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Low-Income Older Adults' Salient Beliefs Regarding Whole Grain Consumption: A Qualitative Approach

Seung Eun Jung, PhD, RD¹; Yeon Ho Shin, PhD¹; Lauren Cave, MS, RD¹; Julianne Rockett, BS¹; Janice Hermann, PhD, RD/LD²
¹Department of Human Nutrition and Hospitality Management, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL ² Department of Nutritional Sciences, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK



BACKGROUND

- Given the known health benefits of whole grains (WG) in promoting overall health, as well as the low intake of WG products by low-income older adults, there is a need for developing effective health promotion programs targeting low-income older adults promoting WG consumption.

OBJECTIVE

To gain an in-depth understanding of low-income older adults' underlying beliefs regarding WG consumption using the Theory of Planned Behavior as a framework.

METHODS

- Study Design:** In this qualitative study, interview questions regarding WG consumption were structured according to the TPB constructs (behavioral, normative, and control beliefs).
- Setting:** Two congregate meal sites located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- Participants:** A convenience sample of 25 low-income older adults, 60 years of age and older, participated in this study.
- Measurable Outcome/Analysis:** Individual interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and cross-checked for consistency. Content analysis was used to identify themes pertaining to the TPB constructs in addition to other prevalent themes.

RESULTS

Table. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Low-Income Older Adults residing in a Southern Region in the United States in an Elicitation Study Identifying Underlying Beliefs about Whole Grain Consumption (n= 25)

Sociodemographic Characteristics	n (%)
Gender	
Women	19 (76%)
Men	6 (24%)
Racial/Ethnic Groups	
White	18 (72%)
African American	6 (24%)
Native American	1 (4%)
Age	
60-64	4(16%)
65-74	15(60%)
75-84	4(16%)
85 years or older	2 (8%)
Marital Status	
Single	8(32%)
Married	1 (4%)
Separated	2 (8%)
Divorced	9 (20%)
Widowed	16(36%)
# of Adults Living with	
None	16(64%)
1	8 (32%)
2	1 (4%)
# of Children Living with	
None	25(100%)
Education	
Less than or equal to12th	16 (64%)
Bachelors' degree	8 (32%)
Masters' degree	1 (4%)
Household income	
Less than \$12,000	15(60%)
\$12,000 to less than \$16,000	8 (32%)
\$16,000 to less than \$20,000	2 (8%)
SNAP participation	
Yes	11 (44%)
No	14 (56%)

RESULTS

- Behavioral beliefs:** Participants believed WGs were nutritious and had health benefits, but disliked sensory qualities, perceived higher cost, and longer cooking time.
- Normative beliefs:** Participants believed healthcare professionals and family would support WG consumption.
- Control beliefs:**
 - Facilitators to WG consumption included knowledge of nutritional and health benefits, WG preparation skills, social support, availability and accessibility, and grocery shopping assistance.
 - Barriers to WG consumption included cost of WGs, age-related physical changes such as chewing and swallowing, lack of motivation to prepare WG, and nutrition-related knowledge deficits.

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings from this study provide strategies for nutrition education programs to promote increased WG consumption by low-income older adults, ultimately influencing the health status of this population.