

A Study on Perception and Usage of Herbs among Young Adults in Gampaha District

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Several bioactive compounds present in herbs help in the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and maintenance of wellness. Relatively less attention is given to studying whether people know and use the available herbs against NCDs, which are public health issues in the country. It is important to study the extent of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (KAB) on the herbs among young adults, who are the key contributors of the country's workforce and the deciders of well-being of the future generations. The objective of this online cross-sectional survey, done on young adults of 20-34 years old, was to determine their levels of KAB on herbs and the associations between KAB and socio-demographics. The pre-tested questionnaire randomly forwarded to respondents through email, Facebook and WhatsApp, was used for data collection from a sample of 344 participants. Respondents showed socio-demographic variations of district, gender, ethnicity, education, income, NCDs presence. Data analysis for exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis was performed with SPSS and AMOS statistical software. AMOS tested the associations between KAB and the socio-demographics. Calculations based on a scoring system revealed that KAB levels were 75, 68 and 48%, respectively. Gender, ethnicity and education levels showed significant correlations with KAB. From a list of 39 herbs, ginger, garlic, curry leaves, turmeric and lime were consumed by the majority. The major knowledge sources were family, books or media. Knowledge on herb-nutrient and herb-prescription drug interactions was lacking. The majority used herbs during common cold/fever and for improvement of immunity. Problems faced during herb consumption were undesirable taste, lack of ingredients and time for preparation. Thus, it was concluded that young adults have high knowledge, medium attitudes and behavior towards herbs; and KAB depends on socio-demographics. It is recommended to conduct future research to determine other socio-demographic factors affecting KAB and plan approaches to replenish the identified gaps in KAB.

Keywords: Attitude, Behavior, Knowledge, Socio-demographic, Sri Lanka