2021 USDA Food Security Report, 10.2 percent (13.5 million households) in the US were food insecure at some point in 2021 (USDA, 2022). Other surveys studying food insecurity in low-income adults in the US showed that as high as 44% were food insecure, with highest incidences among Blacks, Hispanics, or households with children living at home (Owens, et al, 2020; Wolfson & Leung, 2020). Moreover, research suggests that food insecurity among college students has a weighted estimate of 41% (Nikolaus, et al, 2020). One of the ways in which colleges and universities have tried to alleviate food insecurity was to establish on-site food pantries (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). Currently, there are 550 higher education institutions partnering with Swipe Out Hunger, the leading resource for campus

initiatives that support, train, and provide resources to campus-based food pantries (Swipe Out Hunger, 2023).

Considering the prevalence of food insecurity among college students, this paper will report the results of a research study conducted to determine the food security and insecurity levels at a faith-based university in the US. A quantitative non-experimental research design will be employed in this research study. The survey is using the Adult Food Security Survey scale items published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2000). A non-probability convenience sampling method will be used to select participants consisting of current students, graduate and undergraduate, registered at the university full or part time, 18 years or older. Data analysis will be conducted by using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS).

As the current body of literature focuses on food insecurity mainly among college students attending public colleges and universities, it is important to hear the voice of students enrolled in a private, faith-based university. While a very small food pantry was opened on campus in 2014, the pantry has seen a dramatic increase in clientele during and following the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of the study will be framed in the experiences with the on-campus food pantry, as well as recommendations to address food insecurity at the policy and practice levels applicable to other faith-based institutions of higher education.

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