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Impact of food based intergeneration community intervention

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The current food system is not only unsustainable but also increasingly inequitable, resulting in food insecurity for many people in the United Kingdom and globally⁽¹⁾. The health impacts of the current food system on disadvantaged communities warrants examination to improve ecological public health nutrition strategies⁽²⁾. Community gardens and kitchens are frequently established by volunteers in the hope that they will serve as alternatives to the current food environment, building healthy food capacity in the community as well as outdoor physical and social activities for urban residents⁽³⁾. This remains to be explored in deprived communities in Dorset, UK.

This pilot research was conducted in fourteen adults living in disadvantaged areas in Dorset (Hamworthy-Poole). Inclusion criteria were individuals over 18 years old living in low-income households, who were users of community food garden and kitchen initiatives. The individuals usually attend with their family members in the food growing and cooking activities, including young children and older adults in the programmes. Three semi-structured interviews and three focus groups (total n = 14) were undertaken to uncover views on the importance and roles of these community food initiatives in relation to healthy eating and access to locally grown fresh produce. All discussions were digitally recorded, and data were transcribed verbatim. Qualitative data analysis, using Clarke and Braun's⁽⁴⁾ six steps of thematic analysis, was performed via NVivo software.

Four main themes emerged: *Tackling food insecurity & sustainability*, *Utilization of climate friendly & organic Food*, *Bridging intergenerational gap* and *Promoting healthy lifestyle*. These food initiatives help in addressing food insecurity from the perspective of the participants. The role of community gardens together with cooking sessions can be further recognised as contributors to community development, access to healthy food such as fresh fruits and vegetables and nurturing skills related to nutritious food preparation.

In conclusion, this research provided insights into the perceptions on how we can design a health promotion initiative that is inclusive and sustainable to tackle food insecurity effectively.

References

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