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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA.

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Background

Nutrition knowledge plays an important role in public health. It is one of the factors that affects the nutrition habits of individuals, families and communities. It provides a good foundation for making proper decisions regarding food choice and nutrition practices. In order to effectively promote acquisition of nutrition knowledge, attitude and practices among pupils, insight into factors that are associated with nutrition knowledge in both the home and school environments is necessary.

Objective

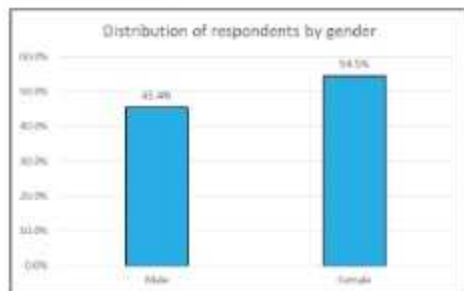
The purpose of the study was to determine the demographic, socio-economic and any factors in the school environment associated with nutrition knowledge of primary school pupils in Laikipia County, Kenya.

The study design was a cross-sectional study involving a total of 326 pupils aged 12-14 years recruited into the study from three primary schools in Laikipia County. The schools were selected on the basis of being located in an arid and semi-arid region, and also being part of the healthy learning programme funded by VVOB. The selected schools were also part of the government school feeding programme. Data on study variables was collected using a pre-tested questionnaire and focus group discussions.

Main Outcome Measures and analysis

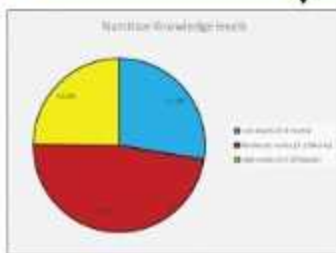
Data was collected on demographic characteristics, socioeconomic characteristics, nutrition knowledge scores. The nutrition knowledge was assessed using a specifically designed 20-item questionnaire. Chi square tests, Pearson correlation coefficient and logistic regression were used to determine association between variables.

Results and findings



The mean age of the pupils was 12.24 ± 1.39 . 45.4% of the respondents were male while 54.5% were Female.

The pupils were in classes five, six and seven. The mean nutrition knowledge score was 10.96 ± 3.75 . The nutrition knowledge was categorized into three levels as follows: low ($\leq 40\%$), moderate (41-69%) and high ($\geq 70\%$).



It was established through the focus group discussions that the respondents had learnt a lot about hygiene and health through participation in the healthy learning programme. The respondents enjoyed the healthy learning programme activities.

The age of the respondents was not significantly associated with the mean nutrition knowledge score. The marital status of the parents and their occupation were not significantly associated with the nutrition knowledge level. Ownership of a television set was significantly associated with the level of nutrition knowledge ($p=0.016$). Pupils whose families owned a television set had higher levels of nutrition knowledge as compared to pupils whose families did not own a television set. The source of lighting used by the respondents at home was significantly associated with their level of nutrition knowledge ($p=0.008$). The respondents who used solar energy for lighting had higher levels of nutrition knowledge as compared to those that used firewood. The class of study was significantly associated with the nutrition knowledge level ($p=0.000$). Class seven pupils were 8.34 times more likely to have higher nutrition knowledge as compared to class five and six pupils (OR=8.34). Class five pupils 2.76 times less likely to have higher nutrition knowledge as compared to their class six and seven counterparts (OR=2.76).

VARIABLE COMPARISON	ODDS RATIO	p-value
Nutrition knowledge levels of class 7 versus classes 5 & 6	8.34	<0.001
Nutrition knowledge levels of class 5 versus classes 6 & 7	2.76	<0.001

Conclusion and recommendations

The television should be explored more to deliver age-appropriate nutrition messages to learners. Proper source of lighting in households should be focused on as it could positively influence the knowledge of pupils in nutrition and other subjects. Facilitating families with solar lamps or installation of electrical energy at subsidized cost is recommended. Various healthy learning activities should be incorporated into the school environment to promote skills on nutrition and health.