Abstract

Background & Objective: Collecting ‘before’ and ‘after’ ratings at the time of post-testing for program evaluation, reduces the likelihood of response-shift bias with a resulting increase in reliability. This method may be promising for program evaluation, especially where overestimation of initial behaviors are likely with a resulting improvement in intervention outcomes. Applying qualitative methods, the objective is to determine client preferences for retrospective approach and format, and implement those results in two tools of varying length.

Description / Methods

The Nutrition Education Evaluation Model (NEEM) was used to guide selection of approaches and development of format for a non-traditional retrospective evaluation. Cognitive interviews were conducted at a food bank in 2006 and at Head Start and EFNEP sites, 2011-2018. Participants were low-income, English or bilingual Spanish speaking and available for an immediate interview. Several strategies were employed: concurrent and retrospective think aloud, paraphrasing probes, response format options and restating text. EFNEP educators offered opinions in unstructured discussions.

Results/ Evaluation

Study participants and EFNEP educators recommended one of four approaches: the Post then Pre. They preferred the format featuring each question on row along with two sets of response options flanking the centered question, use of a visual to portray each question, use of color to guide tool instructions, and presence of icons to support ‘before/then’ and ‘after/now’ concepts.

Conclusions/Implications

Two examples of the visual retrospective method were produced: Focus of Sweet Drinks…Now and Then for an English speaking low-income audience and Focus on Veggies…Now and Then for a Spanish speaking low-income audience. This qualitative method and the study results can be utilized by other researchers and practitioners.

Background

The retrospective pre approach for program evaluation is different from the traditional pre post prospective approach. By obtaining ‘before’ and ‘after’ ratings at the time of post-testing, the benefits are 2 fold: Lesson 1 no longer begins with a test, an issue for participants with low literacy; and the reported intervention outcome increases by neutralizing the negative impact of the response shift bias.

Although there is research supporting this retrospective approach over the traditional prospective pretest posttest approach, minimal research has examined and compared different approaches and formats to the retrospective method. These include: post + retrospective pretest, retrospective pre + post test, post test + perceived change, and perceived change (Table, Step 1).

Methods

The Nutrition Education Evaluation Model (NEEM) was used to guide selection of approach and development of format for two evaluation tools. According to the NEEM, the first priority is to meet the needs of the participant, second, of the educator and last, of the administrator or researcher. For this study, these priorities were examined via cognitive testing interviews with participants at a food bank in 2006 and at Head Start and EFNEP sites, 2011-2018. Participants were low-income, English speaking and available for an immediate interview. Participants were first asked to examine and compare a collection of four prospective approaches (Table, Step 1) and make recommendations. Using the favored approach, a variety of formats were prepared in preparation for the next round of interviews. Participants examined and compared formats. The process was iterated until the final group of interviewees was satisfied with all aspects of format, visual placement and text.

Evaluation

Study participants and educators recommended using the “Post then pre” approach (Table). They preferred a version where each question is centered on row flanked by 2 sets of response options. They preferred use of a visual to portray each question and use of color to guide tool instructions. Educators reported the following benefits to the retrospective evaluation format: Lesson #1 begins with content, not a test; time devoted to school-like test taking was reduced leaving more time for nutrition education.

Results were used to generate two examples of the visual retrospective method applied to tools to evaluate beverage consumption among low-income adults with young children: Focus on Sweet Drinks…Now and Then based on Focus on Sweet Drinks and Focus on Veggies…Now and Then for a Spanish speaking audience based on Focus on Veggies.

Conclusion

This research produced a procedure for other researchers developing retrospective tools in addition to a new non-traditional retrospective format for two visual prospective behavior checklist style tools. The two tools generated a readability level of grade 1-2 or very easy reading and reduced participants’ overall test burden. The tools and instruction guides can be viewed, downloaded and/or professionally printed at http://Townsendlab.UCDavis.edu.

Citations

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