



Food Security and Diet Quality Among South African Adolescents: A Qualitative Study of School-Specific Nutrition Education Programmes

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Abstract

Food security and diet quality are critical public health concerns in South Africa, particularly among adolescents who face significant nutritional challenges. This qualitative study employed focus group discussions and interviews with students, teachers, and parents to gather data on the implementation and impact of school-based nutrition education initiatives. The sample was purposively selected from various schools in four major metropolitan areas of South Africa. The analysis revealed that while most programmes aimed at improving food security and diet quality were well-intentioned, they often lacked consistent funding and resources, leading to inconsistent implementation across schools. School-specific nutrition education programmes can positively influence adolescents' dietary habits and knowledge about nutrition; however, their effectiveness is dependent on adequate support and sustained engagement from all stakeholders involved. To enhance the impact of these programmes, there should be increased financial investment, coordination among different sectors, and ongoing professional development for educators to ensure consistent delivery of quality education.

Keywords: *African geography, qualitative research, dietary diversity, adolescent nutrition, community engagement, ethnography, food security*

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