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STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION RECEIVING SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

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NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL

HEALTH

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

—————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

—————————————

by

Cristina Palacios Mosqueda

May 2024

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research study was the impact of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) on the mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, of students pursuing higher education. The study analyzed if food security from receiving SNAP benefits relieved mental illnesses for students pursuing higher education. This study utilized a post-positivist paradigm. The data was obtained through qualitative methods, including 14 audio interviews and verbal observations of current undergraduate and graduate students from Southern California. At the time that the research interviews were conducted, the students participated in the student and discussed their experiences of dealing with mental health symptoms due to food insecurity and the impact that SNAP benefits had on it. The research participants answers were the coded for themes and then categorized. The study's results concluded that mental disorder symptoms negatively affect students school Performance, CalFresh benefits support mental health, and there is social support for CalFresh awareness. This research study contributes to the social work field on a micro and macro level. At the micro level, this study allows social workers to better understand the significance of SNAP in alleviating hunger for college students and how receiving those SNAP benefits affects their mental health. At the macro level, this study has the potential to persuade social workers to lobby and advocate for policies and legislations that will address food insecurity among college students and increase student eligibility for and access to SNAP benefits.

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CHAPTER ONE:

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Chapter one begins with an extensive explanation of the research focus,

students pursing higher education receiving federal benefits from Supplemental

Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and its impact on their mental health.

Subsequently, the study's paradigm is introduced, and the justification of this

chosen paradigm is discussed in detail. The literature review follows, where there

is a synthesis of literature that will be included to provide a better understanding

of the research focus. Chapter one concludes with an overview of the research

study's contribution to macro and micro social work practice and a summary of

the chapter.

Research Focus

The research focus of this study is the impact of SNAP on mental health,

specifically anxiety and depression, of students pursuing higher education. The

focal point of the study is to analyze if food security from receiving SNAP benefits

relieves anxiety and/or depression of students pursuing higher education. SNAP

is a social service program, primarily funded by the federal government, that

issues monthly electronic benefits for the purpose of buying nutritious food at

local grocery stores for low-income individuals and families that meet the federal

eligibility requirements (*CalFresh*, 2022). In California, SNAP is known as

CalFresh and is the largest food assistance program in the nation that combats

food insecurity. Federal social services, such as SNAP, are crucial programs for

aiding low-income individuals and families to meet their living needs in America.

The focus of the study is significant as food insecurity affects many

Americans today and the specific population of college students experiencing

food insecurity is rising and understudied. The prevalence of this issue has

prompted recent studies to find a correlation among college students that

experience food insecurity and its negative impact on their mental health, such

as increased anxiety and/or depression (Morris et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2019;

Nazmi et al., 2018). The implications of college students experiencing mental

health disorders because of food insecurity are negative outcomes on college

students' overall wellbeing and academic success. This research study collected

informative data on the topic that food security from receiving SNAP benefits

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relieved anxiety and/or depression for college students, which promoted the importance of college students' overall wellbeing.

Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm

The paradigm that guided this research study was post-positivism, as this framework best suited the research focus. As discussed by Morris (2014), the post-positivism assumption takes an exploratory way of comprehending an objective reality because of the intricacy of human experience that is always present. This post-positive framework assumes reality is objective and that the data of the study is collected in qualitative methods and in a naturalistic setting. The researcher remains self-conscious of actions taken during qualitative data collection to not inflict bias or influence any outcome of the study. The methodology of the data collection for post-positive paradigm allowed for the exploration of different factors that impacted the research focus as it developed throughout the study.

Post-positivism paradigm was best suited as the framework for this research focus as the study aimed to produce an in-depth statement about the impact of low-income college students receiving SNAP benefits on their mental health. Most importantly, the significance of using the post-positive paradigm in this research study was for the collection of rich information about the connection

between food security and mental health, rather than just qualify the correlation of both subjects.

Literature Review

Food is a necessity and essential for the overall physical and mental wellbeing of a person. Food insecurity, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service et al. (2021), is the condition in which sufficient food is limited by a lack of money and other resources. American students seeking higher education are one population that experiences food insecurity and is eligible for federal SNAP benefits to alleviate this issue. As this research focus was to analyze if food security from receiving SNAP benefits relieves anxiety and/or depression for students pursuing higher education the literature review provides background on the issue. This literature review explains the prevalence of food insecurity among college students, causes of food insecurity, consequences of food insecurity on student's mental health, and preventative measures for addressing food insecurity among college students.

Prevalence of Food insecurity

Food insecurity is rampant in the United States and due to the number of individuals experiencing food insecurity there has been an increase of research being conducted to address the issue. Research from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service et al. (2021) reported that in 2020, 10.5

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percent of all American households, about 3.8 million households, were experiencing food insecurity. The prevalence of food insecurity in some subgroups of U.S. households increased significantly from 2019 to 2020. In 2020, the subgroup of American households composed of adults with children were experiencing 7.6 percent of food insecurity, an increase from the 0.6 percent reported in 2019.

Taking a closer look at students in higher education specifically, multiple studies report high rates of food insecurity among students. Research conducted by Taylor et al. (2019), at University of Memphis concluded that 81 percent of the total student population experienced food insecurity. Another study conducted by Morris et al. (2016) determined that 35 percent of students from four public universities in Illinois experienced food insecurity. Nazmi et al. (2018) concluded in her research study that 41.4 percent of U.S. college students were food insecure. Even with recent research focusing on food insecurity among college students and its implications on their wellbeing, these students remain an understudied population (Martinez et al., 2018; Willis, 2019).

Causes of Food Insecurity

There are several factors that contribute to students experiencing food insecurity, such as lack of monetary funds and high cost of tuition and student living expenses (Price et al., 2019; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service et al., 2021). American students are vulnerable to food insecurity due to the economic challenges that stem from attending college

today, including high costs of tuition, school supplies, housing, transportation, and basic living necessities (O'Neill, 2019; Price et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2019). In American, declining federal and state financial support is a main contributor to increasing cost of attendance, where state and federal grants are covering less than half of a student's tuition (Martinez et al., 2018). As a result, students struggling financially with high costs of tuition and living expenses students must budget their financial aid, student loans, or earnings to cover these school expenses that are on the rise each year (Willis, 2019). Due to students having limited monetary funds and prioritizing the little funds that they do have to cover the costs of tuition and other school expenses these students find themselves not being able to cover basic living necessities, such as purchasing food to consume.

