Critical Points and Complements of the Food Pantry According to Latin-American Ph.D. Students’ Experiences: A Case Study

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Background: Campus food pantries act as emergency food assistance for students who are struggling to get food. There is limited data available to describe college students’ awareness of existing food pantries and their usage for food acquisition and its benefit among international students who rely on the use of this service.

Objective: To get a broader understanding using a case study with doctoral students from Latin-America, of the importance of the food pantry as a food resource facility on campus, drivers, and barriers to using this resource, and propose solutions to enhance the service quality.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: The case study was approached from an interpretive paradigm consistent with an ontological domain. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during fall-2022. To maintain research quality, this study follows qualitative best practices (Big-Tent). Twelve Ph.D. students from Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, El-Salvador, Mexico, and Panama, were sampled using homogeneous sampling technique. For purposes of a case study, the interviews with Latin participants from master’s programs (n=5) were excluded.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data saturation occurred when no new themes emerged among all participants. A two-cycle coding was conducted: elemental technique (first phase), and cumulative coding technique (second phase).

Results: Seven themes emerged in this research, four surrounding the food pantry service: 1) limited finances as a motivator to use the service; 2) churches as a complement