

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**EMPIRICAL STUDY OF  
SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD  
SECURITY AMONG URBAN LOW-  
INCOME HOUSEHOLDS IN  
SELANGOR**

**NORFAIEZAH BINTI ALIAS**

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## ABSTRACT

Malaysia's urbanization rate reached 78.72% by 2023, and the global population is projected to grow to 9.8 billion by 2050, necessitating urgent urban food security solutions that align with SDG 2. Despite strong national food security, low-income urban households in Malaysia are vulnerable to rising living costs, inflation, and reliance on imports due to the limited availability of affordable, fresh, and nutritious food. This study investigates food quality, accessibility, and availability among families in Selangor to assess the sustainability of food security. The study indicates that poor urban populations in Selangor face seasonal food shortages, supply chain disruptions, income constraints, and rising food prices. It explores how food availability, accessibility, and quality impact sustainability and proposes potential improvements. The study employed qualitative in-depth interviews complemented by quantitative questionnaires. NVivo software was used to thematically analyse interview data from low-income households, policymakers, and stakeholders, while SPSS and PLS software were employed for descriptive statistics, regression modelling, and factor analysis of the survey data. The research focused on the PPR Gombak area in Selangor. Findings reveal that food insecurity in Selangor is not primarily caused by a lack of food, but rather by systemic weaknesses such as seasonal supply disruptions, increasing food prices, and limited access to nutritious food options. Affordability emerged as the primary barrier, exacerbated by inflation and cost-of-living pressures, even when food was available. These insights underscore that food security cannot be addressed through supply alone; it requires comprehensive measures that enhance accessibility and affordability. The study proposes a framework to guide policymakers in integrating governance strategies, social protection, and community-based initiatives to ensure resilience and sustainability. Overall, the research contributes to the discourse on urban poverty, governance, and sustainable development by offering policy-relevant recommendations that align with national strategies and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Keywords:** Sustainability of Food Security, Urban Low-income Households, Food Availability, Food Accessibility, Food Quality

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

As urbanization becomes an increasingly significant driver of migration to cities, it raises serious questions about the future of food security, particularly in rapidly urbanizing countries like Malaysia. According to a 2018 United Nations projection, by 2050, 70% of the global population will live in cities, up from the current 55%. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (2022) reports that urbanization rates in the country are rising, with projections indicating that they will reach 78.72% between 2022 and 2024. This demographic shift, coupled with the expectation that the global population will reach 9.8 billion by 2050, suggests that food consumption will increase by 60% (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2019). Addressing these challenges requires the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2, which focuses on eliminating hunger by 2030. This goal aims to achieve food security by strengthening sustainable agriculture and promoting healthy eating (United Nations, 2015). No country can tackle these global challenges alone (FAO, 2020). While agricultural production has the potential to feed the world, food security primarily depends on ensuring access to affordable, high-quality food from reliable sources (FAO, 2008). Immediate action is essential to combat hunger, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable farming practices, particularly given the growing urban population (United Nations, 2023).

Although Malaysia's overall food security status is relatively strong, it masks underlying vulnerabilities, especially among urban low-income households. In the 2022 Global Food Security Index (GFSI), Malaysia ranked 41st out of 113 countries, with a score of 69.9 out of 100. In the Asia-Pacific GFSI for the same year, Malaysia ranked 7th among the 23 nations assessed. This index evaluates four core pillars: adaptability to changing conditions, cost-effectiveness, accessibility, and food quality and safety (GFSI, 2022). This ranking demonstrates that Malaysia has a relatively robust food security system but also highlights the need for continued efforts to address inherent weaknesses, particularly within urban households.