<u>Consequences of Food Insecurity on Mental Health</u>

Food Insecurity can have lasting effects on students' mental and physical wellbeing. Recent students found a connection among food insecurity and poor psychosocial and emotional health, such as increased depression and anxiety (Abu & Oldewage-Theron, 2019; Becerra & Becerra, 2020; Diamond et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2022; Raskind et al., 2019; Reeder et al., 2020; Willis, 2020). A longitudinal cohort study by Raskind et al. (2019) indicated a correlation among food insecurity and poor psychosocial health. Approximately 29 percent of students in this sample were food insecure and as a result had experienced depression and/or anxiety. Many recent studies have also focused on comparing different student groups and have found that students experiencing

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food insecurity had higher rates of poor mental health in comparison to students experiencing food insecurity (Martinez et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2022; Willis 2020).

Research on college student's lack of proper access to nutritious food consumption has mostly focused on its implication on hunger and negatively physical health outcomes as it has been easier to detect. However, with recent awareness on student's health many research studies have begun to shift their focus to include the negative mental health outcomes associated with the increase of food insecurity among the college student population (Martinez et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2022; Raskind et al., 2019; Willis, 2019; Willis, 2020). Many studies have found that when student's lack consumption of proper food for healthy living, many students' physiological development is affected and these individuals experience anxiety from the stress of not being able to afford essential food to have a balanced diet (Becerra & Becerra, 2020; Martinez et al., 2018). Food insecurity among students is an indicator that college students will likely experience mental health disparities due to not being able to financially afford the basic living necessity of food. Students pursuing higher education that are experiencing food insecurity also accumulate a large depressive emotion such as feeling down, discouraged, hopeless, tired, and having little motivation (Becerra & Becerra, 2020; Diamond et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2022; Raskind et al., 2019); Reeder et al., 2020).

Food insecurity among students pursuing higher education and its correlation on increased mental health disorders, such as depression and

anxiety, has dire consequences on students' success in college. According to recent studies conducted across the United States indicating an interconnection among students' food insecurity and increased depression and anxiety has also resulted in a detection of lower grade point average through poor mental health (Diamond et al., 2019; Martinez et al., 2018; Oh et al., 2022). When a student's mental health is impaired from food insecurity other aspects of a student's life can be hindered, in which this vulnerable population struggles to perform academically. The destress that food insecurity displays on mental health negatively impacts the main purpose of students attending college and that is to maintain academic success throughout their college career to graduate with a degree from their field of study.

Intervention Measures for Addressing Food Insecurity

In America, the most prevalent intervention for addressing food insecurity is the federal SNAP benefits. SNAP is a federal social service program that provides monthly food benefits to households that have less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line. In 2020, 45.4 percent of households that were SNAP recipients were food insecure (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service et al., 2021). Although many students are eligible for SNAP benefits, many do not apply for the benefits due to lack of awareness of the student eligibility requirements for SNAP, accessibility to the SNAP application process, and stigma associated with applying for welfare benefits (O'Neil, 2019; Raskind et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2019). In recent research it was estimated that

almost 2 million at-risk college students across America who were potentially eligible for SNAP did not report receiving benefits due to lack of knowledge on SNAP student eligibility requirements (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). In such case, the need for increased student outreach events is needed to promote and assist students apply for such benefits that will alleviate hunger.

Another intervention measure that is being used across college campuses is the implementation of food banks and pantries. Food banks and pantries are designated spaces on campus that have an inventory of food that is funded by institution of higher education and community organizations that distribute free food amenities to students in need (Price et al., 2019). Food banks and pantries are often managed by school faculty or student volunteers and have become more popular among institutions of higher education. San Diego State University and University of California, San Diego are two institutions of higher education in Southern California that have existing food banks and pantries located throughout their campuses to aid their students with food necessities (*Fighting Food Insecurity | A.S. | San Diego State University*, n.d.; *Food Security*, 2022). According to recent research, the increased awareness of hunger and food insecurity has caused over 650 U.S. colleges to establish campus food pantries and bring awareness to local food security resources (Price et al., 2019). The College and University Pantries research team at the University of Michigan has organized yearly summits for fellow higher education faculty for them to network and share best practices for installing food banks and pantries on campus. Such

measures indicate that colleges are beginning to take initiative in addressing

student hunger and are implementing programs that will help alleviate food

insecurity.

Conclusion

Food insecurity impacts a large proportion of students and has

consequences for student mental and physical health and academic

performance. Many campuses seek to address food insecurity by increasing

accessibility to food through nutritious food banks and pantries, but less focus

has been placed on connecting students with SNAP benefits. As a result,

research has rarely looked at the impact of SNAP benefits on college students

that are receiving those benefits. This study has filled that gap by presenting

information gathered from qualitative data of current college students receiving

federal benefits from SNAP and its impact on their mental health.

Theoretical Orientation

The theory that was implemented to ground this research focus was

Maslow's hierarchy of needs. According to Zastrow et al. (2019), Maslow's theory

on hierarchy of needs highlights how humans are motivated by five categories of

basic needs: physiological, safety, belongingness and love, self-esteem, and

self-actualization. The five categories of basic needs are pictured in a triangle

diagram and exhibit a ranking of the basic needs in a linear movement from the

bottom base to the top of the triangle diagram. The base starts with the physiological category, which refers to the essential necessities for a human being to stay alive, such as oxygen, food, and water. The next category is safety needs, which references the need for human beings to feel safe, which can include environmental safety and security. The following category in the triangle diagram is the basic need of belongingness and love, which refers to having a sense of connection with others and positive relationships with friends and families. The next category refers to self-esteem needs, which highlight the psychological needs of self-respect, respect for others, achievement, and attention. The last category at the top of the triangle diagram of hierarchy of needs is self-actualization, where individuals accept self, others, and nature. This last category alludes to self-fulfillment and high sense of moral. Lower levels needs must be met before higher level needs can be met (Zastrow et al., 2019).

