

**RELATIONSHIP OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF
CHILDREN ATTENDING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)
CENTERS IN TRINIDAD**

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Background: With the accelerating food prices, increasing inflation rates and the number of low income families in Trinidad and Tobago, food insecurity continues to threaten a large number of households within the society.

Objectives- (1) To evaluate household food security status and determine its relationship on nutritional status with children attending two Early Childhood Care Education Centers in Trinidad. (2) Assess household food security status using the household food security scale. Determine preschoolers average BMI using anthropometric measurements, (3) to determine height-for- age and weight-for-age percentile using CDC growth charts. (4) Determine dietary intake.

Methods- In this cross sectional study design, the sample size was 32 subjects. Dietary intake was measured along with height and weight of each child, data was also collected on household food security from care takers. Height and weight was measured during school hours and the food frequency questionnaire along with the household food security scale was taken home by children to be given to primary caregivers. A follow up was done a day later to ensure all food frequency questions were answered correctly.

Results - There was no significant relationship between household food security status and nutritional status of preschoolers. The mean BMI for children from the food secure household was 14.82 ± 2.59 and the mean BMI for children from food insecure households was 14.52 ± 1.90 . A ($p=.770$) showed that these groups were not significantly different. When income was added to the model, there was no interaction between food security level and family income on BMI ($p=.691$). There was evidence that subjects who were food insecure, were less likely to consume

fruits and vegetables frequently. Relations between food security and nutritional status is probable to evolve within time

Conclusion - there was no significant relationship in household food security status and children nutritional status.