

PATTERN OF SWEETENED BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION IN SCHOOL CANTEENS OF THE KANDY DISTRICT

M. N. DE SILVA, A.D.S. ATUKORALA AND W. M.U.R. KARUNADASA

Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Peradeniya

This study was conducted in order to examine the pattern of consumption of sweetened beverages in school canteens of the Kandy district and its relationship to age, gender, sector and monthly income of students' families.

Students (n=900) of age groups 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18 years were studied using a questionnaire in two urban government schools, one urban private school and three semi-urban schools in the Kandy district. Male to female ratio of the total sample was 1:1. The canteen owners of the respective schools were also interviewed on the subject. The variations of sweetened beverage consumption with age, gender, sector and the monthly income of the family were considered in relation to the percentage of students consuming beverages, types of beverages consumed, and amounts and frequency of beverage consumption. In addition, the times of beverage consumption from the canteen, any change in beverage consumption pattern with participation in extra curricular activities, and the preference of chilled and non-chilled beverages were analysed.

Seventy percent of the students used the canteen, but only 67% of the canteen users purchased beverages from it. Unsweetened beverages were not purchased by students. The highest frequency of consumption (58.6%) was observed in the 13-15 year age group. The beverage consumption was higher among boys than girls (62.3% vs. 43.6%). A higher percentage of students consumed beverages in urban schools (66.1%) than in semi-urban schools (42.7%). The percentage of students consuming beverages was positively related to family income. Flavoured, pasteurized milk was the most popular (44%), followed by tea and carbonated drinks (20% each). However, in semi-urban schools, tea was most popular. If given a choice, 70% of the students preferred chilled beverages. The lowest consumption in all age groups, sectors, in both genders and in all the income groups was fruit juice. 64% of the students used the canteen during the interval, 24% after-school hours and 10% before school-hours. Only 44% of students participating in extra curricular activities consumed beverages from the school canteen after these activities. According to the canteen owners, the consumption of beverages almost doubled during the weeks in which children prepared for the annual sports-meet.