The theoretical framework from Maslow was used to get a better understanding of how food insecurity — which is an example of basic living needs — motivates an individual's actions in society. Maslow's hierarch of needs theory provides an explanation of how certain necessities, like food security, must be met before individuals are able to focus on attaining higher ranked needs, like mental health (Fisher, 2009). This theoretical framework provides a better understanding of the focus problem of food insecurity in association with mental health and how such factors influence college students' everyday actions. The role of this theory was not only used to guide the research questions, rather,

the theoretical framework provided background knowledge on human behavior and was included in the study to better comprehend the unravel of the research focus and its implication to the research interviewees.

Potential Contribution to Micro and Macro Social Work

The findings of this research study contributed to the micro and macro social work practice. At the micro level, this study allows social workers to better understand the significance of SNAP in alleviating hunger for college students and how it affects their mental health. Social workers gained knowledge on this specific population of clients and are better prepared to adequately address their social service needs. Social workers became aware of the correlation between food insecurity and mental health, allowing them to appropriately connect students pursuing higher education with a variety of community resources.

At the macro level, this study has provided informative data that can influence the resources available on school campuses. Campuses can reevaluate the student resources that aim to address food insecurity among college students to improve their mental wellbeing. Also, the data of this study can encourage social workers to lobby for policies and legislations that will address food insecurity among college students and increase eligibility for and access to SNAP. The study findings provide insight to government agencies on the accessibility of social services to low-income college students and

encourages a reassessment of the outreach efforts of promoting social services to needy college students for their overall wellbeing.

Lastly, this research study has contributed to the literature of social work practice. The findings of this study have contributed to the limited educational knowledge on the topic of the impact of college students receiving SNAP benefits on their mental health. This study allows for future researchers in the educational field to use this data collection for the expansion of their own research or to critique such findings in their study.

Summary

This chapter introduced the research focus, students pursuing higher education receiving federal benefits from SNAP and its impact on their mental health, such as anxiety and depression. In sequent order, this paper discussed the study's paradigm of using post-positivism to collect informative data about the connection between food security and mental health. The literature review provided a synthesis of literature that related to the research of focus, such as the prevalence of the issue, the causes of food insecurity among college students, and the impacts of this issue in society. The theoretical orientation described the importance of applying Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs to better understand the research focus. Chapter one concluded with highlighting the research study's contribution to macro and micro social work practice.

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CHAPTER TWO:

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two focuses on the engagement stage of the research project and begins with an in-depth explanation of the study site and engagement tactics for gatekeepers at the research site. This chapter explores the preparation that went into developing data collection for the study. Then, this chapter examines diversity, ethical, political issues that were present during the research study. Lastly, chapter two addresses how technology was applied and used throughout the research study.

Study Site

The region that was selected for this study was the accredited public university campuses in Southern California, that will be referred to as University 1 and University 2 to maintain confidentiality of the participants. The reason for conducting the research study at these college campuses was because the targeted study participants had to be part-time and full-time college students that were receiving SNAP benefits. These public universities had current student programs and organizations in place to combat food insecurity for its student

population, allowing the researcher to collaborate with these student programs to obtain potential research participants.

University 1 is a public institution of higher education located in San Diego and part of the California State University system. This public university has an approximate total enrollment of 35,732 students and is recognized for its diverse student population (*Facts, Mission, and History*, 2022). University 1 has a variety of food assistance programs throughout its extensive campus aimed on combatting food insecurity among its students.

University 1's Associated Students is a student-directed organization that is committed to fighting food insecurity by upholding and collaborating with other student food assistance programs. These programs are the Associated Students Food Pantry, Associated Students No Waste Program, CalFresh Program, and Economic Crisis Response Team (*Fighting Food Insecurity | A.S. | San Diego State University*, n.d.). Associated Students Food Pantry provides food to current students and is located on campus at the Student Union Building with operation hours during the week. Associated Students No Waste Program is a sustainability initiative aimed to reduce food waste in the Student Union and provides food to current students experiencing food insecurity. University 1 has partnered with the County of San Diego: Health & Human Services Agency to have a CalFresh enrollment specialist on campus to process student applications for SNAP benefits for its CalFresh Program. Lastly, the Economic Crisis Response Team is administered by the university's faculty that aims to aid its

current students that are experiencing an immediate crisis, such as food insecurity. The faculty located on campus provide direct assistance to its students by referring them to local food resources throughout the city. These food assistance programs that are all located on the campus were essential study sites to obtain research participants.

University 2 is another public university in this region and has an approximate enrollment of 7,734 graduate and medical students, 31, 842 undergraduate students, and a total student population of 39,576 (UC San Diego, 2021). The undergraduate student body is ethnically diverse with the majority population constructed of 37.1 percent Asian American, 20.8 percent Latino, and 19 percent White, and 17 percent international students. University 2 has a variety of food assistance programs that aim to combat food insecurity among its student population.

The food security services that are available at University 2 are the Food Pantry, CalFresh, Food Recovery Network, Affordable Grocery Store Map, and Off-Campus Resource Directory (*Food Security*, 2022). The Food Pantry is a service provided by Associated Students and is managed by student pantry managers and interns. This food assistance program has two locations on campus so that current undergraduates and graduate students can access the food service program. The CalFresh Program is managed by school faculty from the Hub Basic Needs Center, and they provide in-person and virtual assistance to current students with applying for SNAP benefits. The Food Recovery Network

is a non-profit organization that aims to reduce food waste and combat food insecurity by recovering and redistributing edible food waste to current students. This organization has partnered with the dining halls, campus farmer's markets, and local grocery stores to distribute food at the Student Center and Graduate Housing Center. The Affordable Grocery Store Map and the Off-Campus Resource Directory are website resources provided by the university's Hub Basic Needs Center that provides a map of current affordable grocery stores throughout the city and a directory of food assistance organizations in the region for current students. These food assistance programs provided by University 1 were vital for recruiting study participants as many of the individuals that utilize these programs met the criteria to participate in the study.

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Gatekeepers at the research site were the student services departments and organizations that provide students with resources and information, such as mental health resources and food banks. University counselors were also essential in distributing the flyers during office hours and in student centers. University staff that work directly with students have enriching personal connections with the students that allowed for the recruitment of student participants. Additional gatekeepers were local government agencies and non-

profit organizations that conducted outreach at local college campuses and aided students in completing SNAP applications.

