Examining interrelations between food insecurity and disordered eating behaviours and attitudes among urban dwelling young Canadian adults

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BACKGROUND

➢ Food insecurity and disordered eating are each prevalent among young adults

➢ Both encompass worry or anxiety focused on food and, depending on severity, restrictions in food intake; however, links between the two are under-researched, posing a barrier to integrated prevention efforts

➢ Food insecurity: inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints

➢ In 2012, 13% of Canadian households experienced food insecurity

➢ Young adults may be overrepresented

➢ Almost 1 in 3 young adults aged 16 to 30 years recruited from five urban centres across Canada in 2016 reported indicators of household food insecurity

➢ High rates of food insecurity have been reported among post-secondary students

➢ Disordered eating: refers to the regular engagement of unhealthy eating and weight-control behaviours such as dieting, binging and purging, as well as unhealthy attitudes about one’s body

➢ Studies suggest that approximately 25-50% of young adults report indications of disordered eating

➢ Among US adults who visited food pantries, those reporting the most severe food insecurity were more likely to report indicators of eating disorders, including binge eating and dietary restraint

➢ Food insecurity and disordered eating are each prevalent among young adults

➢ The two public health issues are currently addressed in isolation, but the application of a systems lens may inform integrated strategies to address shared risk factors and reduce the negative outcomes of both

OBJECTIVES

➢ To examine:

   ➢ The co-occurrence of food insecurity and disordered eating attitudes and behaviours among young Canadian adults

   ➢ Whether experiences of food insecurity predict disordered eating attitudes and behaviours three years later

METHODS

➢ We will draw upon the Canada Food Study, which is following young adults (16-30 years) from five urban centres across Canada, 2016-2019

➢ Longitudinal sample at year 2, n=~1,000

➢ Food insecurity measured using Household Food Security Survey Module, adopted from Canadian Community Health Survey

➢ Disordered eating behaviours and attitudes measured include binge eating, emotional eating, body dissatisfaction, and weight preoccupation

KEY REFERENCES


Maynard M. Experiences of Food Insecurity Among Undergraduate Students at the University of Waterloo: Barriers, Coping Strategies, and Perceived Health and Academic Outcomes. 2015-177.


IMPLICATIONS

➢ Rates of food insecurity and disordered eating behaviours among young adults are alarming

➢ Food insecurity has been associated with worrisome mental health outcomes, including depression and suicidal ideation, among adolescents and adults

➢ It is not known whether eating disorder pathology might mediate this relationship

➢ The two public health issues are currently addressed in isolation, but the application of a systems lens may inform integrated strategies to address shared risk factors and reduce the negative outcomes of both