

Covid-19 Pandemic: Malaysians on Food Label and Purchase Amid Lockdown

Wong Sook Khuan

Saito University College, Malaysia

Pouline Koh Chai Lin

Taylor's University, Malaysia

The lockdown measures in Malaysia continue to put restrictions on daily activities including dining out for Malaysians. This has caused major changes to the way Malaysians live, especially the majority of them are required to prepare meals at home thus food purchasing activity is inescapable. The aim of this study was to assess the use of food labels on making food purchases among Malaysians during Covid-19 lockdown. A cross-sectional study was conducted through an online questionnaire using a convenience sample of 374 residents living in Malaysia. During the lockdown, 45% reported that they always read the nutritional information on food labels when making food purchases, yet more than half of the respondents who sometimes (28%) or do not even refer to the labels at all (27%). Among the nutrition information listed on food labels, sugar is paid most attention to followed by fats and calories. Additionally, Malaysians show more concerns for date mark, statement of ingredients and the name of the product on the label. Study further revealed only 68% of the respondents' trust that the food labels will assist them to avoid making poor food purchases. Despite that the findings outlined fewer Malaysians using food labels to make healthy food purchases amid lockdown, the country remains optimistic that the food labels can gain ground as a result of the pandemic lockdown.

Keywords: *Covid-19 lockdown, Food choices, Food labels, Food purchases, Malaysia*