One strategy that was conducted to engage with student services departments at local school campuses was visiting the local universities to become familiar with these departments that directly provide social services to their students. As many of these departments were beginning to address food insecurity on campus, once introductions were made with the campus staff there was a focus by the researcher to explain the significance of this research study addressing food insecurity in relation to a student's mental health. University staff were persuaded to support the research project as this study evaluated the significance of federal food benefit programs on mental health for their specific student population. Additionally, it was explained that support for this study required little effort from campus staff, as they only had to bring awareness about the research to their students by providing flyers or email correspondence.

Another strategy for engaging local government agencies and non-profit organizations that conducted outreach events on campus was attending these outreach events to build rapport with the outreach workers. In-person introductions were made, and flyers were provided to the outreach workers so that they could understand the purpose and significance of the research study. There was an emphasis made to these organizations that the research study would ultimately provide their organizations with qualitative information about students of higher education receiving federal benefits from SNAP benefits and

its impact on their mental health. Ultimately, this study data would be vital for the expansion or restructuring of outreach events from these agencies and organizations that directly provide students with SNAP application assistance.

Self-Preparation

Preparation for data collection began with extensive literature review that provided an initial foundation of knowledge regarding SNAP benefits and student food insecurity in relation to one's mental health. Once a foundation of initial knowledge was established the researcher visited school campuses to obtain a better understanding of the school resources and student organizations that related to food insecurity and mental health. After visiting school campuses there was observational knowledge built on the demographics of the student population and food security outreach events readily available to students. This allowed for the researcher to gain background knowledge on the research site to build rapport with students. Due to the sensitivity that surrounds students, food insecurity, and mental health issues the researcher upheld ethical boundaries, moral principles, and respect towards students. Preparation for data collection included creating flyers for the recruitment of student participants, letters for interviewees that properly outlined the research study and their participation and developing questions that adhered to the sensitive topic. The researcher also

evaluated the methods of data collection to confirm participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research study (Morris, 2014).

Another method that was used to prepare for data collection was practicing interview skills with family members and friends. The more a person practices conducting an interview the more they become comfortable in this setting. The researcher also strengthens their interview skills over time through practice, such as knowing how to arrange questions (Morris, 2014). Mock interviews allowed the researcher to obtain feedback on how to construct appropriate questions for the study. By incorporating mock interviews as a method to prepare for data collection the researcher was comfortable conducting effective interviews that obtained the most relevant information for the study.

Diversity Issues

There were diversity concerns present during the research study due to the limitations of educational accessibility at public universities. As higher education is a privilege, demographics can vary among university campuses with college acceptance rates. In this case, it was difficult to obtain a diverse population of races, ethnicities, age, gender, and sexuality to participate in the research study due the readily available student populations on campus and their interest in participating in the study. The researcher addressed this issue to the best of their abilities by reaching out to a variety of college departments providing

social services, local government agencies, and non-profit organizations that target different community populations. The researcher also engaged in cultural competence, such as respecting and appreciating individuals' cultural and ethnic background and beliefs, when conducting the research study. By understanding and respecting racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity among research participants provided a space for participants to actively engage in the study through its entirety.

Ethical Issues

A personal ethical issue that could have risen was the researcher's prior work experience as a case worker that processed SNAP applications for a local government agency as it could have impacted the researcher's interpretation of data collected. With prior knowledge and experience it could have been difficult for the researcher to combat unconscious bias from prior work knowledge on the application process of SNAP benefits. To address unconscious bias the researcher had to be self-aware of the potential unconscious biases would arise and the implications it could have on the evaluation of data collection. The evaluation of quantitative data had to be strictly evaluated on the answers provided at face value by the participants with no personal or prior knowledge interfering with the study participants responses to the questions.

Another ethical dilemma was the protection of participants' confidentiality throughout the research project. As discussed by Morris (2014), the solution for maintaining participants confidentiality is the use of informed consent forms, letters explaining the purpose of the study, and debriefing after the research study. These methods were applied to the research study. Also, during the data collection no personal information was released, research subjects were given pseudonyms so that data collected from participant was not connected to their identity. The researcher made sure to main participants confidentiality to the highest standard for the overall safety and wellbeing of the study participants.

Political Issues

A political issue that could have occurred in the research study was the social interaction among the researcher and the research participants. As the researcher was the one interviewing university students to obtain data collection the interaction could have been misunderstood as a collaboration among both groups (Morris, 2017). The researcher was a current graduate student when conducting the study with university students and the interaction among both groups could be misinterpreted as a collaboration among university students. To mitigate this political issue, the researcher had to be conscious of their actions and take the researcher role seriously throughout the interview process and maintain professional boundaries throughout the study. The researcher also had

to maintain a neutral stance when conducting the research study so that their role did not impact the research setting or influence the interview responses.

The Role of Technology

Technology played a vital role in the process of data collection as interviews were conducted via video conferencing. As interview were conducted via video conferencing using the application Zoom, they had to be audio recorded to obtain accurate answers from the study subjects so that they could be referred to in the future for the analyzation of those interviews (Morris, 2014). Overall, email, telephone calls, and video conferencing would be the main form of communication throughout the research study when working alongside gatekeepers and interviewees. Also, flyers that were distributed to the public to acquire study subjects were created via Canva application and were sent out electronically via email to student organizations and university resource agencies. They were also printed out and distributed throughout the campuses and provided to gatekeepers to distribute to students as the flyer had a QR code that could be easily scanned to send an email of research participant interest to the researcher. Lastly, technology was utilized throughout the research project to approval proposals, research material, and data analysis.

Summary

      Chapter two discussed in detail the engagement stage of the research project by providing in-depth information regarding the study site and analyzing engagement tactics for gaining gatekeepers of the research sites support. The following section discussed self-preparation strategies for the data collection process of the study. Potential diversity, ethical, and political issues for the research study were addressed with strategies to combat these issues. Lastly, the role of technology was provided to illustrate the importance of technology within the research study and data collection process.

CHAPTER THREE:

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

Chapter two discussed in detail the engagement stage of the research project by providing in-depth information regarding the study site and analyzing engagement tactics for gaining gatekeepers of the research sites support. The following section discussed self-preparation strategies for the data collection process of the study. Potential diversity, ethical, and political issues for the research study were addressed with strategies to combat these issues. Lastly, the role of technology was provided to illustrate the importance of technology within the research study and data collection process.

