

Understanding the Factors that Influence School Food Pantry Participation

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Food Insecurity

- Between 2000 and 2011, the prevalence of food insecurity in households with children increased from 16.2% to 20.6% (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2012)
- In 2011, children were food insecure in 10.0% of households with children (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2012)
- Food insecurity is associated with worse academic performance, social development, and health outcomes

Food Assistance

- Federal food assistance does not reach all food insecure households
 - 55% of food insecure individuals are income-eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and 29% are not income-eligible for any federal food assistance (Gundersen et al., 2011)
 - Among households that are eligible, SNAP does not cover their entire food need
 - SNAP benefits don't last the whole month for most participants, with 90% of benefits being redeemed by the third week of the month (Castner & Henke, 2011)
- School food pantries provide assistance to households with children

Research Questions

Given the negative consequences of food insecurity and the need for food assistance, this study investigates the following two questions:

- 1) Which participant- and pantry-level characteristics predict school pantry use?
- 2) Among participants, which participant- and pantry-level factors predict higher levels of participation?

Literature

Previous studies focus on participation in pantries and have identified the following factors as associated with pantry use:

- Low education
- Single-parent household
- Use of other food assistance
- Convenience of pantry
- Food quality
- Stigma

(Bhattarai, Duffy, & Raymond, 2005; Daponte et al., 1998; Wimer, Wright, & Fong, 2012)

School Food Pantries

- Conveniently distribute food to households with children at schools
- Three different service delivery models:
 - Mobile Market/Client Choice
 - Permanent Space/Client Choice
 - Pre-bagged/Pre-boxed
- In 2011, Feeding America provided meals to over 66,000 students through 353 pantry sites (Feeding America, 2013)

Overview of Data

- Collected between May 23rd 2012 and June 22nd 2012 from 8 school food pantries associated with 3 food banks in different geographic locations
- Pantries and schools were selected based on their characteristics and willingness to participate
- Surveys were pre-tested and received IRB approval
- 208 recipients and 47 non-recipients were interviewed
- Respondents comprise a convenience sample
- Respondents were provided a \$10 gift card as an incentive

Recipient and Non-recipient Surveys

- Recipient survey covered the following topics:
 - Demographics
 - Usage of the pantry
 - Food received
 - Convenience and environment of the pantry
 - Ability to store and prepare received foods
 - Impact of the pantry on their lives
 - Non-recipients were solely asked about their demographic information and the reasons they did not use the pantry

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	All survey respondents	Recipients	Non-recipients
Female	86.7%	88.9%*	76.6%
<i>Age group:</i>			
18-19	1.2%	0.5%*	4.3%
20-29	18.0%	17.3%	21.3%
30-39	40.4%	41.4%	36.2%
40-49	23.9%	23.6%	25.5%
50-59	10.2%	10.6%	8.5%
>=60	6.3%	6.7%	4.3%
<i>Relationship to child:</i>			
Parent	76.9%	79.3%*	66.0%
Grandparent	12.9%	12.5%	14.9%
Sibling	1.6%	1.4%	2.1%
Neighbor	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Legal guardian	2.4%	2.4%	2.1%
Other	6.3%	4.3%*	14.9%
<i>Number of household members:</i>			
1-3	24.3%	23.1%	29.8%
4-6	60.0%	61.1%	55.3%
7-10	14.9%	15.4%	12.8%
>=10	0.8%	0.5%	2.1%
Sample size	255	208	47

*Recipients and non-recipients are statistically different at the 5 percent level.

Reasons for Non-Participation

	Percent reporting explanation
Not aware of the school food pantry	51.1%
Inconvenient hours	19.2%
Gets food assistance from other sources	12.8%
Does not need food assistance	8.5%
Does not wish to be seen using pantry at the school	2.1%
Poor quantity food	2.1%
Poor quality food	0.0%
Sample size	47

Regression Models

- Linear Probability Models investigating any participation
 - Dependent variable: Binary variable indicating whether the respondent reports using the pantry at any point during the school year
 - Sample: All respondents
- Linear Probability Models investigating frequency of participation
 - Dependent variable: Binary variable indicating whether the respondent used the pantry frequently or not
 - Sample: Pantry participants

Key Findings Regarding Any Participation (Table 1)

- Female parents/guardians are more likely to use services
- Non-parent caregivers are less likely to use services than parents
- Whether the pantry is client choice or not does not predict participation

Key Findings Regarding Frequency of Participation (Table 2)

- With the exception of age, demographic variables do not predict frequency of use of the pantry
- Using other food pantries predicts less frequent use of the school food pantry
- Receiving food that is normally what the client eats is associated with more frequent use of the pantry

Limitations

- Food banks, pantries, and survey respondents were not randomly selected
- Data collection occurred at one point in time
- Respondents were likely inclined to provide the socially-desirable responses
- Language barrier
 - 15% of recipients required a translator