

Consumers’ perception on healthy food and its association with socio- demographic factors: A preliminary cross sectional study in Bukit Jalil.

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Introduction

In the era of obesogenic environment, healthy food has become vital to support one’s health. Meanwhile, the definition of healthy food has been found to follow consumers’ multi- faceted heuristic cues and subjective values implemented on food (1). These eventually influence the way consumers perceive healthy food and their subsequent dietary choices. Consumers’ perceived personal preferences, food pricing, nutritional value and availability on healthy food are the four key factors in determining the perceived role and worthiness of healthy food (2,3,4). Nonetheless, by demonstrating the association between gender and socio- economic levels with the perceived factors, it showed specific intervention could positively impact on eating behaviours.

Objective

To assess consumers’ perception on healthy food based on personal preferences, food pricing, nutritional value, and food availability and its association with socio-demographics factors.

Methods

Study Design	Cross sectional
Sampling method	Simple random sampling
Study Site	Urban marketplace, Pinnacle Sri Petaling
Data collection method	Participants filled in an online questionnaire upon informed consent that took around 10-15mins to complete
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age >18 years old• Literate in either English or Malay Language
Statistical Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SPSS ver. 28• Descriptive statistics to describe socio- demographic characteristics.• Pearson Chi Square test for associations between gender, socio- economic levels and consumers’ perception on healthy food. $p < 0.05$ as statistical significance value.

Results

- 161 participants were recruited in Feb - March 2023.
- Majority of the participants (76%) make decision on their daily food choices based on their judgement on how healthy the food is.
- They were much willing to opt for healthy food for its nutrient values (88.2%) regardless of its availability (64%).
- However, more participants perceived fresh food products as more expensive than processed food products (35.4%).
- There was no significant association between gender on the perception of healthy food in terms of all four levels of value dimensions.
- Male has reported a significantly greater disagreement in perceiving quality of fresh food products as high as compared to female($p < 0.037$).
- Few significant associations were found between socio-economic levels in perceiving food availability ($r = 17.8$) and quality of fresh food ($r = 24.7$), and on the perception of healthy food product attractiveness ($r = 10.7$), careful use of preservatives ($r = 13.1$) and frequency to purchase pre- prepared meals ($r = 11.3$).

Discussion

- Higher earnings neighbourhoods usually have fully equipped supermarkets that offer good quality of foods at reasonable prices, different from independent supermarket retailers or small convenience stores in less developed areas that often provide low quality and yet expensive fresh food items (5).
- Female who have already innately conditioned with motivational orientation as derived from self- body issue then later showed greater impulsive positive ratings on perceiving healthy food in favorable manner as they felt they are obligated to rate so (6).

Conclusions

- Nearly all participants have found to perceived healthy food as the main important source for overall good health and were much willing to opt for its nutrient values regardless of the pricing and availability when shopping for groceries. This mannerism is especially seen through different levels of wealth rather than gender.

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