

Review

A Food Insecurity Systematic Review: Experience from Malaysia

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Abstract: Living free from hunger is a basic human right. However, some communities still experience household food insecurity. This systematic literature review explored different aspects of household food insecurity in Malaysia including vulnerable groups, prevalence, risk factors, coping strategies, and the consequences of food insecurity. The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. Thirty-three relevant articles were selected from scientific databases such as CINAHL, Pubmed and Google Scholar, scrutiny of reference lists, and personal communication with experts in the field. The prevalence of household food insecurity in Malaysia was unexpectedly reported as high, with affected groups including *Orang Asli*, low-income household/welfare-recipient households, university students, and the elderly. Demographic risk factors and socioeconomic characteristics included larger household, living in poverty, and low education. Coping strategies were practices to increase the accessibility of food in their households. Consequences of household food insecurity included psychological, dietary (macro- and micronutrient intakes), nutritional status, and health impacts. In conclusion, this review confirmed that household food insecurity in Malaysia continues to exist. Nevertheless, extensive and active investigations are encouraged to obtain a more holistic and comprehensive picture pertaining to household food security in Malaysia.

Keywords: household food insecurity; Malaysia; risk factors; coping strategies; consequences



Citation: Sulaiman, N.; Yeatman, H.; Russell, J.; Law, L.S. A Food Insecurity Systematic Review: Experience from Malaysia. *Nutrients* **2021**, *13*, 945. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030945>

Academic Editors: Joanne E. Cecil and Samantha Caton

Received: 2 January 2021

Accepted: 11 March 2021

Published: 15 March 2021

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1. Introduction

There are approximately 200 definitions of food security [1,2], with the most widely used definition:

‘Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ [3]

The definition of food security is multidimensional, built on four ‘pillars’, namely physical availability of food, economic and physical access to food, food utilization, and stability of the three dimensions over time [4].

Food insecurity exists whenever “the availability of nutritional adequate and safe foods or ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways is limited or uncertain” [5]. The importance of addressing food insecurity has been recognised through the second goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 [6].