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Fruits and Vegetables Consumer Access and Consumption Behaviour in Kenya: The role of Retail Markets

Abstract

Background: Food systems in developing countries are currently undergoing rapid transformation towards provision of sustainable healthy diets due to the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Adequate consumption of F&Vs is associated with a lower risk of NCDs. Retail markets play a crucial role in promoting access to and consumption of fresh F&Vs, however, the association between dimensions of access and consumption is not fully understood. The objective of this study was to assess the role of formal and informal urban retail markets in consumers' access to and consumption of F&Vs in Kenya as guided by the food environment framework.

Methods: The cross-sectional study adopted a mixed-methods approach with quantitative data collected from adult consumers (n=206) and qualitative data from F&Vs vendors, county government staff and market leaders. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the formal and informal markets. Multivariate logistic regression model was used to analyse the predictors of F&V consumption.

Results: There was a significant ($P<0.05$) gender difference in consumer purchasing behaviours for F&Vs. Most women consumers preferred to purchase F&Vs from informal markets (82.2%) compared to men (17.8%). The study demonstrated a low consumption of fruits (2.03 ± 1.27 servings) and vegetables (2.17 ± 1.35 servings) by adult male and female consumers despite ease of access to retail markets. Overall, only 3.1% and 4.5% of the adults consumed recommended number of servings (≥ 5) of F&Vs respectively per day. The significant ($P<0.05$) predictors for daily consumption of fruits were consumer age ($P=0.018$), education level ($P=0.032$), occupation ($P=0.032$) and perception on the safety of the retail market ($P=0.046$). Age ($P=0.028$), distance to the market ($P=0.001$) and perceptions on safety of the market ($P=0.040$) were the key determinants for the number of fruits servings consumed in a week. Further, only monthly income ($P=0.043$) influenced daily consumption of adequate amounts of vegetables while consumer gender, occupation, monthly income, time taken to the market, and ease of market accessibility predicted ($P<0.05$) weekly vegetable consumption.

Conclusion & Recommendations: There is a need for gendered nutrition education and social behaviour change communication intervention programmes to promote purchase and consumption of adequate amounts of F&Vs among adult consumers in urban areas. Context specific retail market policies, regulations and initiatives targeted at improving infrastructure, food safety and safety of consumers are needed to increase access to F&Vs in urban settings.

Keywords: Access to retail markets; Consumer purchasing behaviours; Fruits and vegetables consumption; Retail Market Food Environment; Urban Retail Markets

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