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Saudi Arabian mothers' child feeding practices, autonomy and concern about child weight

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Background & Objectives: Childhood obesity is a health concern in Saudi Arabia. Further study of parental feeding practices and concern about childhood weight in Saudi Arabia (SA) is needed. The purpose of the study was to: (1) Identify maternal feeding practices and concern about child weight using the Child Feeding Questionnaire (CFQ), (2) identify maternal Autonomy (A) and maternal report of children's Negative Reactions to Food (NRF) and (3) determine whether there is an association between CFQ scales and NRF and A.

Subjects & Methods: A convenience sample of mothers from Saudi Arabia living in the US with children 2-6 years of age was contacted. Eligible mothers were sent a link to an online questionnaire Internal consistency for questions on the CFQ, NRF and A were computed using Cronbach's α . Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to test the association among CFQ scales, NRF, A and demographic factors.

Results: Mothers (n=108) completed the questionnaire and internal consistency was 0.73 or above for general autonomy, concern about child weight, negative reactions to food and monitoring. The mean (SD) for concern about child weight were 1.8 (1.2). Mothers' with a lower-income had a greater concern about child weight ($r=-0.20$, $P=0.04$) and mothers who had greater concern about child's weight and who used more restrictive feeding practices reported NRF in their children ($r=0.19$, $P=0.05$; $r=0.20$, $P=0.04$, respectively). The more feeding autonomy mothers had, the greater responsibility they reported about feeding their children ($r=0.20$, $P=0.04$).

Conclusion: While few mothers reported concern about weight, they reported frequent use of inappropriate restrictive and pressuring feeding practices. Understanding mothers feeding practices is important to identify children's eating habits and prevent childhood obesity. Since a little is known about feeding practices among Saudi mothers, further study is needed to verify the differences in child feeding practices and concern about child weight in mothers who only live in Saudi Arabia.

Biography:

Iman Almarhoon has obtained his Bachelor of Science in Home Economics and Nutrition from King Saud University. Following that in August 2014, he has completed his Master of Science at the University of Idaho in Family and Consumer Sciences, which concentrated in Nutrition. His research focus on child nutrition and health led me to research Saudi Arabian mother's Child Feeding Practices, Autonomy and Concern about Child's Weight.

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