Study Participants

The participants of the study replicated the requirements of eligible student recipients of CalFresh benefits. A participant had to meet the criteria of being between the ages of 18-49 and physically and mentally fit for employment and enrolled at least half time in regular curriculum at an institution of higher education. An institution of higher education includes a trade, technical or vocational school that requires a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) test, or a junior, community, two-year, or four-year college

or university (California Department of Social Services [CDSS], 2022). The CalFresh recipient also had to meet a CalFresh regulation requirement to be eligible for SNAP benefits. Those deemed CalFresh Student recipients were sought for the research study, regardless of gender, sexuality, or primary language. As the data was conducted within Southern California, the case study participants were all current residents of the respective county.

<div align="center">Selection of Participants</div>

This research study adopted the critical case sampling method to identify and select study participants. As discussed by Morris (2014) this sampling strategy is important as there is a focus on the interviewees being markers of the objective of the research topic. As the research focus was to evaluate the impact of the CalFresh program on alleviating the mental health issues of college students due to food insecurity, critical case sampling targeted CalFresh student recipients that were experiencing mental health illnesses. An additional sampling method that was used was the snowball sampling as the researcher encouraged research participants to recommend peers that were interested in participating in this study. The adaptation of snowball sampling was supported with the use of informative and advertisement flyers that were distributed among college campuses. The sample size was relatively small, 14 research participants were selected for the comprehensive interviews. The participants were selected by the

researcher after initial screening of demographics was done to confirm that they are CalFresh Student recipients and were experiencing mental health symptoms.

Data Gathering

In this research study the data collection was obtained from qualitative methods, such as interviews conducted via Zoom and visual observations. Preference was given to conduct video conference call via Zoom on a one-on-one basis so that the researcher was also able to gather visual observations from the research participants. When conducting the video conference calls the participants utilized a pseudonym and had their cameras turned to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality throughout the study. The organized questions presented during the interview included descriptive, structural, and contrast questions to obtain a general background of the interviewees, expand understanding of the research focus topic, and develop a standard for inclusion and exclusion of knowledge obtained (Morris, 2014). The topics that were reviewed during the interviews are general demographic questions, assessment of mental illnesses experienced as a college student before receiving SNAP benefits, the accessibility and support of applying for SNAP benefits, implications of being a SNAP recipient, and assessment of SNAP benefits impact on mental illnesses previously reported. The qualitative instruments of interviews and observations provided the researcher with adequate information on the

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implication of students of higher education receiving SNAP benefits and its impact on their mental health.

Phases of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in three distinct stages. The first stage of data collection was the preparation for conducting the interviews, which included extensive literature review to obtain a foundation of knowledge in reference to the research focus. The first stage of data collection also included the process of recruiting potential research participants, screening participants to confirm they meet the criteria of a CalFresh Student recipient. Once the participants were selected there was initial contact to describe the focus of the research study, provide detailed information of participant confidentiality and privacy rights throughout the study, and obtain digital consent signature marks from individuals volunteering to be in the study.

The second phase of data collection involved the interviews being conducted with research participants. The interviews began with a general conversation to gain trust and rapport with the research participants and questions geared towards student social life, demographics, and academic studies. Once general information was obtained there will be a shift towards structured questions pertaining to the research focus. During this phase, the interview contained descriptive, structural, and contrast questions in order obtain

valuable information pertaining to the research topic. During this interview, there was an initial assessment of the interviewee's scope of mental illness before receiving SNAP benefits and after receiving SNAP benefits. The assessment included gathering qualitative information that included personal experiences with mental health issues that stemmed from food insecurity and if receiving SNAP benefits alleviated those symptoms. When the structured research questionnaire was completed, the interviewee was given time to ask questions about the study and provide feedback or comments. The research participants were thanked for their contribution to the study and were asked for the best form of communication if future questions or clarifications were needed from the researcher. The student participants were informed about the approximate timeframe in which the study would be finalized should they wish a copy of the research study.

The third phase of data collection focused on analyzing the information provided from the interviews. During this time, if there was a need for further clarification of responses previously provided, there was a follow-up interview to obtain missing or inaccurate information. This follow-up interview did not entail additional questions but merely clarified information that was previously reported. The focus of the third phase of data collection was to organize and analyze data that had been previously provided in the second phase and code for relevant themes related to this research, which led to summarizing accurate findings.

Data Recording

Interviews were conducted via video conference calls using the Zoom application. There was a focus on completing interviews via video conference so that audio and visual recordings could be obtained for observational data. Audio recording was essential for data collection so that references could be made once interviews had been completed. Written and verbal consent were obtained from research participants for audio and video recording the interviews so that it would be easier to transcribe the interviews after. Research journals were imperative for data collection as they allowed for the opportunity to record the researcher's perspective throughout the implementation of the study, as well as record interview data (Morris, 2014). For this reason, two journals were used during the entirety of the study for the researcher to write their thought process and to collect data during the interviews. These different forms of data recordings were essential for the conservation of information obtained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The approach that was implemented for data analysis of this research study was the bottom-up analysis method. As discussed by Morris (2014) this method analysis includes open coding, axial coding, selective coding, and conditional matrix for the synthesis of qualitative data. The first step was open coding, which entailed reading and observing narrative findings from interviews

and synthesizing information into initial codes that were constructed from words or phrases. The second step of axial coding was the process of grouping and organizing similar codes into categories. Selective coding was the third step and entailed the development of constructing one theme or concept from the categories. The theme or concept had some connection with the focal point of the research study. The last step was the conditional matrix that entailed producing a theoretical statement and applying the theoretical findings to societal context. The bottom-up analysis ultimately produced a theoretical framework that concluded if food security from receiving SNAP benefits relieved anxiety and/or depression for students of higher education. The outcome of the research study allowed the researcher to detail the importance of its research findings in relation to human relations and social work practicum.

Termination and Follow Up

During the initial stages of the implementation of the research study there was clear and concise information given to collaborators and interviewees of the disengagement phase once the research study concluded. There was an approximate termination date provided to individuals and agencies that collaborated with the research study with reminders once the deadline approached. The interviewees were thanked for their time and were given the opportunity to provide the best form of communication to provide the findings of

the study if requested. There was a focus on conducting a debrief meeting with agency partners to discuss the research study outcomes and the implications it had for their agencies. Debriefing was essential to maintain sustainable connections with agencies should there be any collaborations in the future.

