Gender Norms and Obesity-Related Health Behaviors In Five Diverse Utah Communities


BACKGROUND
- Utah women from culturally diverse groups experience disparities related to obesity.
- Gender norms may influence obesity-related health behaviors.

OBJECTIVES
- To use a gender-based approach to address obesity among Utah women.
- To describe the association between perceived gender norms and health behaviors.

METHODS
- Partnership between Utah Women’s Health Coalition (UWHC) and Community Faces of Utah (CFU) to study obesity-related health behaviors in women using Community Based Participatory Research approach.
- CFU includes leaders from African, African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, and Pacific Islander Utah communities, the University of Utah, and the Utah Department of Health.
- Women from each community were trained as wellness coaches, using motivational interviewing to inspire behavioral changes in women in a 12-month study.
- Data on perceived gender norms, power to make behavioral changes, and self-reported health behaviors collected by peer coaches during in-person interviews.
- A 5-point Likert Scale used for gender norms and power questions: Strongly Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.
- Chi-squared tests were used to calculate p-values using SAS software.

RESULTS
- Baseline data available for 231 women:
  - 31 African Women (13%)
  - 45 African American Women (20%)
  - 53 Hispanic Women (23%)
  - 69 Pacific Islander Women (30%)
  - 33 American Indian/Alaskan Native Women (14%)

- Interviews were conducted in English (68%), Spanish (23%) and Kirundi (8%).

- Women who agreed strongly or somewhat with female-dominated decision making were significantly less likely to be overweight or obese compared to women who disagreed strongly or somewhat (39.4% vs. 12.0%, p=0.0128).
- No significant differences observed between male-dominated decision making about finances, food, or leisure time activity and meeting physical activity level guidelines.
- No significant differences observed between male dominated decision making about finances or leisure time activity and consuming 5 or more fruits and vegetables per day.

CONCLUSIONS
- Self report of consumption of 5 or more fruits and vegetables per day was inversely associated with male decision making about foods eaten and positively associated with perceived power to eat more fruits and vegetables within the home.
- No associations observed between gender norms and physical activity behaviors.
- Public health interventions that aim to promote healthier lifestyle choices among women should consider the impact of gender norms on health behaviors.

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