

A20 Psychosocial factors as mediators to the relationship between food security status and academic performance among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Empirical evidences suggested that the increasing number of food insecurity become a threat to students' well-being and success. It is crucial to prevent food insecurity in order to produce a quality and productive future nation. The phenomenon of food insecurity, if not treated, could give big loss to nation due to its consequences which include psychosocial health and academic success. Therefore, this study aims to determine the potential mediators on the relationship of food security status and academic performance through psychosocial health (stress, anxiety and depression) among undergraduate students in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). This cross-sectional study was conducted among participants ($n=663$) involving seven randomly selected faculties in UPM. An online self-reported questionnaire was used, comprised of socio-demographic backgrounds, 10-item U.S Adult Food Security Survey Module and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for academic performance. Results indicate that majority of respondents were female (63.6%), Malay (68.5%), single (96.2%), not working part-time (94.9%), living inside campus (82.7%), financial aid recipient (91.4%) and had CGPA less than 3.75 for academic performance (88.6%). About 62.8% reported to have experienced food insecurity. The prevalence of stress (34.5%), anxiety (77.3%) dan depression (40.1%) was reported among respondents. Linear regression reveals that food security status associated with anxiety ($B=0.288$, $SE=0.136$, $p<0.05$), depression ($B=0.460$, $SE=0.126$, $p<0.05$) and GCPA ($B=-0.018$, $SE=0.004$, $p<0.05$) but not stress ($B=0.207$, $SE=0.132$, $p>0.05$). In the mediation analysis using PROCESS SPSS macro, it was found that food security status has an indirect effect on academic performance through anxiety and depression but not through stress. The result suggests that higher institutions especially student's affair division and counselling unit play important role considering organizing psychosocial health management session as an alternative to improve academic performance besides diminish food insecurity among students.