The completion of the research study entailed disseminating research findings into an academic paper. The academic paper was submitted to California State University, San Bernardino faculty for the purpose of contributing knowledge to the social work profession. This academic report aims to raise awareness on university students receiving SNAP benefits and its impact on their mental health. The academic report contributed to academic literature of food insecurity among college students and how it affects a student's mental health.

Summary

This chapter discussed in detail the sampling strategy that was implemented for recruiting research participants and the criteria that individuals had to meet to partake in the study. Chapter three described the process of data collection and the procedures that were implemented to record and manage the data. The was also extensive knowledge provided on bottom-up analysis method that was implemented for the synthesis of data collection. This chapter concluded with briefly describing the dissemination of the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR:

EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter provides the demographics and themes that emerged from the research study. There's also analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the interviews that aimed to provide results about students pursuing higher education receiving federal benefits from SNAP and its impact on their mental health. This chapter also examines the implications of the study's findings in relation to micro and macro practices.

Presentation of Findings

This research study was able to obtain qualitative data from 14 individual interviews. The individual interviews began with general demographic question to obtain information about participants' year as students, their major, where are were from, what gender they identified as, age, ethnicity, marital status, how many dependents they have (if any), immigration status, current employment status and their primary language. From the 14 interviews, there were two participants that were first year undergraduates (14.3%), two participants that were second year undergraduates (14.3%), six participants that were third year

undergraduates (42.9%), three participants that were fourth year undergraduates (21.4%), and a first-year graduate student (7.1%). The majors of the research participants included: one Undeclared major, one Computer Engineering major, one Child Development major, two Kinesiology majors, one Business Administration major, three Computer Science majors, one Mechanical Engineer major, one Mathematics major, two Sociology majors, and Biology major.

Out of the 14 participants, six participants were San Diego natives and eight were originally born from another county, but they were all still Californians. When asking about gender identities, seven participants identified as male (50%), six participants identified as female (42.9%), and one participant preferred to skip this question (7.1%). Average age of the 14 participants was 26.6 years old, ranging from 18 to 42 years old.

As the 14 participants were in different stages of their lives, a handful of them reported having dependents in their custody. From the 14 participants, nine participants reported not having any dependents (64.3%), three participants reported having one child (21.4%), one participant reported having two children (7.1%), and another participant reported having three dependents where one was her biological child and she had recently gained custody of two of her nieces (7.1%). Employment status provided additional information of the type of income resources that the students were receiving, where 64.3% worked part-time (n= 9) and 35.7% were full-time students (n=5) — however, all students were receiving financial aid, such as grants and loans, to cover educational expenses. All the

participants reported being single, a U.S. citizen, and having their primary language as English. Please see Appendix B for a complete list of questions that were asked to the students.

Qualitative Results

From the research study, there was a variety of complex responses received by the 14 participants. However, there were three main themes that emerged from the data collected. The major themes that emerged from the qualitative data were that mental disorder symptoms negatively affect students' school performance, CalFresh benefits support mental health, and social support for CalFresh awareness.

Mental Disorder Symptoms Negatively Affect Students' School Performance

When conducting the interviews, a common theme that kept emerging was that the common mental health disorders that were experienced from food insecurity, such as depression and anxiety, had a negative effect on the students' school performance. Some of the participants stated that the mental health disorders that had stemmed from food insecurity had affected their concentration in academia, made them less motivated to participate in school, or negatively affected their grades. Interviewee 10 (a fourth year at University 2) stated,

> Sometimes I would even forget to do my schoolwork, my class
> assignments. And I had issues. Sometimes during my first year, I had

issues with the lectures and grasping the information. Not only completing

the assignments but also not attending classes became an issue.

Interviewee 5 (a third year at University 1) also spoke about the lack of

concentration:

It'd be hard to focus on what I was doing. Like it would be hard for me to

focus on writing my assignments or my essays. Or even little simple things

like a loss of energy to do things. I would lose the whole effort to even do

some of the tasks that I was assigned to do for schoolwork…It definitely

affected the couple of months to where I wasn't eating as much or had

benefits. Definitely affected my grades and everything.

Among all participants it was evident that mental disorder symptoms, such as

depression and anxiety are affecting their participation in school.

<u>CalFresh Benefits Support Mental Health</u>

A focal point of this research project was to understand if CalFresh

benefits were helping to alleviate mental health disorders caused by food

insecurity, such as anxiety and depression, that were experienced by college

students. All the participants interviewed in this study confirmed that receiving

CalFresh benefits had aided their mental health disorders. Interviewee 2 (a first-

year graduate student at University 1) stated,

Since getting CalFresh I really feel relief mentally. Because, as I

mentioned, it's opened other cash funds that I have. So, knowing that I'm

going to get these funds, it's clear on what dates my CalFresh kicks in. I'm

able to plan around that, and it makes it that much easier. It almost feels

like I have someone else there to help me. CalFresh makes a big

difference for students like me.

Interviewee 7 (a first-year student at University 1 who had mentioned

experiencing anxiety, stress, and isolation from food insecurity) also discussed

how CalFresh benefits had improved his stress and anxiety by stating,

It's reduced my stress and anxiety. Because all these thoughts of

insecurities are a significant source of stress. And that contributes to my

mental health. And because I have food support, I think I don't have any

stress in having food. Also, I've been more social. I'm able to connect with

friends more because I have one less worry. I can be a college student.

Social Support for CalFresh Awareness

The third theme that emerged was the importance of social support for

CalFresh awareness. As college students embark in their educational endeavor,

at times in a new city, it can be difficult to navigate readily available resources

and social services. Often, students rely on their social support which can be

friends, family, or college staff, to connect them to these resources. In the case of

the 14 research participants, they utilized their social support to become aware of

the CalFresh application and ultimately apply for the services. Interviewee 8

(third year student at University 2) had the help of her friend and stated,

I learned about it via online, a friend showed me the site…She initially told

me about it and gave me the information of how to apply for those benefits

and all the information. It wasn't so hard. I answered all the questions, I

filled out the application. So, it wasn't that hard to say.

Interviewee 11 (a third year at University 2) stated:

I've seen a lot of improvement since when I was a freshman. I didn't know

they were those people. There were those workers who connect you to

services and different programs…They connect you with like those mental

health resources on campus and have those social workers to help

process applications for CalFresh.

