

The Role of Gender and Socio-Demographics Variables on Food Safety Perceptions of Lebanese University Students

Authors : Lara Hanna-Wakim, Carine El Sokhn

Abstract : The perception of the consumer in food safety plays an important role in reducing the incidence of foodborne diseases. Studies show that young adults aged between 18 and 25 years are more prone to foodborne illnesses than adults because of their lack of food safety knowledge. The aim of this study was to measure the degree of university students' awareness in food safety, as well as to explore whether there is a relationship or not between the demographic characteristics of university students and their knowledge and practices. A valid questionnaire divided into three parts was distributed to 938 university students, aged between 18-25 years, living alone or with their parents, from different majors and years of study. The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS program. The total scores of the students surveyed were 47.95% on their food safety knowledge and 56.45% on their practices in the matter. The final score of the food safety perception of university students in both genders was 52.2%. Female students scored higher (63.14%) than male students (39.69%), and students majoring in health related fields (67.45%) scored higher than those majoring in areas not related to public health (49.21%). These results showed an overall low level of food safety perception of university students. Educational interventions are needed to improve their food safety knowledge and practices as they will be responsible for their own family one day.

Keywords : food safety, gender, perception, practices, knowledge, lebanese university students

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