SOCIO-ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF HOUSEHOLD FOOD INSECURITY

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Background: Food security refers to the assured access to enough food at all times for a healthy and active life. Households are considered to be food-insecure if they have uncertain or have limited access to food through normal channels. Food-insecure households lie along a continuum. As food insecurity becomes more severe, household members may begin/continue to disrupt their normal eating, skip meals, and experience hunger due to lack of money for food; then hunger falls at the far end which may lead to malnutrition, poor growth and mental retardation to the children. This study documents the prevalence and correlates of food insecurity in the Philippines. The results of this study are useful in identifying households or individuals who are likely to be food-insecure using the determinants identified, which are the interest of program planners and implementors.

Objective: To determine the socio-demographic and economic characteristics and nutritional status influencing households who are food-insecure.

Methods: The 6th National Nutrition Survey (2003) employed the sampling design adopted by the Family Income and Expenditure Survey of the National Statistics Office. A total of 786 enumeration areas were covered nationwide. There were 3,568 of 0-10 year-old children included in this analysis. The study adopted the Radimer/Cornell measures of hunger and food insecurity, introducing some modifications. The items were classified into three levels, namely: (a) food insecurity of the mother/caregiver, (b) food insecurity of the child/children, and (c) food insecurity of the household. All computations were done using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed for all variables to describe the characteristics of food-insecure households. To determine the relationship between food insecurity and other variables, the odds ratio and comparison of means were done. A logistic regression model was used to predict food insecurity.

Results: The probability of a household being food-insecure is increased when the child is underweight, stunted and when household size is increased. On the other hand, the probability of a household being food-insecure is decreased when the household has a vehicle, has many types of appliances, has more bedrooms, their toilet facility is water-sealed, the educational attainment of the mother is high and the mother is employed.

Conclusion/Recommendation: Socio-economic and household characteristics and nutritional status of the child is related to food insecurity and they can be used to predict the likelihood of the household, child and mother being food-insecure. Further studies can be done on food insecurity. Validation of the tool used in determining food insecurity using food consumption and nutrient intakes of individuals and households, and expenditure of households should be done.