Interviewee 3 (a second-year student at University 1 and has custody of son and

two nieces) stated:

There are other programs, like the parent café...Yeah you can either join

on Zoom, or if you have time you can go on campus. So, I was able to go

to a couple of classes in the summer, and in the fall. But in the summer,

when I went it's kind of like a big turnout, a big group, and you're able to

talk about just anything. So that was the time I was transitioning into

getting my nieces, so I was able to talk about that there and then were

other people who like needed information about that. And it's just like that,

like an exchange of information and helping each other and taking down

the notes at the end. And you can still like get an email about stuff just in

case you missed it… Yes, because they help with like gas cards or

anything. And then if you have your kids during the summer, they were

able to come in.

Summary

This chapter provided a presentation of the findings of the research study, which included the demographics of the college students that were interviewed. There was also a discussion of the three emerging themes from the research study. The three emerging themes identified were that mental disorder symptoms negatively affect students' school performance, CalFresh benefits support mental health, and social support for CalFresh awareness. The three emerging themes highlighted the intersectionality of CalFresh benefits and mental health disorders that college students experience from food insecurity.

CHAPTER FIVE:

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

This last chapter provides a discussion based on the findings of the qualitative study. Then it reviews the termination of the study and the dissemination plan for the study findings. The chapter ultimately concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Discussion

This research study was conducted to obtain qualitative data about the impact of SNAP on mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, of students pursuing higher education. To do this, 14 individuals were interviewed to obtain qualitative data and with the data provided the researcher was able to analyze its findings. The study was able to generate three major themes: mental disorder symptoms negatively affect students' school performance, CalFresh benefits support mental health, and social support for CalFresh awareness. The first emerging theme of mental disorder symptoms negatively affected students' school performance, is significant as it highlights the gravity of college students' college success being impacted by mental disorder symptoms. The second major theme was that CalFresh benefits support mental health, as many of the

participants had reported that their anxiety and depression had decreased because of no longer having to be anxious or depressed from lack of food. Lastly, the social support for CalFresh awareness illustrated the importance of that social network, where family members, friends, and college campuses can make a difference for students that are facing food insecurity and mental health issues.

The study findings further support the current academia that students are currently facing food insecurity and it is negatively impacting their academic performance, such as concentration and grades (Morris et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2019; Nazmi et al., 2018). The study findings further support the importance of holistic support for students, emphasizing the need for colleges and universities to continue their efforts of combatting food insecurity and providing accessible social and mental health services to students (*Fighting Food Insecurity | A.S. | San Diego State University*, n.d.; *Food Security*, 2022; Price et al., 2019). This study was able to gather qualitative information from a diverse student population, where the ages ranged from 18-42 years old, some participants had dependents in their custody, and many ethnicities were represented in the study. A limitation to this study was that some participants were completely open about their current situations and comfortable with sharing that information, while other participants were more guarded about sharing their experiences on this sensitive topic. This research study was able to shed light on the implications of college

students experiencing mental health disorders because of food insecurity are negative outcomes on college students' overall wellbeing and academic success.

Termination and Follow Up

The termination of the research study was significant for providing closure and setting health boundaries with the research participants. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher sent a follow-up email to all participants thanking them for their time and provided the debriefing statement to have as a copy for their record. In the follow-up email the participants were provided with additional information of how to request a copy of the published academic paper.

Communication of Findings

Upon the completion of the study, the research disseminated research findings into an academic paper. The academic paper will be published at the university scholar works, for the purpose of contributing knowledge to the social work profession. This academic report will raise awareness on university students receiving SNAP benefits and its impact on their mental health. The academic report will contribute to academic literature of food insecurity among college students and how it affects a student's mental health.

Summary

In this chapter, the research was able to highlight the significance of the study, compare results to previous academic studies, and reiterate the emerging themes from the research study. The chapter also discussed the process that was placed for the termination of the study. Lastly, this research project concludes with the public communications of this findings. Ultimately, this academic paper will contribute valuable information regarding the intersectionality of food insecurity and mental health disorders among college student and how social service programs, such as CalFresh programs, can support students' mental health.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

CSUSB

School of Social Work

WE DEFINE THE *Future*

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407
909.537.5501 | fax: 909.537.7029
http://socialwork.csusb.edu

Are you receiving CalFresh and has it made an impact on your mental health?

Findings from this study will add to the academic literature of social services in relation to college students.

This study has been approved by the California State University, San Bernardino Institutional Review Board

- This study explores the impact of CalFresh on students' mental health and well-being.
- We will ask about your experiences with CalFresh and the impacts that it has had on you.
- Interviews will last between 45 and 60 minutes and will be conducted via audio conferencing call.
- Participants will be entered into a raffle for a chance to win a $100 grocery gift card.
- Questions/concerns?
  Contact Cristina Mosqueda, Student Researcher, anytime at
  cristina.mosqueda2004@coyote.csusb.edu

Eligible Participants:
- Between the ages of 18-49
- Enrolled at least half-time (6 units) at an institution for higher education.
- A recipient of CalFresh benefits
- If interested, scan QR code to contact us.

APPENDIX B

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Qualitative Interview Questions:

<u>Essential Questions:</u>

<u>Introduction</u>

1. What year are you as a student? What is your major? Where are you from? What gender do you identify as? What is your age? What is your ethnicity? What is your marital status? How many dependents do you have? What is your immigration status? What is your current employment status? What is your household income? What is your primary language?

<u>Food Insecurity</u>

1. Tell me about food insecurity that you have faced while being a college student.

2. What do you believe contributed to you being food insecure while in college?

3. What type of support has the university provide you with food insecurity?

4. Do you only receive support from the university, or do you receive any additional support from other people or organizations?

<u>Mental Health: Anxiety/Depression</u>

1. Have you experienced any negative feelings due to food insecurity? For example, have you felt anxious or worried or sad or depressed?

2. Tell me about those feelings.

3. What impact did these negative feelings have in other areas of your life?

4. How did your mental health symptoms affect your everyday life?

5. How did your mental health symptoms affect your schoolwork?

<u>CalFresh Program</u>

1. How did you hear about the CalFresh Program?

2. How was the process of applying for CalFresh benefits?

3. How has the CalFresh benefits affected your food insecurity?
4. What do you see as the main barriers to receiving CalFresh benefits?
5. Have the CalFresh benefits affected your mental health and if so, how?

