



REVIEW

Characterization of feeding practices in children

Caracterización de prácticas alimentarias en niños

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: nutrition, in addition to being the basis of a set of eating habits, adheres to the need with which food intake must meet the daily needs demanded by life and physical activity.

Objective: to characterize eating practices in children.

Method: a review of the available literature in databases such as SciELO, Scopus and ClinicalKey was carried out, from which a total of 15 related articles were consulted, empirical methods such as logical history and analysis and synthesis were used.

Results: individuals in charge of children should wash their hands before preparing food and those of children before eating. Food should be preserved and stored safely and served immediately after preparation. Poor feeding practices and infections, often aggravated by poverty, humanitarian crises and conflicts, deprive them of adequate nutrition. Nutritional status is based on being the result of the intake and energy needs in the body, expressing a degree of well-being of people.

Conclusions: a diet must be ensured that includes all the necessary foods to satisfy the nutritional and energy needs of the child in order to avoid diseases and ensure an optimal state of health.

Keywords: Child Well-being; Child Development; Motivation; Nutrition.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la nutrición, además de ser la base de un conjunto de hábitos alimentarios, se apega a la necesidad con la que la ingesta de alimentos debe satisfacer las necesidades diarias que demandan la vida y la actividad física.

Objetivo: caracterizar las practicas alimentarias en niños.

Método: se realizó una revisión de la bibliografía disponible en bases de datos como SciELO, Scopus y ClinicalKey de las cuales se consultaron un total de 15 artículos relacionados, se utilizaron métodos empíricos como el histórico lógico y de análisis y síntesis.

Resultados: individuos a cargo de los niños/as deben lavarse las manos antes de preparar alimentos y las de los niños/as antes de comer. Los alimentos deben ser conservados y almacenados de forma segura y servirlos inmediatamente después de su preparación. Las malas prácticas de alimentación y las infecciones, a menudo agravadas por la pobreza, las crisis humanitarias y los conflictos, los privan de una nutrición adecuada. El estado nutricional se basa en ser el resultado de la ingesta y las necesidades energéticas en el organismo, expresando un grado de bienestar de las personas.

Conclusiones: se debe asegurar una dieta que incluya todos los alimentos necesarios para satisfacer las necesidades nutritivas y energéticas del niño para así evitar enfermedades y asegurar un estado de salud óptimo.

Palabras clave: Bienestar de la Infancia; Desarrollo del Niño; Motivación; Nutrición.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, food practices play an essential role in the life of human beings, especially from the first years of life, to achieve optimal physical, psychological, intellectual, and cognitive development. As stated by the United Nations Children's Fund, malnutrition profoundly harms the growth and development of children as expressed by the WHO; relating healthy dietary practices creates a healthy childhood, adolescence, and even a healthy adulthood and old age.⁽¹⁾

It should be considered that nutrition, besides being the basis of a set of eating habits, is attached to the need with which food intake should meet the daily needs demanded by life and physical activity, also providing additional nutrients for the construction of bones, the contribution to tissues and organs thus demonstrating the importance of nourishment, to achieve correct eating practices to be taken into consideration when performing daily routines, for optimal expansion and training of children, where their anthropometric measurements are considered in addition to their cognitive constitution.⁽²⁾

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the most recent statistics are that 149 million children under five years of age have a pathology called rickets; on the other hand, 45 million children are thin. Significantly, in recent years, there has been an increase in these pathologies and problems, mainly due to the existing overcrowding and the economic explosion, which have added to the political crisis in the world today.⁽³⁾

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) mentions that in Latin America, 22,5 % of individuals cannot access good nutrition due to scarce resources; in the Caribbean region, the percentage of people affected by this crisis is 52 %, on the other hand, Mesoamerica has a lower percentage of 27,8 %, followed by South America with 18,4 %. The number of people going through a hunger crisis is increasing daily; in South America, it was stated that approximately 11 million people are going through this crisis, and the percentages studied show that Mesoamerica has 8,4 % while the Caribbean has 16,4 %.⁽⁴⁾

As stated by the United Nations (UN), currently, the percentage of children under five years of age suffering from chronic child malnutrition is 23,1 %; on the other hand, in rural communities, the level of figures is higher at 28,7 %. Nowadays, the world moves with figures and statistics that show the things or situations that are not prospering, and at the same time, when the figures are good, they allow us to continue advancing and improving.⁽⁵⁾

