



Quality of Life Considerations for Nutrition Education Interventions Targeting Parents of Elementary School-Age Children

C. Delaney;¹ R. Hagedorn, MS;² K. Eck, MS, RD;¹ K.P. Shelnett, PhD, RD;³ M.D. Olfert, DrPH, RD;² C. Byrd-Bredbenner, PhD, RD, FAND¹

¹Nutritional Sciences Department, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ;

²Department of Human Nutrition and Food, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV;

³Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL



Abstract

Objectives

The PRECEDE-PROCEDE model posits that health promotion interventions firmly predicated on factors defining the target audience's quality of life (QOL) are critical to success. Thus, this study aimed to describe how parents of elementary school-age children defined quality of life with the goal of informing the tone and thrust of childhood obesity prevention intervention materials.

Methods

Focus groups were conducted by trained moderators with English- and Spanish-speaking parents of 6-to-11 year-olds (n=185) in 3 states (FL, NJ, WV).

Results

Critical factors affecting parents' QOL and life satisfaction were the happiness of family members, family cohesion, family health, having enough time to spend with their families, financial stability, and for some, spirituality. English-speaking parents also included having time for themselves to do activities that they enjoy, limiting stress, and setting goals. Key factors diminishing parents' QOL were time scarcity and work-life balance. To improve their QOL and satisfaction with life, Spanish-speaking parents wanted more time to spend with kids and English-speakers felt a need to better balance time stresses from kids' extracurricular activities. Having more supportive relationships, better health, and financial stability were other factors parents' felt would improve their overall QOL. Spanish-speakers also felt that having a greater sense of community (e.g., knowing neighbors) would improve their QOL. Parents were aware that their lifestyles and behaviors that they model to children (e.g., physical activity, eating, screentime) affect their families' QOL now and in the future, so they actively encouraged their families to engage in healthier behaviors. Parents also recognized that a positive home environment (one that limits stress, promotes family cohesion, supports healthy behaviors) could help them improve their QOL.

Conclusions

Key factors affecting parents' QOL focus on family happiness, cohesion, health, time sufficiency, financial stability, and for some, spirituality. Health promotion and nutrition education interventions responsive to factors defining parents' QOL and desired improvements identified in this study remain rare, yet have the potential to increase intervention recruitment, retention, and effectiveness.

Methods

Sample

- Parents of children ages 6-11 years
- English and Spanish speaking
- From 3 states (FL, NJ, WV)

Data Collection

- 64 Focus Groups (n=185)

Data analysis

- Constant comparison to identify point of data saturation
- Coding to identify themes and trends in the data

Funding Source

United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Grant Number 2017-680001-26351



Results

Parent Characteristics	Mean ± SD %(n)
Age	38.24±5.62
Gender	
Female	95% (175)
Male	5% (10)
Language	
English	68% (126)
Spanish	32% (59)
State of Residence	
Florida	35% (66)
New Jersey	32% (59)
West Virginia	33% (60)
Highest Education Level	
High school or less	23% (42)
Some college	23% (42)
Bachelor's or higher	53% (98)

Perceived Effects of Lifestyle on Health

English-speaking Parents:

- importance of modeling healthy behaviors (healthy eating, physical activity, dental care)

Spanish-speaking Parents:

- work schedule leads to unhealthy lifestyle (increased consumption of convenience foods)
- lack of child supervision leads to increased screentime and decreased physical activity

"We model things at home. How we live now will likely show when they are older"

"We live out in the country, we don't have neighbors, so we are constantly outside being active, getting fresh air"



Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

- Focus groups in both English and Spanish
- Focus groups led by trained moderators using guide to ensure uniformity and completeness
- Geographic diversity (NJ, FL, WV)

Limitations

- Low representation of fathers
- Data were self-report

Conclusions

- Parents of elementary-school children agreed that factors affecting their quality of life have a direct impact on their families' health.
- Family members' health, financial stability, and time management were major factors affecting QOL for both English and Spanish speaking parents.
- Both English and Spanish-speaking parents felt modeling healthy behaviors was important but felt lack of time available to spend with their children inhibited their ability to promote healthy behaviors.
- Parents recognized the effect the environment (home, physical activity and food) has on their family.

What Determines Personal Happiness

- Health of family
- Happiness of family
- Financial stability
- Personal time (English-speaking parents)

"...that the kids are happy"

Major Factors Affecting Parents' Life Satisfaction

- Financial stability
- Time management
- Work-life balance
- Spanish-speaking Parents: lack of time to spend with kids due to work
- English-speaking Parents: children's activity schedule

"The kids activities—getting them from a to b and having to work, running here and there. It's the logistics"

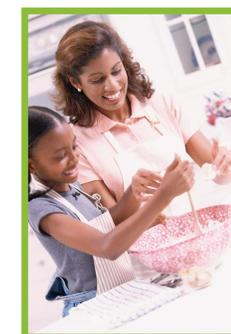
"The time that I spend working here away from them"

Changes that would Improve Parents' Life Satisfaction

- More time with kids
- Improved finances
- More supportive relationships (community, family, spouse)

"I would dedicate more time to my kids and my family"

"I think that when the home environment is positive, you have stronger family bonds"



"Sometimes I don't have the time to provide a healthy meal and instead look for easy food, like Chinese, fast food, or street food"