OP003

Traffic Light Labelling System on Packaged Solid Food Products in Ragama Town Area: A policy evaluation study

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Introduction

The Traffic Light Labelling System (TLLS) for packaged solid and semi-solid foods was implemented in Sri Lanka in 2019 as a measure to reduce the Non-Communicable Disease burden related to nutrition in Sri Lanka.

Objectives

To describe the level of implementation of the TLLS in packaged solid food products and its awareness among the adult population in Ragama town.

Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted under two arms as Study I and II.

Study I: Snacks and Confectionary Isles of four supermarkets were examined to observe all packaged food products that complied with the Food (Color coding for sugar, salt and fat) Regulations of 2019. A pre-tested checklist based on the TTLS legislature was used to assess the implementation level with a score from 0-10.

Study II described the awareness of TLLS among the adult population in public areas using an interviewer-administered questionnaire.

Results

Among 412 items assessed, 75%(n=311) had completely adhered to TTLS legislature while 10%(n=42) had completely violated it. The most violated regulation was inaccurate main logo size (n=67,16.26%)

Among 385 adults, majority (n=222,57.7% were not aware of the TLLS. The most considered factor when purchasing a food product was the expiry date (n=217,56.4%) and food purchase was mostly influenced by income (n=175,45.5%).

Conclusion

Although a high level of adherence to TLLS was seen among snacks and confectionary items, their nutritional labels were not a decisive factor for purchase. As buyer awareness regarding TLLS was poor, this study calls for increasing awareness and creating a culture of reading food labels during shopping.

Key words: *Policy, Nutrition, Food packaging*