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, fees, books, housing, utilities, and healthcare. These budget demands compete with money that can be used to purchase food. Over the past 10 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 Hawai’i found that 45% of students were food insecure or at risk of food insecurity.

Studies can also be done to determine if food insecurity is higher in women than men. Studies suggest a higher prevalence of food insecurity among female college students compared to male college students. It may be due to the increasing costs of nourishing the body and the financial strain that can lead to food insecurity.

**Keywords:** food insecurity, college students, risk factors of food insecurity, academic performance, health, and psychosocial development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Title</th>
<th>Study Type</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence and Correlates of Food Insecurity Among Students Attending a Midsize Rural University in Oregon</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 352</td>
<td>Students attending a midsize rural university in Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Prevalence of Food Security and Insecurity Among Illinois University Students: An Undergraduates Study</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 1,882</td>
<td>Undergraduate students in the Southern U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Factors Increase Risk for Food Insecurity Among College Students?</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 1,200</td>
<td>Students attending the southern university completed online survey. Anthropometrics were measured by trained staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Insecurity among Undergraduate Students in Illinois</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 124</td>
<td>Undergraduate Illinois university students, employing a survey containing the Household Food Security Survey Module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors Related to the High Rates of Food Insecurity Among Diverse Student College Freshmen</td>
<td>Quantitative Cross-Sectional Study</td>
<td>n = 20</td>
<td>Students attending the southern university completed online survey. Anthropometrics were measured by trained staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary:**

- Identify risk factors for food insecurity among college students, such as low socioeconomic status. Those who were food insecure were more likely to be female, minority, and from lower socioeconomic status.
- Comprehend the social environment and support systems since they influence the students’ ability to intake proper nutrition.
- Be able to assess the presence of risk factors and signs of food insecurity.
- Know awareness to food insecurity and promote the importance of proper nutrition.
- Identify resources such as access to food banks, special programs for students, and information on proper nutrition.

**Conclusion/Implications for Practice:**

- Further research could include looking at other age groups, such as middle school age, elementary school age, or geriatrics age.
- Research could be done regarding which areas are more prevalent in different socioeconomic statuses.
- Studies can also be done to determine in food insecurity is higher in women or men.
- Mostly quantitative studies were used, so more qualitative studies could be included.

**Findings:**

- Students who were employed were almost twice as likely to report experiences with food insecurity.
- More time spent working many hours (average of 18 hours, ranging from 45 hours per week) and lack of access to food may affect student’s academic success.
- Good academic performance is inversely associated with food insecurity.
- Low-income students are twice as likely to report experiences with food insecurity.

**Further Study:**

- Further research could be conducted to determine if food insecurity is higher in women or men.
- Mostly quantitative studies were used, so more qualitative studies could be included.