As pointed out by the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), in Ecuador, 1 % of children under two years are shown with Chronic Childhood Malnutrition; the provinces with the highest levels of ICD are Chimborazo with 35,1 %, Bolivar with 30,3 % and Santa Elena with 29,8 %. At the same time, the provinces with the lowest ICD rates are El Oro 9,8 %, Sucumbíos 13,3 % and Los Ríos 14,4 %. Sadly, in cities such as Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, there are no statistics with sufficient evidence to know how the population, in general, is at the level of the food plan and even more in its surrounding sectors here, including the place where it is required to raise the food practices project.⁽⁶⁾

It is required to meet standards of a balanced and nutritious daily intake, which translates into showing entities capable of functioning in any required area, whether social, academic, motor, or others. It is necessary that, as integral beings, we educate ourselves by learning to know and recognize that our health will have a positive or negative effect depending on the way we eat. Decision, attitude, and discipline are needed to achieve this.

Given the above, this article aims to characterize the dietary practices of children and adolescents.

METHOD

The available literature was reviewed using articles retrieved from SciELO, Scopus, and ClinicalKey databases. Filters were used to select articles in English and Spanish, and empirical methods such as the historical-logical method and analysis and synthesis were used to compile and understand the information obtained. The terms "Child Welfare," "Child Development," "Motivation," and "Nutrition" were used as keywords in the article. A total of 15 references addressing different considerations on feeding practices in children were selected.

RESULTS

Based on the above, it can be described that a healthy diet is governed by including all the foods included in the healthy plate but in the right proportions and in sufficient quantity (no more, no less) to maintain the nutritional needs of the body according to the energy consumption that it performs with daily activity, Therefore, it is taken into account that this is a fundamental part as a subject of study because due to the problems faced by the country, many households are forced to consume food based on its price and not on its nutritional information.

The Ministry of Public Health (MSP) mentions that some individuals in charge of children should wash their hands before preparing food and children's hands before eating. Food should be preserved and stored safely and served immediately after preparation. This allows food practices to be excellent and efficient since food intake is essential for the individual to remain healthy in a comprehensive manner. Proper nutrition allows them

to maintain their optimal conditions; therefore, their development and skills will be significant, promoting an increase in their health condition.⁽⁷⁾

As integral beings, we must consider that eating practices involve diners, meals, time-spaces, and a set of cognitive-affective social practices articulated in the relationship with the environment and the production and reproduction of the body through its organic conformation. They show significantly that nutrition is affected by the conditions of daily life, in addition to the ingestion, since these conditions, together with other complementary processes in daily life, are necessary for people's integral and individual functionality. This shows that carrying out the requirements to fulfill their function is essential.⁽⁸⁾

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that poor feeding practices and infections, often aggravated by poverty, humanitarian crises, and conflicts, deprive them of adequate nutrition and, in too many cases, cause their death, thus deepening and increasing most of the nutritional problems caused by bad habits, excess, deficiency, poor quality or irregular schedules. Therefore, it is necessary to raise awareness, create discipline, educate, promote, and create healthy habits to prevent the problem from growing; a culture with poor values adds to the increase of bad practices and conditions; we seek to improve, and why not say eradicate poor nutrition, but each condition is sometimes unfavorable. However, it is essential to address these challenges that make it difficult to ensure that beings are in total health.⁽¹⁾

Nutritional status results from intake and energy needs in the body, expressing a degree of well-being. It is a tool used to identify whether or not there is a growth or increase in the development of the individual. At the same time, it is used to detect health-related problems at the nutritional level, including malnutrition or obesity. Once the problem has been detected, it is determined what to work with in order to improve this complication and significantly relate the reason for this situation. These states will be determined with different indicators; one is through the body mass index, known by its acronym (BMI). We relate it to the height, weight, waist, and hip index, and in turn, an evaluation of their eating habits and consumption of nutrients is performed.⁽⁹⁾

