Barriers and Assets that Influence Nutrition Behaviors and Preferences for Receiving Nutrition Education of Somali Refugees in Utah

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BACKGROUND
Refugees have nutrition-related needs that are different from other populations in their host country, due to prior trauma, cultural values, beliefs, diversity, and language. To effectively address their nutritional needs for optimal health outcomes, it is important to understand barriers but also assets, such as gardening and cooking skills1, and network of social support1,2. Nutrition education should be tailored to the needs, skills, and preferences of refugee audiences3.

OBJECTIVES
This study examines i) barriers and assets that influence nutrition behaviors and ii) preferences for nutrition education among Somali refugees in Utah.

METHODS
Design, setting, and participants
Semi-structured phone interviews were conducted with 20 Somali refugees (19 females, and 1 male) in Utah who self-identified as food gatekeepers for their family and had lived in Utah for < 5 years. Interview questions were revised after review by an expert panel. Questions assessed barriers and assets for healthy eating and preferences of approaches for nutrition education. Interviews were conducted in Somali.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis
Audio recordings of interviews were translated to English, transcribed and uploaded into NVivo for storage and organization. To identify codes and themes, two independent researchers used a multi-step process coding and analyzing the data. Three themes were identified.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Somali Refugee Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mean ± SD or % (n=20)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages (years)</td>
<td>40.9 ± 9.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education (years)</td>
<td>9.3 ± 4.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Household size</td>
<td>5.7±3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children &lt;5 years</td>
<td>0.95±1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children between 6 to 17</td>
<td>2.7±2.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Years in refugee camps</td>
<td>9.1±7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in USA</td>
<td>4.2±1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receive SNAP benefit</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receive WIC benefit</td>
<td>60%</td>
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</tbody>
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The thematic analysis of the participant responses identified three main themes.
1. Barriers to healthy eating include:
   - lack of ingredients and equipment needed for cooking
   - accessibility of food, transportation, finding items in grocery stores, language barriers
   - affordability of food and budgeting

2. Assets include:
   - enjoyment of cooking
   - including children in food preparation
   - social support network to provide access to resources

3. Preferences for nutrition education
   - group education with a Somali instructor from a professional background

Topics of interest for nutrition education include:
- food safety
- cooking American foods
- child nutrition

CONCLUSION
Nutrition education delivered to refugees could be strengthened by delivering content that addresses assets and barriers specific to the population and is delivered by a professional from the target culture.

REFERENCES


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