What is the relationship between food insecurity and college students aged 18-22 and its effects on academic performance and how can proper nutrition be promoted?

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Food insecurity is defined as the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods. It can also be defined as the limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. Previous research has observed that food insecurity can disrupt optimal development throughout the life cycle. A growing body of literature has documented the effects of food insecurity on cognitive, academic, and psychosocial development among college students. These studies consistently observed that food insecurity is associated with lower academic performance, poor health, and decreased psychosocial function. Among college students, financial hardship can translate into budget demands, such as tuition, housing, utilities, and healthcare. These budget demands compete with money that can be used to purchase food. Over the past 50 years, the price of higher education has steadily outpaced inflation, the cost of living, and medical expenses. Food insecurity, as a potential consequence of the increasing cost of higher education, can be considered a major student health priority. College students face life-changing milestones during their transition to adulthood that may have long-lasting effects. Food insecurity during these years can potentially affect college students’ cognitive, academic, and psychosocial development.

Studies addressing food insecurity among college students suggest a higher prevalence of food insecurity compared with the general population. A previous study conducted in 2014 found that 41% of students were food insecure or at risk of food insecurity. The purpose of the current study was to further analyze the prevalence of food insecurity and identify its correlates among students attending a rural university in the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Sample Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Factors Increase Risk for Food Insecurity Among College Students?</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 1,882</td>
<td>Students attending a midsize rural university in Oregon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity Among Students Attending a Midsize Rural University in Oregon: Examining the Role of Financial Factors, Resources, and a Ill in Predicting Food Security Status Among College Students</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 2</td>
<td>Students attending a midsize rural university in Oregon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity among University Students in Illinois: Quantitative Study</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 124</td>
<td>Students attending an Illinois university in Illinois.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Related to the High Rates of Food Insecurity Among Diverse, Urban College Freshmen</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 128</td>
<td>Students attending a southern university completed online survey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Food Insecurity in College-aged Students

- **1 in 10 students are food insecure.**
- **31% of students are food insecure.**

#### Food Insecurity in the College Population

- Students who were employed were almost twice as likely to report experiences with food insecurity.
- Time spent working more than 18 hours per week and lack of a place to eat food may affect student’s academic success.
- Food insecurity is inversely associated with academic performance.
- Students with a grade point average of 3.1 or higher were less likely to be food insecure.
- Income was the strongest correlate of food insecurity.

#### Conclusions and Further Study

- Food insecurity among college students is due to the increasing costs of higher education.
- This research has observed that food insecurity in college students is associated with lower academic performance, poor health, and decreased psychosocial function.
- Further research could include targeting at other age groups, such as middle school age, early school age, or geriatric age.
- Research could be done regarding which areas are more prevalent in e-learning food insecurity.
- Studies can also be done to determine if food insecurity is higher in women or men.
- Mostly quantitative studies were used, so more qualitative studies could be included.