

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Motivators of and Barriers to Health-Promoting Behaviors Among Culturally Diverse Middle and High School Students

Wippold, G. M., Tucker, C. M., Smith, T. M., Rodriguez, V. A., Hayes, L. F., & Folger, A. C. (2018). Motivators of and barriers to health-promoting behaviors among culturally diverse middle and high school students. *American Journal of Health Education*, 49(2), 105-112.

THE PROBLEM:

Approximately, one-third of youth in the United States are obese. In conjunction with the obesity epidemic comes a lack of value on adequate nutrition. Most adolescents are not eating the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables. These unhealthy habits throughout adolescence often carry over into adulthood.

As health educators, it is critical to identify what motivates adolescents — especially those from diverse backgrounds — to make the nutritional decisions they do. Also, recognizing barriers to health-promoting behavior is key in moving adolescents' food choices in a healthier direction.



Research Summary:

A total of 591 culturally diverse students (middle school 45.3%, high school 54.7%) participated in this health-promoting behaviors study. The Motivators of and Barriers to Health-Smart Behaviors Inventory-Youth survey was administered to each student to better pinpoint motivational factors and barriers to making healthy food and physical activity choices. The survey is broken up into 4 domains: Healthy foods and snacks, healthy drinks, physical activity, and healthy breakfast. Using a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = *strongly disagree*, 4 = *strongly agree*) students selected their strength of agreement toward each question/statement.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, researchers found that among culturally diverse middle and high school students, the No. 1 barrier to drinking healthy drinks was preference, followed by a distaste for water. On the contrary, the No. 1 motivator to eating healthy foods was the students' knowledge of, and commitment toward, selecting healthier options. Researchers also found that temptation was the highest barrier to engaging in healthier eating. Culturally diverse populations are exposed to sweeter drinks and unhealthy food options at home, more so than their Caucasian counterparts. All in all, cultural factors influence health-promoting behaviors among adolescents.

Key Takeaway:

Health educators need to be aware of cultural differences when it comes to healthy eating habits. Advocating for healthy vending machines on campus, developing a policy committee to push for healthier drink and food options within the cafeteria, and hosting health education seminars for parents to educate them on the importance of healthy food and meal prepping are all examples of how health educators can have a greater impact on a culturally diverse community.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Advocating for Healthy Nutrition Habits](#)
- [Health Literacy](#)
- [ChooseMyPlate](#)
- [Nutrition.gov](#)