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Smart food policies for promoting healthy lifestyle among children and adolescents

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Statement of the Problem: Food policies have an essential role in preventing global obesity epidemic and health problems. The interaction between individuals' factors and the environments and systems in which people live provides a novel perspective to understand how various food policies work in different settings. The purpose of this study is to qualitatively explore how combined food-policy actions work and how such policies can be designed to be more effective with substantial and sustained effect specifically on youth lifestyle.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Our approach draws on evidence from a range of disciplines (socio-psychology, communication, social marketing, nutrition economics and public health nutrition) to develop an innovative holistic conceptual framework to understand how food policies work in different areas such as school settings, food industry, and marketing. Directed and semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups were conducted with 115 participants (67 adults and 48 youth) in

Lebanon. Collected data have been submitted to a thematic qualitative analysis.

Findings: Effective food-policy actions should be: 1) tailored to the preference, behavioral, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics of the people they seek to support, 2) designed to work through the mechanisms through which they have the greatest effect and, 3) implemented as part of a combination of complementary and mutually reinforcing actions. Mobilization and organization of public and key stakeholders support for bold executive actions are crucial.

Conclusion & Significance: Smart food-policies should be comprehensive to create positive changes to food, information, social environments and food systems that enable youth to learn healthy behaviors. Policies assessments should be carefully designed using indicators of progress along the various pathways towards the short and long-term goals of promoting and improving healthy lifestyles among youth.

Biography

Sima Hamadeh is an Assistant Professor and program Coordinator of Nutrition & Dietetics Sciences at Haigazian University-Lebanon. Her interests lie in such areas as the dietary motivations and behaviors in communities; the evolution of nutrition; the epidemiology of obesity especially among youth; the health promotion and communication; and the nutrition policies. Her Master and Doctoral studies were awarded respectively, the "Emerald Literati Network Awards for Excellence 2009" - as Highly Commended Award Winner and the "Prix d'Excellence Scientifique Franco-Libanais 2015" for the outstanding research project. She has several publications in scientific refereed journals and book. She has also presented many oral communications on public health nutrition in international and national congresses. She works closely with different national ministries and organizations, and international institutions in projects, seminars, researches and community programs. Dr. Hamadeh is also former member of several executive international Scientific Committees and Associations.

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