

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA (UiTM)

FINAL YEAR PROJECT

**FOOD INSECURITY AND ITS ASSOCIATION WITH MENTAL HEALTH AND BMI
STATUS AMONG UiTM PUNCAK ALAM STUDENTS**

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JULY 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praises to Allah for giving me the opportunity and guidance in my one-year journey of working on this thesis. I sincerely appreciate all of the people who have helped and encouraged me while I have conducted my research.

First and foremost, I want to sincerely thank Assoc Prof. Dr. Siti Sabariah Binti Buhari, my supervisor, for her wise counsel, helpful criticism, and unfailing support, all of which have greatly influenced the direction of this effort.

I express my gratitude to my friends and coworkers for their invaluable insights, thought-provoking conversations, and unwavering support during this research trip. Their assistance has been really helpful.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to my family for their patience, understanding, and steadfast support throughout this endeavour. Their support and affection have always been a source of bravery.

Without the help of everyone, I could not have dreamed of producing such work with effort and perfection if it was not for the guidance I have received. I once again thank everyone profoundly for their support and help.

ABSTRACT

Background: This research aims to identify whether food insecurity has the potential to be a critical factor in causing adverse effects on mental health and BMI status in young adults. Early adulthood is an important period for growth and development as the education and economics of an individual transition into a bigger part of their life. However, the risk of food insecurity increases with it due to some factors causing the individual to develop issues with their mental health and BMI status. **Purpose:** To investigate the association between food insecurity with mental health status and BMI status. **Method:** The data is to be collected among UiTM Puncak Alam students aged 20-25 years old who fit the qualifications to answer the questionnaires. They will self-report their well-being through the questionnaires 'Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale' (DASS-21), BMI, and Radimer/Cornell Hunger Scale. The data will be analysed to find the associations between food insecurity with mental health status and BMI status. **Results:** Food insecurity is significantly associated with depression, anxiety and stress but does not have an association with BMI status. **Conclusion:** This study aims to emphasise the adverse effect of food insecurity towards mental health and BMI status.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION.....	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	2
ABSTRACT.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
List of Tables.....	6
List of Figures.....	6
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	7
1.1 Research Background.....	7
1.2 Problem Statement.....	8
1.3 Significance of Study.....	9
1.4 Research Questions and Research Objectives.....	9
1.4.1 Research Questions.....	9
1.4.2 Research Objectives.....	9
1.5 Hypothesis.....	10
1.6 Scope of Study.....	10
1.7 Research Framework.....	10
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 Definition and Prevalence of Food Insecurity.....	12
2.2 Food Insecurity among University Students.....	14
2.3 Food Insecurity and Mental Health.....	17
2.4 Food Insecurity and Body Mass Index (BMI) Status.....	20
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	23
3.1 Research Design.....	23
3.2 Study Location.....	23
3.3 Study Subject: Inclusion Criteria.....	23
3.4 Sample Size.....	24
3.6 Research Instruments.....	24
3.6.1 Mental Health Status.....	24
3.6.2 Food Insecurity Status.....	25
3.6.3 Body Mass Index Status.....	26
3.7 Data collection.....	27
3.8 Data analysis.....	28
3.9 Ethical consideration.....	28
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	29
4.1 Assessment of Sociodemographic Data, Food Insecurity Status and BMI Status.....	29
4.2 Assessment of Mental Health Status.....	32

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

According to the USDA, food insecurity is the inability of a household to consistently obtain enough food for each member to have an active, healthy life. This could be a short-term or long-term predicament for the family. One indicator of how many people cannot afford food is food insecurity. The Global Hunger Index (2023) has recorded that Malaysia is ranked 56th out of 125 countries with a score of 12.5 thus concluding that the hunger level in the country is at a moderate status. Even so, Malaysia's issue regarding food insecurity cannot be taken lightly especially when certain ages and races of people are mostly facing this issue. Some of them include *Orang Asli*, low-income households/welfare-recipient households, university students, and the elderly (Norhasmah et al., 2021).

This research topic is going to delve more into the food insecurity issue surrounding young adults specifically university students as they are more exposed to all kinds of consequences and they were found to be at a higher risk of food insecurity with the reported prevalence varying from 43.5% to 67.7% according to studies by Nur Atiqah et al. (2015), Norhasmah et al. (2013) and Siti Marhana et al. (2014). Food insecurity has been known to come with a few consequences. The psychological, dietary (macro- and micronutrient intakes), nutritional status, and health effects were all consequences of household food insecurity (Norhasmah et al., 2021). However, there is not much research that has been done regarding the effects of food insecurity on mental health and BMI status among young adults or university students. Although a few research from other countries has proven that food insecurity does take a toll on mental health and BMI status, adding another research would provide more knowledge regarding this issue thus further proving that food insecurity is indeed associated with the cause of the degrading states of mental health and BMI status of university students (Nagata et al., 2019).