

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FOOD INSECURITY AMONG STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the consequences of food insecurity (food intake, academic achievement and health related well-being) among students who received financial assistance in Public Institutions of Higher Education in Peninsular Malaysia. Four public universities in Peninsular Malaysia were randomly selected and 484 students were involved in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires and anthropometric measurements. Analysis of Covariate (ANCOVA) was utilized to analyse the data. Majority of respondents (73.7%) stated that acquired loans and scholarships were not sufficient. A total of 67.15% respondents were categorized as food insecurity. After controlling the covariates variables, there were significant mean differences in diet diversity scores ($p < 0.05$), Physical Component Summary (PCS) ($p < 0.05$) and Mental Component Summary (MCS) ($p < 0.01$) based on the food security status. Furthermore, there were significant mean differences between the PCM for role physical functioning dimension ($p < 0.001$), body pain dimension ($p < 0.001$) as well as MCS for the dimensions of social

functioning ($p < 0.001$) and role emotional ($p < 0.001$) with food security status. In conclusion, these findings suggest that poor dietary diversity, PCS (role physical functioning, body pain) and MCS (social functioning, role emotional) might be the consequence of food insecurity. Thus, government and universities need to give full and serious attention toward the problem of food insecurity as it implicates the nutritional status and health related well-being among students in Public Institutions of Higher Education. Besides, responsible agencies that provide financial assistance to students should review the amount of loan or scholarship provided due to the fact that cost of living and education expenses are rising each day. Meanwhile, the Institutions of Higher Education should focus on improving nutrition knowledge, financial management and health as well as providing stalls that provide a variety of healthy and nutritious food at reasonable prices in campus together with disclosure of financial management and nutrition education.

