

Food Insecurity among Children

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Household food insecurity and hunger are major problems all over the world, even in US and Canada. Food insecurity implies that there is lack of sufficient food to fuel a healthy and active lifestyle. It is having limited or uncertain access to food resulting from financial constraints.

Because food insecurity is a growing global concern, much attention has been given to it and the resulting social, psychological, and physical effects in recent years. It affects one in six American households with children. It seems to be prevalent among socioeconomically disadvantaged households with children [3]. It remains a persistent and alarming problem in some developing nations. Most food-insecure households cope with life by limiting the types of food they buy and by relying on public food assistance programs. Child hunger causes poor health outcomes and nutrient deficiencies such as calcium or iron deficiency. It can lead to behavioral problems, poor grades in school, poor health, aggression, anxiety, and attention deficit disorder in elementary-age children. It can also lead to obesity, depression, and suicidal ideation during young adulthood.

Poverty and food insecurity have serious consequences for the health and well-being of children and their parents. Those impacted by poverty or food insecurity are likely to experience resource-related hardships [4]. Parents as well as their children suffer from food insecurity.

ABSTRACT

Food insecurity refers to the lack of nutritious foods to maintain good health. It is a serious health problem that is related to other social difficulties such as poverty. Children from food insecure households have less consistent access to food. This may lead to behavioral problems and poor grades in school. Ensuring food security for young children should be a national priority because it greatly affects their current and future health. This paper provides a brief introduction to food insecurity in children.

Keywords: food insecurity, children, child food insecurity

INTRODUCTION

Food is important to maintain body systems and fulfill the basic needs for growth and development. Having access to nutritious food is vitally important to good health and economic well-being.

Food security is a fundamental human right. It means that you are not worried about when the next meal is coming, nor do you need to cut back on food in order to pay the bills. Governments around the globe have a moral responsibility to feed people under their jurisdiction through food self-sufficiency, which is the nation's ability to provide basic food for its citizens [1]. Food security, when all people at all times have access to sufficient and nutritious food is the ideal environment in which to raise a child [2].

FOOD INSECURITY

Food-related hardship has been referred to as food insecurity or hunger. Food insecurity has become a central issue of public policy and public concern. Food insecurity refers to the uncertainty of having enough food for all household members to sustain active, healthy living due to lack of money or other resources [5]. A household is regarded as food insecure if it does not have consistent access to adequate food. Food insecurity depends on factors such as income, employment, education, local food access, and household structure (i.e. single parents or married couples). Food insecurity is more prevalent in households headed by single women than those with married couples.

The causes of food insecurity among households with children are complex and involve many factors. Children from food insecure households suffer from poor health (incidences of infection, stomach aches, headaches, colds, ear infections, childhood obesity, and iron deficiency), lower cognitive skills, poorer academic achievement compared with their food-secure peers. This prevents these children from reaching their full potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic difficulty influences household food availability. This in turn affects food intake of household members. Child food insecurity is inexcusable and could be addressed if

stakeholders collaborate to implement the following food availability recommendations:

- Policymakers should increase and invest in local food supply options
- Provide some types of interventions, such as food stamps or food supplementation (WIC, Medicaid, or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)), work support benefits, tax credits, public health insurance, child care vouchers, and housing subsidies.
- Farmers should sell local produce just above wholesale price to increase affordability
- Promote educational opportunities with inclusion of context-relevant skills
- Provide employment opportunities and affordable housing to parents

The government should embark on programs and policies that address child health disparities through education and policy formulation that ensure a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice.

CONCLUSION

Food insecurity can occur and inflict harm to individuals of any age, but it can be especially devastating to children. Food insecurity among children remains a critical issue and a persistent social concern worldwide. It is negatively related to child health and development. It has the potential of affecting children's learning, social interaction, and

productivity. Long-term solutions lie in adequate incomes for families and eradication of poverty.

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