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Standardizing eating habits: a critical analysis of Brazilian and Spanish food norms in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Abstract In response to the health, social, economic and political impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries have adopted social isolation as a preventive measure. The concern with "healthy" eating was accentuated in this context and food norms were developed as an orientation strategy related to eating habits. The scope of this article is to carry out a critical and comparative analysis of four food guidelines published in Brazil and Spain in this period, based on three principles: concepts regarding healthy eating; the place attributed to the multidimensionality of the act of eating; and the relevance of intersectionality. Comparison of the documents was conducted using a qualitative approach based on discourse analysis. The documents feature differences in terms of the format and content of the recommendations, but the discursive construction of all the guidelines is normative and reproduces a fundamentally biomedical perspective centered on nutrients and on individual responsibility, without taking into consideration the multidimensionality of the act of eating and the specificities of the micro- and macrosocial contexts. The analysis also reveals the need to include the intersectional dimensions of gender, race, ethnicity and class into the proposed recommendations.

Key words Healthy eating, Food norms, COVID-19, Medicalization, Intersectionality

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