Understanding the changes in the daily lives of refugee families

Community photo-elicitation to explore diet, physical activity and environmental conditions



- North of England
- 27 mothers and fathers
- 2 organizations
- 26 interviews in Arabic

What we wanted to understand

How resettlement in the UK had transformed food, physical activity, everyday spaces and family responsibilities related to childhood.

Why this methodology

The photographs helped to talk about everyday and sensitive aspects, facilitated the evocation of experiences and made it possible to work with culturally recognizable images for the participating families.

Application sequence

1 Collaborating with refugee mothers

A small group reviewed the research materials, suggested changes, and helped generate and select relevant photographs before the interviews began.

2 Generate and select photos

The images addressed food, shopping, home and physical activity. The identification of children was avoided.

3 Interviewing from a place of trust

The semi-structured interviews were conducted mainly in Arabic and with the support of organizations in the territory.

4 Dig deeper from the images

Each photograph was used to compare changes before and after resettlement and to explore environmental barriers.

What it allowed to know

The analysis showed changes linked to adaptation to the new context, the reorganization of family roles, and environmental barriers such as housing, neighborhood, climate, school, and food availability.

Example of the interpretative process

A photograph of a family meal allowed us to talk not only about food, but also about schedules, cultural changes, parental decisions, relationships between generations and new choices of girls and boys.

Critical point

The images were mainly generated by three mothers, while the final selection was made by the research team. This helped provide common visual prompts but concentrated some of the decision-making power over how participants' experiences were represented in the hands of the researchers.

What we can learn from it

The people living in a specific territory can collaboratively develop research materials; the language and positionality of the researcher can influence participation; and children's educational life is closely connected to their families, housing conditions, neighborhood, community networks and schools.

Family practices

They are shaped by the interplay of displacement, gender, language, cultural background, economic circumstances, and conditions in the host community. Together, these factors influence food practices, mobility, caregiving, and opportunities for community participation. The predominance of mothers and Syrian families among the participants, along with the absence of children's direct perspectives, limits the diversity of perspectives represented in the study.

Reference

Alsubhi, M., Epton, T., Goldthorpe, J., y Peters, S. (2022). A qualitative investigation of the health behaviours of young children from refugee families using photo elicitation interviews. Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 10(1), 1086–1109. https://doi.org/10.1080/21642850.2022.2141245

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