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## **Knowledge on Selection of healthy foods among Ordinary level students in a National school, Nikawaratiye, Sri Lanka**

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**Background:** Awareness of optimal nutrition among adolescents fosters healthy growth. It also reduces the risk of becoming underweight, overweight, or obese and the development of non-communicable diseases in later life.

**Objectives:** To describe the knowledge of healthy food selection among Ordinary-level students in a national school in Nikawaratiya, Sri Lanka.

**Methods & Materials:** This was a descriptive cross-sectional survey conducted among 270 male and female students studying in grades 10 and 11 at Nikawaratiye, National School. A GNKQ – r (UK) self-administered questionnaire was used, and face validity was ensured by the panel of subject experts. The item scale consisted of 13 items. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the International Institute of Health Sciences. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed with SPSS version 22. Mann Whitney U test was performed.

**Results:** Of the participants, 62.6% were in grade 11 and 37.4% were in grade 10. Among them, 50.7 % were male and 49.3% were female. Total knowledge scores ranged from 1 to 11, and the mean score was 5.51 ( $SD \pm 1.95$ ). Among the students 48.1% had knowledge above the mean knowledge score and many of them (22.2%, n=60) had scored 4. There was no significant difference between the awareness of selection of healthy foods between males (median=6, n=137) and females (median=5, n=133), ( $U=9028.5$ ,  $z= -.130$ ,  $p=0.897$ ,  $r=0.0079$ ) at 95% confident level. There was a significant difference in the awareness of healthy food selection between grade 10 (median=7, n=101) and 11 (median=5, n=169), ( $U=4855$ ,  $z= -6.006$ ,  $p= 0.000$ ,  $r=0.36$ )

**Conclusion:** Mean knowledge of healthy food selection was unsatisfactory. The level of knowledge differed significantly between grades 10 and 11. More than half of the students' knowledge was below the mean level regarding the selection of healthy foods. Awareness programs are required to be conducted in schools.