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A study about the food literacy in relation to health among students in the Faculty of Science, University of Kelaniya Sri Lanka

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Food literacy is a relatively new and arising concept around the globe. Past studies have demonstrated positive associations between food literacy and healthy dietary behaviors such as increased consumption of fruit and vegetables, preference for healthy food, and decreased frequency of consumption of processed food. In such context, focusing on food literacy is a promising approach as insufficient nutrition affects students' health and academic success. Students may have competent knowledge regarding nutritional requirements. However, the transition to university life provides them a lot of freedom to choose the type and also the quantity of food they eat. The majority of the universities have dining facilities that provide a variety of food options, which can cause to initiate either good or bad eating behaviors. This study was conducted to explore the concept of food literacy because it relates to overall well-being from the attitude of young Sri Lankan adults who recently transitioned to independent living. Three hundred eighty-three students who were studying at the Faculty of Science of the University of Kelaniya were considered as the sample by using the stratified random sampling method using each degree course as the stratum. Data were collected using an online questionnaire. A descriptive analysis was conducted and a logistic regression was fitted to find the association between food literacy and other socio-economic factors by taking the healthy situation as the response variable. Accuracy of the fitted model was tested by obtaining the confusion matrix. It was found that the precision of the overall model is 78.3%. Height, weight and the residence during the university period were discovered as the significant factors. Results of the study have also shown that while young adults value "healthy" eating, they are at a risk for leaving their family homes because of the lack of necessary food literacy required to make healthy food choices and to sustain healthy food relationships. These results have also suggested that significant challenges exist in obtaining and utilizing food literacy, which appears to influence food choices, health, and well-being. Furthermore, findings specify that young adults could potentially have the advantage of expanding their views on food to encompass cultural knowledge, environmental stewardship, and family connectedness. This study has added worth to the present literature by discovering the factors related to food literacy and well-being from the perceptions of young Sri Lankan University adults. Moreover, this study has shown that young adults may not be equipped with the necessary food literacy to navigate complex food environments.

Keywords: Food literacy, Food handling, Nutrition, Well-being, Young adults