



EXPERIENCE REPORT: IMPLEMENTATION OF FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION ACTIONS WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The transition to higher education is a phase marked by intense changes in lifestyle habits, including food. The diet of university students is impacted by factors such as lack of time, academic pressures, work and financial issues, often resulting in the choice of fast foods, such as ultra-processed foods. Lack of time and stress are aspects that make it difficult to maintain a healthy diet, leading to inadequate eating practices (SANTOS, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between psychological aspects and eating behavior. Conditions such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders can directly influence the nutritional status of individuals (FRANÇA et al., 2012). Given that students face both academic and emotional challenges, the intersection between Nutrition and Psychology becomes an essential tool to promote healthier eating habits and improve quality of life.

This report describes the experience of implementing a Food and Nutrition Education (EAN) program with students of the Psychology course at the University Center of Brasília (UniCEUB), with the aim of improving their eating habits and promoting reflections on their food choices. In addition, the importance of Health Surveillance in monitoring and promoting food and nutritional security among students will be addressed.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out with six students in the 6th semester of the Psychology course, aged between 18 and 30, at the Taguatinga campus of UniCEUB. The methodology consisted of three meetings, the first focused on diagnosing eating habits, the second on intervention and the third on evaluating the changes observed.

In the first meeting, a conversation circle was applied with questions based on the Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ). The questions explored topics such as the definition of healthy eating, the habit of eating breakfast, preparing one's own meals, and the consumption of fruit and water. These questions allowed us to identify the main eating problems faced by the group, such as a lack of interest in cooking, insufficient water intake, and the absence of breakfast in their routine.

In the second meeting, an intervention was carried out with the application of a card game, inspired by the Food Guide for the Brazilian Population, and the digital distribution of a recipe book with quick and healthy options. The card game used a color scheme to classify foods as natural, processed and ultra-processed, and aimed to encourage reflection on food choices.

Finally, in the third meeting, a new discussion group was held to evaluate the results of the intervention. The group was encouraged to share their impressions about the changes made to their eating habits and the challenges that still exist.

1

RESULTS

The first stage revealed that students had difficulty organizing their diet, with emphasis on lack of time and preference for ultra-processed foods due to convenience. In addition,



Furthermore, water intake was insufficient and breakfast was often neglected.

After the intervention, it was observed that students showed interest in developing their culinary skills, using the recipes suggested in the book. There were reports that some participants began to include breakfast in their routines. However, the difficulty in maintaining regular water intake still persisted, although there was a slight increase in consumption during the morning period, when students were at college and had water bottles in hand.

DISCUSSION

Food and Nutrition Education (EAN) aims to empower individuals to adopt healthier eating habits through interventions that promote behavioral changes (TRECCO, 2016). In the university context, these interventions are particularly important, given the impact that academic life has on eating patterns.

The methodology used in this study, based on the Maguerez Arch, proved to be effective in allowing a practical and reflective approach to the participants' eating habits. The observation of the group's reality, the identification of the main problems and the application of creative interventions, such as the card game and the recipe book, facilitated the students' engagement and promoted reflection on their food choices (COLOMBO; BERBEL, 2007).

Health Surveillance plays a crucial role in promoting healthy eating habits and preventing diet-related diseases, especially in school and university settings. Monitoring the health conditions of the student population, including identifying risk behaviors and promoting educational interventions, is essential to ensuring food and nutritional security (BRASIL, 2022). Collaboration between Nutrition and Psychology professionals, together with Health Surveillance agencies, can strengthen intervention and awareness strategies, contributing to the formation of healthier individuals who are more aware of their food choices.

However, it is important to highlight that changes in eating behavior require time and consistency. Although the intervention has generated positive results, some challenges, such as low water intake, continue to require attention. Continuing educational actions and encouraging small steps, such as using apps that remind people to drink water, can be effective strategies to overcome these challenges.

CONCLUSION

The Food and Nutrition Education work carried out with Psychology students at Uni-CEUB achieved positive results, promoting initial changes in eating habits and encouraging reflection on the importance of healthy eating. In addition, the experience was enriching for both participants and organizers, who were able to apply and improve their knowledge of EAN.

Integrating Health Surveillance principles into EAN actions can enhance results and ensure students' food and nutritional security. For changes to be lasting, ongoing monitoring and encouragement are necessary. Simple actions, such as carrying water bottles and preparing practical and healthy meals, can significantly contribute to adopting a healthier lifestyle.

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2

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