Linking Nutrition and Sustainable Food Consumption: The Effect of Chinese Traditional Health Beliefs

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Background: Food plays a vital role in promoting good health according to Chinese traditional health beliefs (THB). THB also emphasizes that harmony with nature is essential for maintaining health and well-being. Such principles of THB may align with sustainable eating practices, such as consuming locally grown, seasonal, and natural foods.

Objective: This study aims to explore the psychological mechanism through which THB beliefs link nutrition and sustainability in food consumption among Chinese university students.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: This online survey recruited 122 undergraduate students from Chinese universities to fill out a questionnaire.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: The participants reported their frequencies of sustainable food consumption, food-related health concerns, and sustainability concerns. The questionnaire used participants’ beliefs of the superiority of Western versus Chinese medicine to measure their THB. The data were analyzed using a structural equation model, where sustainable food consumption was explained by food-related sustainable concerns. In addition, traditional health beliefs, food-related health concerns, and their interaction (traditional health beliefs by health concerns) were specified to predict sustainable food consumption and sustainability concerns.

Results: The food-related sustainability concern was a significant positive predictor of sustainable food consumption behaviour (standardized regression weight b=0.50, p<0.001). Participants with stronger traditional health beliefs reported more sustainable food consumption (b=0.28, p<0.001). Surprisingly, participants with stronger food-related health concerns tended to consume less sustainable food products (b=-0.29, p=0.01). To explain the food-related sustainability concerns, the pattern of results demonstrates a moderating effect of THB. The estimated coefficients indicated that there was no significant association between food-related health concerns and sustainability concerns for participants without a strong THB (b=0.20, p>0.34). Conversely, with a strong THB, food-related health concerns were positively associated with sustainability concerns (interaction effect: b=0.81, p=0.01).

Conclusion: The results highlight that Chinese traditional health beliefs can bridge the demand for good nutrition and a sustainable environment, which has important implications for creating the synergy between nutrition education and promoting sustainable eating practices.

Funding: None

Perceptions of a Motivational Interviewing Training Designed for Community Health Workers

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Background: Use of and demand for community health workers (CHWs) as a means to support health behavior change has increased recently. To support this endeavor, CHWs are often tasked with providing motivational interviewing (MI). Existing literature points to challenges in MI training. However, perceptions of MI training among CHWs have not been explored.

Objective: Characterize the perceptions of an MI training among practicing CHWs.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: A convenience sample of practicing CHWs in Oklahoma were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews after completion of a CHW-specific MI training.

Measurable Outcomes/Analysis: All CHWs who completed the MI training were invited to participate in one semi-structured interview (SSI) post-training. Interviews prompted for acceptability of training, aspects of feasibility, and the overarching perceptions regarding the role of MI for CHWs as key members of the healthcare team. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded deductively based upon criteria for acceptability and feasibility. Two members of the research team independently and iteratively coded transcripts until >80% agreement was achieved. Transcripts were coded for themes and entered into NVivo.

Results: Ten CHWs completed SSIs; the following themes were identified: Acceptability of MI, Acceptability of MI Training, Implementation of MI and Training Content, Practicality of MI and Training, Demand for MI Training for CHWs, and Areas for Improvement. Overall, CHWs indicated MI as a skill is acceptable, as was the training, and it should be a key aspect of CHW training. “I wish when I first started [that] I would have [received] MI training...[now], I’m ready. I feel more prepared.” They also conveyed an enhanced ability to demonstrate empathy: “[It helped] me not be so assuming about their circumstances but to really listen to their stories...It doesn’t matter how affluent your life may be...as humans...we’re all six degrees of separation [away from] ‘that could be me next’.”

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