

Nutrition Knowledge and Attitudes of Street Food Vendors Within the Mangaung Metromunicipality, Free State, South Africa

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Abstract

As a result of nutrition transition, a gradual increase in non-communicable chronic illnesses has been observed. Street food vendors play a vital role in providing meals to middle and low-income persons, therefore it is important for food preparation and meal planning that they have good nutrition knowledge and attitudes. This study therefore had the aim of assessing the nutrition knowledge and attitude of street food vendors in Mangaung Metro Municipality. A descriptive survey was conducted to obtain the nutrition knowledge, attitudes and demographic characteristics of 100 street food vendors using a questionnaire. Participants in this study were predominantly Black Africans (81%) and female (57%). Food items predominantly sold by vendors include sugar, fat and energy-dense food items such as pap (55.2%), fat cakes (29.9%), French fries (26.8%), fizzy drinks (14.3%) candy (12.7%) and bread (16.4%). Majority of the South African vendors (54.8%) had average knowledge of nutrition while non-South Africans had (47.4%) predominantly fell in the good nutrition knowledge category. Participants generally had good attitudes towards nutrition. Taking into consideration the food portions and food types sold by street food vendors and their habitual consumers, it can partially be concluded that they contribute to the high obesity rates among the Black African population. The lack of knowledge about good nutrition and the poor socioeconomic status of the majority of those involved in street food trade make it challenging to provide feasible solutions that don't compromise the profitability of the trade and in turn the livelihood of vendors.