

Agricultural Production and Food Systems

P001 A Qualitative Study to Compare Food-Insecure College Students' Eating Behaviors With and Without Access to a Campus Food Pantry

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Background: Food-insecure college students have an increased likelihood of developing disordered eating behaviors, possibly due to coping behaviors including restriction when food is scarce and bingeing when food is abundant. While more and more universities are adding on-campus food pantries, it is unclear how access to on-campus food pantries impacts eating behaviors and food insecurity.

Objective: To explore how the cycle of food abundance and scarcity impacts food-insecure college students' eating behaviors and how access to a campus food pantry impacts this cycle.

Study Design, Settings, and Participants: Food-insecure, undergraduate students (n=40) from institutions around Illinois with food pantries (n=20) and without food pantries (n=20) who met inclusion criteria completed one-on-one semi-structured interviews via Zoom.

Outcome Measures and Analysis: Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Investigators performed content analysis to identify and compare themes among participants with and without access to a campus food pantry.

Results: Students with and without access to a campus food pantry discussed similar experiences, including experiencing periods of food abundance and scarcity, and using a variety of food-related behaviors to cope with their food situation. Some students attending institutions with an on-campus food pantry were unaware that a pantry existed. Students from both types of institutions reported that although they did not use one, an on-campus pantry has the potential to increase food availability and improve eating habits; however, regardless if a pantry was on campus, students reported that shame and embarrassment would prevent them from using university resources.

Conclusions: Food-insecure college students may exhibit disordered eating behaviors, including restriction and binge eating, to cope with their food situation. Furthermore, the existence of a campus food pantry alone is insufficient for addressing college food insecurity and the corresponding disordered eating behaviors.

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P002 Access to Fresh Produce and Low-Fat Food Products in SNAP-Eligible Virginians During COVID-19

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Background: Consuming fresh produce and low-fat food products is desirable to maintain a healthy diet. Restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in disruptions in the food supply and difficulties in access to fresh produce and low-fat products.

Objective: To assess food access to fresh produce and low-fat products among SNAP-eligible Virginians during COVID-19.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: An online Qualtrics cross-sectional survey was conducted with SNAP-eligible Virginians aged 18 and older in November-December 2020.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Survey questions included socio-demographic information and questions about access to, and quality of, fresh produce and low-fat products within the respondents' neighborhoods. Descriptive statistics were computed in SPSS.

Results: Of 973 survey responses, 228 (23.4%) respondents reported difficulties accessing fresh produce; 215 (22.1%) difficulty accessing fresh produce of high quality; and 233 (23.9%) issues with breadth of produce selection. By contrast, 184 (19.0%) respondents reported difficulty accessing low-fat products and 184 respondents (19.0%) reported issues with breadth of low-fat product selection. Severe difficulties in accessing both fresh produce and low-fat products were noted in Southwest and Eastern Virginia.

Conclusions: Overall, one-quarter of survey respondents reported challenges with accessing produce. While we did not assess changes because of COVID-19 specifically, efforts to support access to nutritious options is a critical component of promoting food security and community food security. These results can inform and tailor coordinated programs that include nutrition education programs and policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives. Follow-up research is warranted to determine ongoing challenges with food access among adults and households with lower incomes.

Funding: USDA Virginia Cooperative Extension Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education, Virginia Department of Social Services (SNAP)

P003 Feasibility of Using MMCA Strategies to Promote Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Selection and Prevent Food Waste in Food Pantries

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Background: Fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV) are often discarded by food pantries due to perishability. Emerging research documents the effectiveness of marketing-mix and choice-architecture (MMCA) strategies to increase client selection of FFV and reduce food waste in food pantries.

Objective: To explore perceptions of Virginia food pantry personnel on the feasibility of implementing MMCA strategies to improve clients' selection of FFV and decrease food waste during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: A cross-sectional, 24-item online survey was conducted with food pantry personnel representing 68 food pantries in Virginia. Participants were recruited through existing partnerships with SNAP-Ed and EFNEP employees between April to May 2021. The survey examined food distribution methods, perceived feasibility of 15 MMCA sub-strategies, and factors explaining the feasibility of MMCA strategies.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Descriptive statistics were used to describe food pantry characteristics, food distribution methods, and feasible MMCA sub-strategies. Binary logistic regression tests determined factors predicting perceived feasibility of MMCA sub-strategies.

Results: Over three-quarters of food pantries (n = 55, 80.9%) distributed food using a touchless, pre-packed method to support safety measures, which limited the feasibility of implementing most MMCA sub-strategies. Regardless of distribution method, offering recipe cards (promotion) was the most feasible sub-strategy (80.6%). Of the 18 (26.5%) food pantries that reported using the client-choice distribution method, feasible sub-strategies included placing FFV in attractive baskets (83.3%) (place) and increasing the number of FFV clients can select (83.3%) (pricing). Factors predicting the (in)feasibility of MMCA strategies included the perception that these strategies were effective in helping clients make healthier choices and misalignment of strategies with current food pantry food distribution method.

Conclusions: To increase the adoption of MMCA strategies, researchers and practitioners need to match MMCA strategies with perceptions of food pantry staff and food pantry distribution methods. Future research could examine required implementation resources, client acceptability and sustainability of MMCA strategies, and the

potential of these strategies to reduce food waste within food pantries and clients' households.

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P004 Strategies and Unmet Needs to Reduce Household Food Waste Reported by Self-identified Food Conservers

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Background: In the United States, about 30% of edible food produced is wasted, and 20% is wasted at the consumer level. Yet, an estimated 35% of Americans “put a lot of effort” into wasted food reduction, suggesting an opportunity to learn from these food conservers through positive deviance inquiry.

Objective: The purpose of the study was to identify food conservation practices, psychosocial drivers, and unmet waste mitigation needs of self-identified food conservers.

Study Design, Setting, Participants: Adult, self-identified food conservers were recruited online and screened for criteria of age and food procurement/preparation responsibility. Eligible participants completed a 90-minute virtual focus group and survey consisting of previously validated questions assessing household food waste amounts, behaviors and attitudes.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Verbatim focus group transcripts were dual coded and thematically analyzed using a hybrid inductive-deductive approach.

Results: A total of n = 27 participants completed the questionnaire and one of six focus groups consisting of 3-6 participants each. The majority of the participants were White (48%) or Asian (41%), female (67%), had a college degree (74%), had on average 2.6 members in their residence, and made above the US median household income (56%). Reported strategies to reduce food waste included meal planning, creating and adhering to shopping lists, food inventory management, anti-depth organization of food storage spaces to promote maximum visibility, meal prepping, cooking meals in the home and repurposing leftovers. Participants reported intentions to avoid waste, confidence in their ability to reduce waste, and personal and subjective norms that encourage mitigation efforts. Participants reported needing assistance determining optimal produce storage methods and desired opportunities to learn from other food conservers.

Conclusions: Self-identified food conservers reported a variety of household food waste mitigation strategies,

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