

Differences in Community Members' and Academics' Perceptions of Factors Contributing to Food Insecurity and Obesity among Mexican Immigrants: An Application of Concept Mapping

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Purpose

- This study described and statistically evaluated the factors felt to contribute to weight gain and obesity among Mexican immigrant families.
- Specifically, we focused on the differences and similarities in perceptions among community members and academics in a community-academic partnership.

Problem

- Community-based participatory research has been described as a collaborative approach where community members, organizational representatives, and academic researchers all participate in the research process.
- As research partners, community members and academics may find some common ground in identification of problems, but frequently differ in their perception of the cause of those problems and struggle with finding common ground.
- Failure to account for these differences ultimately leads to issues with the design of community health programs.
- Group concept mapping is a research approach that lends itself well to the conduct of community-based participatory research and the results can be used to easily compare the perceptions of different groups of participants.

Findings

- We examined two separate concept maps generated by the two independent groups, one consisting of community members and the other consisting of academic members.
- The results indicated the conceptualized patterns, represented by the two concept maps, were more similar than expected by chance, although meaningful differences existed.
- Members of the Mexican immigrant community categorized their personal experiences attempting to incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into their lifestyles.
- In contrast, academics tended to organize their thinking based on prior knowledge of the concepts.



Who Should Care Most?

- Mexican immigrants and their families, local government officials, health care providers, educators.

Recommendations

- Building from the primary study, this analysis was a step in generating the knowledge needed for intervention planning and development.