

Food Security Resilience Among Tennessee Households Post COVID-19: Exploring Absorptive, Adaptive, and Transformative Capacities

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted food systems across the United States, exposing significant vulnerabilities in household food security, particularly in Tennessee. Understanding how households respond to and recover from food insecurity is critical for building resilience in the face of future crises. **This study aims** to analyze the resilience of households in Knox County, Tennessee, by exploring three key dimensions of resilience: absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities that households employ to manage and mitigate food insecurity. **Data** were collected from the 2022-2023 Knox County Community Food Security Assessment, which surveyed 771 households. **The study used quantitative analysis** to examine the prevalence of food insecurity, coping strategies, and structural barriers affecting household resilience. **The results** indicate that 57% of respondents experienced food insecurity. Regarding absorptive capacities, 47% of households relied on growing their own food, while adaptive capacity was hindered by structural issues, including 76.3% feeling unqualified to apply for food assistance, 10.1% facing challenges with public transit, 14.1% lacking private transportation, and 48% reporting childcare constraints. Transformative capacity remained largely underdeveloped reflected by the facts that 97% of respondents recognize the importance of conserving farmland and community gardens. **This study contributes** a comprehensive framework for examining and strengthening food security resilience in vulnerable populations. It highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as expanded food assistance programs, income-generating opportunities, and community-driven solutions, to address systemic barriers and build long-term resilience.

Keywords: Food security, household resilience, Absorptive capacity, Adaptive capacity, Transformative capacity.