Conceptualizations of Food Insecurity Among Nutrition, Public Health, and Social Work Students

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**Background:** Recently, a call to action was made for schools that educate health professionals to provide training on social and economic determinants of health. Training future professionals in health-related fields (eg, nutrition, public health, and social work) to understand and identify the context-specific social determinants of health, including food insecurity, should be prioritized when designing curricula for clinical and public settings.

**Objective:** This study explored how students conceptualize food insecurity and their understanding of the complex conditions that lead to experiences of insufficient food resources.

**Use of Theory or Research:** Students’ responses regarding the factors that influence or cause food insecurity were classified under the five levels of the social-ecological model (individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, or policy).

**Target Audience:** A convenience sample of 306 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in academic health-related programs (47.4% nutrition and dietetics, 21.6% public health, 19.0% social work) at 12 US universities participated in a cross-sectional online survey.

**Evaluation Methods:** Responses to an open-ended question soliciting the students’ definitions of food insecurity were analyzed for themes. A team of four researchers developed a codebook using an inductive approach. Two researchers then independently coded the responses, reconciled differences within the coding process, and identified emerging themes.

**Results:** Students’ understanding of food insecurity was diverse—definitions representing a continuum of responses ranging from physiological experiences of hunger to worrying about food access. Themes associated with individual, interpersonal, and community-level factors influencing food insecurity were identified. Students highlighted food quality, access, and consistency as essential features of being food secure.

**Conclusion:** Understanding the multi-dimensional factors contributing to food insecurity and the contexts in which food insecurity occurs is essential for future nutrition, dietetics, and public health professionals. Nutrition professionals teaching in higher education settings have an opportunity to support students’ understanding of food insecurity and its multiple factors.

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**Background:** Recent research increasingly associates ultra-processed food (UPF) consumption with a range of diet-related diseases, leading to discussions of interventions for reducing UPF consumption. However, little is known regarding consumer perceptions of UPF, including the degree to which consumers prioritize nutrient content relative to degree of processing when evaluating a food’s overall healthfulness.

**Objective:** To identify the proportion of adult consumers who have heard of the term “ultra-processed food” in a statewide sample of adults residing in Vermont, and to examine the criteria Vermont consumers prioritize when evaluating a food product’s healthfulness.

**Study Design, Setting, Participants:** Online survey collected from 671 Vermont residents in 2022, randomly sampled from a commercially available email list. Survey

*Continued on page 10*
Rose (continued)

questions assessed perceptions of UPF and how consumers prioritize nutrient (sugar, fat, sodium) and non-nutrient (ingredients, processing) criteria when assessing the healthfulness of packaged foods.

**Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** Descriptive statistics present perceptions of UPF, the proportion of respondents prioritizing each criterion, and demographic characteristics (age, gender, income, education) of the sample. Associations between variables are compared using chi-squares and logistic regression (p<0.05).

**Results:** When assessing the healthfulness of food products, respondents prioritized levels of added sugar (52.6% of respondents), ingredients (44.4%), and minimal processing (42.8%); and were less concerned with sodium (41.3%) and fat (37.3%) contents. Half of respondents (55%) had previously heard of the term “ultra-processed foods,” and the majority (91%) of those who had heard of UPF were concerned about the levels of UPF in their diets. Nearly a third of respondents (30%) reported making changes to reduce their UPF purchase and consumption patterns, and these respondents were more likely to prioritize minimal processing (OR: 2.99, 95% CI: 2.0-4.4) and kitchen ingredients (OR: 1.70; 95% CI: 1.2-2.5) after controlling for demographic variables.

**Conclusion:** The public is concerned with high levels of ultra-processed foods in their diets and considers a range of non-nutrient criteria when identifying healthier food choices, including criteria related to ultra-processing.

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**Mapping Food and Nutrition Education Resources and Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers in the Pacific Islands**

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**Background:** Schools provide a unique opportunity to educate and motivate Pacific Island students and the wider Pacific Island community about food systems, food production activities (e.g., gardening and cooking) and to focus on the knowledge and skills needed to make healthy and sustainable food choices. However, it has been reported that school educators can find it challenging to translate food and nutrition curriculum to lesson plans and learning activities and source contextually-relevant resources.

**Objective:** This project aimed to identify food and nutrition curriculum materials and professional development/upskilling activities available for Pacific Island educators, to inform the development of a web-based resource.

**Study Design, Settings, Participants:** In 2022, a systematic desk-based scoping activity was undertaken to identify any resources available to teach food and nutrition in Pacific Island schools (primary and secondary level) and professional development opportunities relevant for educators for 14 countries.

**Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** Identification, and categorisation of food and nutrition teaching resources and professional development opportunities.

**Results:** There are limited resources and opportunities for Pacific Island food and nutrition teachers to upskill in food and nutrition education. There are several resources that are available for specific countries, but few that are designed for use regionally. Some of these resources are directly aligned to food-based dietary guidelines, while others appear to be developed for specific activities by non-governmental organisations. Resources that could support food and nutrition education in schools was related to cooking, ocean and waterway foods, food in schools, food safety, gardening, healthy eating, pacific research, sustainability, teaching practice and WASH.

**Conclusion:** School educators may benefit from more food and nutrition resources and professional development activities to complement those that are currently available. Given the challenges experienced in locating and sourcing resources, all resources and professional development opportunities were collated and linked to on a web-based resource, the Pacific School Food Hub.

**Funding:** This work was undertaken within a project funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Sub-regional Office for the Pacific Islands.

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**Monitoring Is an Effective Parenting Practice to Encourage Adolescents to Meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans**

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**Background:** Monitoring parenting practice refers to the tracking of what a children eat and drink. Parents can monitor their children to ensure they consume adequate amounts of healthy food and avoid unhealthy food to meet the daily recommended minimum Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) for all food groups.

**Objective:** This study examines how monitoring parenting practice is related to meeting the daily recommended minimum of DGA for the consumption of all MyPlate food items by adolescents.

**Study Design, Setting, and Participants:** The study design was cross-sectional. An online survey by Qualtrics was used to collect the data from 211 parents with their adolescents (10-17 years old). Parents answered ten questions to identify the degree of their monitoring practice. The 2012 Youth Adolescent Food Frequency Questionnaire collected adolescent food consumption data. Spearman rank correlation coefficient, Wilcoxon rank-sum test, and stepwise logistic regression were performed.

**Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** How parental monitoring helps adolescents to meet the daily recommended

*Continued on page 11*