

Self-Perceived Competencies in Cooking and Nutrition: A Preliminary Study in Mexico City

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Background

Culinary interventions are frequently employed in clinical and community settings to enhance nutrition behaviors, food preparation skills, and eating habits.

Objective

However, there needs to be more understanding of the prior knowledge, skills, and abilities of participants engaging in these interventions. This study explores participants' self-perceived competencies in cooking and nutrition and their interest in further learning.

Methods

A culinary intervention was implemented at the end of a nutrition course for 49 beneficiaries of a food bank. An exploratory study was conducted to assess participants' self-perceptions of their cooking and nutrition knowledge, skills, and abilities. Additionally, the study evaluated their interest in further learning and their self-reported levels of stress and anxiety.

Results

The majority of participants rated their confidence ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.68$) and ability ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.8$) in preparing meals for their families as very high and high, respectively, most also expressed high overall satisfaction with this activity ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.68$). Nonetheless, there was a strong interest in further learning about nutrition ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.52$). Participants frequently reported eating with their families ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.89$), trying new foods ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.0$), and cooking new dishes for their families ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.88$). Additionally, participants indicated that they sometimes experienced feelings of anxiety ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.1$) and stress ($M = 3.0$, $SD = 1.0$), however, the feelings were not very frequent.

Conclusions

Culinary interventions may provide benefits that extend beyond nutrition. While most participants felt confident in their ability to prepare meals, they also expressed a desire to learn more about nutrition. Additionally, cooking for their families was perceived as an enjoyable activity, highlighting the potential for culinary programs to positively influence family dynamics and well-being.