

ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of Two Theoretically-Based Nutrition Education Interventions Designed to Change Chronic Disease Risk-Behaviours of Women attending Community-Based Training Programmes

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The study evaluated the effectiveness of two theoretically based nutrition education interventions based on the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

Focus groups were first used to obtain qualitative data to tailor the nutrition education interventions. The latter comprised one - hour sessions on health and nutrition, once per week for 12 consecutive weeks.

A pre-test / post-test controlled trial was conducted using 172 women, aged 18 to 65 years. The women were recruited from a government sponsored community-based training programme for low- income women. Six classes were selected which were randomly assigned to the three groups (TRA, HBM and Control). Measurements were taken at baseline, at the end of the intervention (three months) and three months post-intervention (six months). Knowledge and belief were measured using a self-administered questionnaire. Anthropometric measures included weight, height, waist,

and hip measurements and twenty- four hour dietary recalls were used to measure food intake. The data were analysed using 2-way ANOVA; the factors were time and treatment group.

There was a 21% attrition rate at three months while the rate at six months was 47%. At three months, results indicated a significant increase in knowledge in both experimental groups (TRA $p < .002$, HBM $p < .001$), but not in the control group ($p = .741$). Kilocaloric and carbohydrate intake increased significantly in the TRA group (kcal $p < .01$, CHO $p < .003$) at three months, but there was no change in the other groups. Dietary fibre intake decreased significantly in the TRA group $p < .003$. There were no intervention effects on anthropometry and no effects at six months on any of the outcome variables.

There is great potential for the use of theoretical models in the design of nutrition education programmes for low- income women in Trinidad & Tobago. The TRA appears to have produced better results than the HBM. More research is needed to identify the components of the models that are most effective in this population.

Keywords: Health Belief Model, Theory of Reasoned Action, Focus Groups, Nutrition education intervention, Pretest/Post-test, Nutrition related behaviours.