KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWS TO EXPLORE SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS: A CASE-STUDY IN DUBAI

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Abstract:

Background

School Nutrition Programs (SNPs) significantly affect in-school youngsters' eating behavior , and health and wellbeing, which in turn impact their intellectual, social, and emotional development, in addition to their risk to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Many stakeholders are involved in the development, implementation, and sustenance of SNPs in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). Thus, developing a thorough understanding of their perceptions is crucial to enact evidence-driven improvements. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no scientific study has been conducted to capture such information in relation to SNPs in the Gulf region, in general, and the UAE, in specific.

Objective

The objective of this study is to explore the perceptions of the myriad of stakeholders (positioned at differing levels of the public health and education ecosystems in the UAE) in relation to SNPs in Dubai, UAE.

Methods

As part of this study, 29 semi-structured interviews were carried-out with a selection of Key Informants, all of whom are directly or indirectly involved in SNPs. An inductive thematic approach was adopted to analyze the generated data.

Results

The data analysis led to the generation of two themes: (1) Challenges, and (2) Opportunities for Improvement. The challenges identified were fit into differing categories based on their level of occurrence. As for the categories within the second theme: Opportunities for Improvement, they referred to the levels of intervention of the respective recommendations.

Conclusion

This study unearthed a deep understanding of the SNPs in Dubai, UAE. Accordingly, the categories within both themes turned out to be (more or less) the same which can be mapped onto the Social Ecological Model (SEM). Our results emphasize that all the involved stakeholders, from all the various institutions in the UAE, need better collaborate and in turn co-create on the level of the Emirate and also nationally.

Biography

Dr. Reem AlGurg is the Assistant Professor of Health Policy at the College of Medicine, Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences. Held various positions that helped formulate insight on the educational and healthcare system. Voluntary involvement in the literature scene; teaching at a University level; as well as involvement with senior level healthcare professionals in order to conduct the research at the University of Bradford has given insight to the health system and strategy. Research Interest: Healthpolicy ; Nutrition ; Health awareness; Nutri-genetics; Nutri-genomics

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