Opportunities for Multi-level, Culturally-Tailored Interventions to Improve Nutrition Access in Hispanic/Latino Communities

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Background: US Hispanics/Latino communities face limited access to nutritious foods, leading to high rates of chronic disease and food insecurity. Current nutrition access programs in New Hampshire incorporate minimal cultural tailoring and have not adapted to the rising Hispanic/Latino population. Multi-level approaches, which target systemic, social, and individual health influences, have been effective at improving nutrition access in vulnerable populations, and are warranted in NH Hispanic/Latino communities. Therefore, assessing opportunities for multi-level, culturally-tailored interventions can help address food insecurity and chronic disease in Hispanics/Latinos in NH and the US.

Objective: To identify barriers and opportunities for multi-level, culturally-tailored interventions that increase nutrition access in NH Hispanic/Latino communities.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: This cross-sectional qualitative study consisted of six semi-structured focus group discussions conducted over Zoom. The participants included representatives from the food system (n=5), public health (n=3), community-based/ nonprofit (n=6), and community nutrition education (n=6) sectors.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Participants were asked to reflect on barriers and opportunities in their work pertaining to the cultural tailoring of their nutrition access programs. Zoom audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded using inductive thematic analysis, which led to the identification of overarching themes. Data were managed using NVivo12 software.

Results: Themes related to cultural tailoring emerged within three categories: Current Practices, Barriers, and Concerns. Current practices included “expanding existing program offerings” and “seeking partnerships.” The barriers that emerged were “limited capacity,” “low workplace competence,” and “low demand.” Additionally, there were concerns that program-wide cultural tailoring practices may suggest homogeneity within a population and interfere with efforts to support clients individually.

Conclusion: The current practices, barriers, and concerns identified in this qualitative study should be considered to enhance nutrition access among Hispanic/Latino adults. These findings may guide nutrition access stakeholders to take steps towards multi-level, culturally-tailored practices to address chronic disease and food insecurity in the NH Hispanic/Latino population. These findings also revealed opportunities for cross-sector collaboration, further supporting the feasibility of multi-level solutions.

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Perceived Barriers to Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors in Low-Income Families With Children Under the Age of Three

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Background: The COVID-19 pandemic may have accelerated disparities in behavioral risk factors of child obesity among low-income families because of financial difficulties, social isolation, and other struggles.

Objective: This qualitative study conducted individual in-depth interviews with low-income families of children under the age of three to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent economic challenges have changed eating, mealtime, and sedentary behaviors.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: A generic qualitative approach was utilized to gain uncovered insight into low-income families. A total of 11 parents of children under the age of three were recruited from the Texas Tech University Early Head Start Center. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. A semi-structured interview guide was informed by the Social Cognitive Theory to explore barriers to healthy eating and active living for young children in family contexts.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: All interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed and verified by three independent reviewers. Two trained coders analyzed qualitative data throughout a process of coding in a systematic manner, assisted by MaxQDA. Both deductive and inductive approaches were utilized to complete coding. All quotes were then encoded and categorized into main- and subthemes.

Results: A majority of participants were single head-of-households (67%) and food insecure (70%). Establishing a consistent mealtime and exercise routine for children became challenging because of changes in employment status of parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most parents stated that their children’s dietary habits increased consumption of fast foods and unhealthy snacks. Many parents were unable to afford healthful foods and had utilized federal and local food assistance programs to help feed their families. All families reported that their children’s screen time has substantially increased. Moreover, most parents did not associate child screen time with obesity risk.

Conclusion: This study highlights the urgent needs of supporting families with young children to develop healthy and affordable meal ideas and establish manageable rules around snacks and screen time during COVID-19 and beyond.

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