The assessment of nutritional status is based on a set of means used to describe an individual's nutritional status and assess their nutritional requirements. It shows us that the nutritional assessment and its status allows the individual to know the degree to which their diet is and details to know what their deficiencies are and also improve and thus solve their problems and to measure, identify, in order to make an assessment of performance and thus be able to monitor the state nutritional progress, confirming, as well as it is and assess the levels of nutrition either favorable or unfavorable. This process is essential to monitor and, in turn, carry a permanent and constant plan for managing good nutrition; it is accompanied by physical assessment and dietary history, among other factors.⁽¹⁰⁾

The consequences of poor nutrition can lead to the development of diseases such as obesity or overweight; non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, hypertension, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, anemia, etc.); chronic and degenerative diseases, including premature aging; alterations in the digestive system; lack of energy accompanied by constant fatigue; growth retardation, etc. For them, it is advisable to raise awareness of a balanced diet full of nutrients, accompanied by other components that will benefit optimally and significantly the evolution of people who make a stop and decide to change their daily diet. Otherwise, the consequences will be dire, including the death of the individual.⁽⁷⁾

The benefits that can be considered in good dietary practices relevant to children begin with the objective of improving their quality of life; this involves physical condition, maintaining a healthy weight, and achieving healthy growth and development of the individual. It highlights several factors that affect optimal development, assuming good hygiene practices, food, emotional state, and nutritional status, comprehensively making the individual well. They are also an accumulation of fundamental principles to be followed, as well as rules and standards at each stage of feeding, from the intake of the first breast milk to the time of solid ingestion and a combination of foods.⁽¹¹⁾

Processed foods are based on products that require processing and quick preparation, products for frequent consumption, products for occasional consumption, and products with specific claims. These foods are subordinated to a high level of processing, so their main characteristic is high in salt and sugar. Thanks to technological development, processed foods are altered from their natural state using industrial methods or principles, such as canning, preserving, freezing, or dehydration. Adding preservatives either of natural or chemical origin, changing significantly texture, flavor, shape, even color and aroma, which allows this type of process to extend the shelf life of products for preservation; one of the consequences is that it significantly lowers the organoleptic properties of the same.⁽¹²⁾

Unprocessed foods stand out in a generalized way without generating doubts in the healthy category. They are considered as such because they have not been subjected to industrial processes, which is why these foods provide many nutrients necessary to ingest correctly. They are commonly known as fresh or natural foods since they have not been affected in their natural state or process, giving rise to physical changes that alter their texture, aroma, flavor, and color obtained from nature without additives or preservatives.⁽¹²⁾

It is essential to know that through ingesting food contaminated by microorganisms or chemical substances. Severe pathologies can be generated, usually due to processed foods. These diseases can cause symptoms ranging from mild discomforts such as pain, nausea, and vomiting, followed by more severe problems that can affect multiple body organs; these diseases can originate at various stages of the food chain, including production, processing, distribution, and food preparation. Prevention of these diseases involves practices such as sound and correct hygiene, proper food handling, and regulations and control measures in the food industry.⁽¹³⁾

Many infections are due to inadequate food consumption, so measures to prevent contamination should be considered and established. Studies on developing methods to reduce and eliminate human pathogens from marketed fruits and vegetables are also rising. Microorganisms enter from various foods and in any form at the stage of ingestion and absorption of food previously manipulated by chemical processes. Good food practices should be established to succeed in not contracting epidemics, from correct production to greater or lesser consumption.⁽¹⁴⁾

When contaminated food is consumed, microorganisms can cause gastrointestinal symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, and fever; foodborne infections can affect people of all ages and health levels, but children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems are more susceptible. Prevention of foodborne infections involves proper hygiene measures in food handling and preparation and monitoring and regulating food safety throughout the supply chain.⁽¹⁴⁾

In the challenging and exciting world of gastronomy and the symphony of exuberant flavors and harmonious colors, we long to show a creation where the magical colors and flavors merge, harmonizing a dish that evokes health, contrasts with love in every bite that, in addition to how amazing it is before the eyes, this is still a standard that tells us the proportion of carbohydrates, proteins, and vegetables. The same must provide balance, exquisiteness, and neatness and evoke the sensations of more subtle palates such as children's.⁽¹⁵⁾

CONCLUSIONS

It can be seen that maintaining a healthy diet in children is an essential pillar to avoid multiple diseases associated with nutrient deficiencies in the diet. A diet that includes all the foods necessary to satisfy the child's nutritional and energetic needs should be ensured to avoid diseases and ensure an optimal state of health.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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