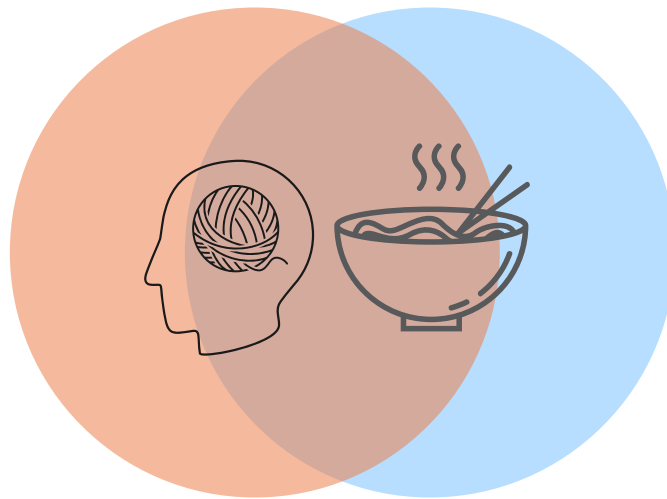


AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH:

POST-SECONDARY STUDENT FOOD INSECURITY & MENTAL HEALTH

Interviews with the Community



Fairuz Karim
SCSC Fellowship 2022

Community Engagement Initiative Report



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CURRENT DATA SHOWS

2 in 5

post-secondary students in Canada experience food insecurity

Food insecurity and poor mental health are closely linked in Canadian adult populations



Little research is known on the relationship between food insecurity and mental health among post-secondary students in Canada

THE INITIATIVE

To explore the nature and intersection of post-secondary student food insecurity and mental health, interviews were conducted with individuals who are working in, knowledgeable about, and/or want to share lived experiences with these challenges.

Virtual interviews were completed between June-August 2022. Interviews were completed over Zoom because it provided the best format for community members to join from anywhere in the world and with limited space or financial restrictions.

We reached out to the community in several ways. These included 1) a recruitment callout on the Meal Exchange Instagram platform, monthly newsletter, and email network, and 2) direct email recruitment to food security initiatives, mental health organizations, and researchers working within the post-secondary student food insecurity and/or mental health space.



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THE OUTCOME

Community interviews helped us to better understand the perspectives of post-secondary student leaders, campus staff, and research experts working within the space(s) of food insecurity, mental health, and/or student wellness. By understanding their perspectives, we were able to gather meaningful insight that was used to (1) inform the research conducted and (2) develop a well-informed and evidence-based resource that will support student food insecurity projects and post-secondary campuses to better address these intersecting challenges.

10

participants



2

research experts

1

community leader

1

campus staff member

6

students and student
leaders

LET'S TALK
ABOUT
MENTAL
HEALTH

"I've heard of conversations on mental health and food insecurity separately, but there's nothing that comes to mind where it was talked about in relation to each other. There's never really an intersection that's addressed, it's always in separate spaces, so when it comes to the intersectionality between food insecurity and mental health, I would like to see more collaboration across services"



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THE OUTCOME

The following is the infographic that was developed based on the recommendations from the community interviews. This infographic will be used to disseminate the research findings from the research that was conducted.

EXAMINING THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF FOOD INSECURITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Implications for Current and Future Post-Secondary Student Programming and Services

Food insecurity is defined as the

"inadequate or insecure access to food (both in quantity and quality)"¹

2 in 5 Canadian post-secondary students experience food insecurity²



Post-secondary students are **uniquely vulnerable** to food insecurity because of high food costs, rising housing costs, expensive tuition fees and lack of food literacy skills and knowledge³



Post-secondary students are **more likely to experience adverse mental health outcomes (anxiety, stress, etc.)** compared to food-secure students



Approach

We sought to **qualitatively explore** the impact of food insecurity on the mental health of post-secondary students in Canada.

We interviewed **student leaders, campus staff, and research experts.**



Recommendations



Increase awareness and exposure to food security supports and resources among post-secondary students, particularly during transitional periods.



Develop food security programming and supports that use a human dignity-based approach.



Encourage and promote a holistic approach to addressing the intersection of food insecurity and mental health by engaging in cross-sectoral collaboration with diverse stakeholders on and off campuses.

References

1. Jane Y. Polivy and Heather Gilmour, "Food Insecurity and Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Health Reports* 21, no. 12 (December 16, 2020): 3-11, <https://doi.org/10.25318/82-009-x20209120001-eng>.

2,3. Brittany Maguire, Sahini Mohanlal, and Vyshanwe Sivazankar, "2021 National Student Food Insecurity Report - 2nd Ed.", 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/190eMAK3XR7K5p1kCjTY6kd9REuXtE/view?usp=sharing&usp=embed_facebook.

4. Meryn Sanders Maynard et al., "Experiences of Food Insecurity Among Undergraduate Students: 'You Can't Starve Yourself Through School,'" *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 48, no. 2 (August 31, 2018): 130-48, <https://doi.org/10.47776/cjhe.v48i2.130121>.

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