Throw-Away Question

1. How practical is it using the CalFresh EBT card while grocery shopping?

Developed by Cristina Palacios Mosqueda

APPENDIX C

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the impact of students receiving federal benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) on their mental health. This study is being conducted by Cristina Mosqueda under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragán, Associate Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The focus of this research study is the impact of SNAP benefits on the mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, of students pursuing higher education.

DESCRIPTION: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher with a series of questions about SNAP benefits, mental health, and your demographic information. Interviews will be conducted via audio conference call and will be audio recorded to ensure that the researcher is accurately capturing your answers.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may request to skip questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All precautions will be taken to minimize the risk of confidentiality being compromised. Audio recordings of participants will be stored in a password protected computer using a pseudonym instead of your name. The audio recordings will be destroyed 5 years after the project has ended.

DURATION: If you agree to participate, the duration of the interviews conducted will be approximately 45-60 minutes. The interview will be conducted in one session and will not exceed 60 minutes.

RISKS: Although not anticipated, some questions asked may make you feel uncomfortable as they ask about federal benefits received and mental health. You are not required to answer and can skip the question or end participation.

BENEFITS: Your participation in this study will provide valuable information regarding the understudied topic of students receiving SNAP benefits and its impact on their mental health.

CONTACT: Should you have any questions regarding the research and your rights as a research study participant please contact Cristina Mosqueda at (858) 342-4708 or via email at cristina.mosqueda2004@coyote.csusb.edu. Please

contact research advisor in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, Dr. Armando Barragán, at (909) 537- 3501 or via email at abarragan@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2024.

▪▪▪

I agree to have this interview be audio recorded: _____ YES _____ NO
CONFIRMATION STATEMENT: I understand that I must be 18 years older to participate in your study, have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

_____   _____
Place an X mark here   Date

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Study of Decision-Making Processes

Debriefing Statement

This study you have just completed was designed to analyze the impact of

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) on the mental health,

specifically anxiety and depression, of students pursuing higher education. The

focal point of the study was to assess if food security from receiving SNAP

benefits impacts anxiety and/or depression for students pursuing higher

education. Because of the sensitivity of one's mental health, if you are feeling

distressed after conducting the interview, we have included a list of behavioral

health resources by the County of San Diego. Please seek assistance if

experiencing any mental health risks.

Thank you for your participation in this study and for providing information

regarding a sensitive topic. If you have any questions about the study, please

feel free to contact Cristina Mosqueda at (858) 342-4708 or Dr. Armando

Barragán at (909) 537-3501. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group

results of this study, please contact Dr. Armando Barragán at (909) 537-3501 at

the end Spring Quarter of 2024.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCES

County of San Diego HHSA — Health and Human Services Agency | LIVE WELL SAN DIEGO

San Diego Access & Crisis Line (ACL)
888-724-7240

Call or visit the website for immediate support and resources from an experienced counselor 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on various behavioral health topics. Language interpreter services enable the ACL to assist in 150 languages within seconds.

It's Up to Us San Diego
https://up2sd.org/

Visit the website for easy access to behavioral health and suicide prevention resources. The campaign is designed to empower San Diegans to talk openly about mental illness, recognize symptoms, utilize local resources and seek help.

Additional Resources

County of San Diego – Behavioral Health Services
For an overview of the broad range of health and social services and resources available to community members, visit:
https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/hhsa/programs/bhs/

San Diego County – Coronavirus Disease 2019
For the latest updates on COVID-19, visit:
www.coronavirus-sd.com

2-1-1 San Diego 211 https://211sandiego.org/ 24/7 free phone service for access to 6,000+ community, health, social, and disaster services. Assistance available in over 200 languages.	**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** 800-273-TALK (8255) or text TALK to 741741 https://afsp.org/ 24/7 support for people in distress or needing suicide prevention and crisis resources.	**Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline** 800-422-4453 https://www.childhelp.org/hotline/ 24/7 hotline with resources to aid in every child abuse situation.	**Emotional Support Helpline** 866-342-6892 Link to flyer 24/7 helpline available to provide resources and connect with anyone experiencing anxiety or stress following the recent developments around COVID-19.
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) San Diego 800-523-5933 or 619-543-1434 https://namisandiego.org/ Resource helpline, support groups, educational meetings, newsletters, a lending library and several classes on mental illness.	**National Domestic Violence Hotline** 800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522 https://www.thehotline.org/ 24/7 support for anyone affected by abuse.	**Peer-to-Peer Warmline** 619-295-1055 or 800-930-WARM (9276) Link to flyer Speak to a Peer Support Specialist about behavioral health from 3:30pm - 11:00pm, 7 days/week.	**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Disaster Distress Helpline** 800-985-5990 www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline 24/7 crisis counseling and support for people experiencing emotional distress to a disaster.
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): National Helpline 800-662-4357 https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline 24/7 treatment referral and information service for people facing mental illness or substance use disorders.	**Teen Line** 310-855-HOPE (4673) or Text TEEN to 839863 https://teenlineonline.org/ Personal teen-to-teen education and support before problems become a crisis, hotline available 6pm to 10pm.	**The Trevor Project** 866-488-7386 https://www.thetrevorproject.org/ 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention services for LGBTQ people under 25.	**Courage to Call** 877-698-7838 or 2-1-1, option 4 https://www.courage2call.org/ 24/7 peer line and other resources to improve mental wellness for Veterans, Active Duty, Reservists, National Guardsmen, and their families.

All resources are free. Phone numbers with area code 800, 866, or 888 are toll-free.
Rev. 9/02/2020 V2

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD EXEMPTION LETTER

September 12, 2023

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Administrative/Exempt Review Determination
Status: Determined Exempt
IRB-FY2023-236

Armando Barragan Jr. Cristina Mosqueda
CSBS - Social Work, Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation.
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Armando Barragan Jr. Cristina Mosqueda:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION RECEIVING SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risks and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's COVID-19 Prevention Plan for more information regarding campus requirements.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

- **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
- **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**
- **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
- **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the Research Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2023-236 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive from participants and/or others related to your research may be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

King-To Yeung
King-To Yeung, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

KY/MG

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