

Status of Whole Grain Cereal Consumption: An Online Survey

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Encouraging healthy diets among the general public is necessary to mitigate the increasing prevalence rates of diet-related diseases in Sri Lanka. Whole grain cereals (WGC) are pivotal components of healthy diets and have proven effects against a range of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). An online survey was conducted to determine the levels of knowledge, attitudes and behavior (KAB) on WGC consumption and barriers towards adequate intake. It further evaluated the associations between socio-demographic factors and KAB levels on WGC consumption among Sri Lankans. The data were collected from female adults living in Sri Lanka assuming they were responsible for food behavior of the household. An online questionnaire was developed, pretested and used to collect data by posting on social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp. In total 416 responses were used for analysis after cleaning, using SPSS, AMOS and descriptive statistics. The construct validity of the questionnaire was examined using Factor Analysis and the resulted model of the questionnaire exhibited appropriate model fit in AMOS (cmin/df= 2.069, RMSEA= 0.051, GFI: 0.855, CFI= 0.813). The majority of the population had an average knowledge score (66%), high attitude score (75%) and a low behavior score (33%). The lack of knowledge on specific health benefits provided by WGC, the inability to distinguish between whole grains and refined cereals, unacceptable organoleptic properties, longer preparation time duration, low market availability and high cost were identified as the major barriers in WGC consumption. Significant correlations ($p < 0.05$) were obtained between education level and knowledge on WGC. Family income significantly correlated with knowledge and attitudes on WGC while the location of residence significantly correlated with behavior on WGC. Thus, addressing the issues through pricing strategies, providing education on specific health benefits and identification of WGC, and improving market availability of WGC products is required to uplift WGC consumption among Sri Lankans.

Keywords: Attitudes, Behaviour, Female adults, Knowledge, Sri Lanka