



Study on Awareness, Attitude and Practices Regarding Food Labelling Among Students

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Food labelling serves as an important communication tool between food manufacturers and consumers. It provides essential information regarding ingredients, nutritional composition, manufacturing date, expiry date, storage conditions and food safety. Proper understanding and utilization of food labels enable consumers to make informed food choices and adopt healthier dietary practices. The present study was conducted to assess awareness, attitude and practices regarding food labelling among students. A total of 100 students were selected through random sampling, and data were collected using a standardized questionnaire. The findings revealed that awareness was highest for production/expiry date (94%) and product name (89%), whereas awareness regarding nutrition facts (68%), storage instructions (54%) and country of origin (41%) was comparatively lower. Most respondents (86%) believed that all food products should be labelled and 59 per cent considered current food labels informative. Production/expiry date (87%) was the most frequently checked food label component. Choosing healthier foods (67%) was the major reason for reading ingredient lists, while lack of interest (51%) was identified as the primary barrier to food label utilization. The study concluded that students possess positive attitudes toward food labelling, although awareness and utilization of detailed nutritional information remain limited. Improving nutrition education and food label literacy may enhance consumer understanding and encourage healthier food choices.

Introduction

Food labels are an important source of information that help consumers understand the nutritional quality, ingredients and safety of packaged food products. Increasing urbanization, changing lifestyles and the growing consumption of processed foods have increased the importance of food labelling in promoting healthy dietary behaviour. Food labels provide information regarding product name, ingredients, nutritional facts, manufacturing and expiry dates, storage instructions and country of origin. Such information assists consumers in making informed purchasing decisions and selecting healthier food products. Therefore, understanding awareness, attitudes and practices regarding food labelling among students is essential for improving nutrition literacy and promoting healthier food choices.

Methodology

The study entitled "Awareness, Attitude and Practices Regarding Food Labelling among Students" was conducted at the Community Science College and Research Institute (CSC&RI), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Madurai. A total of 100 students were selected using a random sampling method. Data were collected using a standardized questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic information and statements related to awareness, attitude and practices regarding food labelling. The questionnaire was pre-tested among selected students to assess clarity and suitability before final administration. Awareness and attitude statements were measured using a three-point scale consisting of

Disagree (0), Not Sure (1) and Agree (2). Practices related to food label usage were assessed using a three-point scale consisting of Never (0), Sometimes (1) and Always (2). The collected data were analysed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, chi-square test and independent t-test.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (N=100)

Characteristics	Respondents (%)
Age (years)	
Below 20	42
Above 20	58
Gender	
Male	42
Female	58

Awareness Regarding Food Label Components

Students demonstrated varying levels of awareness regarding food label information. Awareness was highest for production/expiry date (94%), followed by product name (89%), manufacturer information (88%), net quantity (83%) and ingredient list (81%). Awareness regarding nutrition facts (68%), instructions for use (63%), storage instructions (54%) and country of origin (41%) was comparatively lower. The findings suggest that students mainly focus on food safety and product identification information rather than detailed nutritional information.

Table 2. Awareness of Food Label Components Among Students

Food Label Component	Respondents (N = 100) Percent
Product Name	89
Net Quantity	83
Nutrition Facts	68
Storage Instructions	54
Production/Expiry Date	94
Manufacturer Information	88
Ingredient List	81
Instructions for Use	63
Country of Origin	41

Attitude Towards Food Labelling

Students exhibited positive attitudes toward food labelling. Many respondents (86%) believed that all food products should be labelled, while only one per cent felt that food labelling was unnecessary. More than half of the participants (59%) agreed that current food labels are informative and 66 per cent reported that labels are easy to understand. However, 70 per cent indicated that important information such as manufacturing and expiry dates is often printed in very small letters. Additionally, 67 per cent supported the use of colourful and easy-to-understand front-of-pack labels.

Practices Regarding Food Labelling

Food label reading practices varied among students. Production/expiry date was the most frequently checked information, with 87 per cent of respondents reporting that they always checked it before purchasing food products. Product name was always checked by 85 per cent of participants, while net quantity was consistently checked by 60 per cent. Ingredient lists and nutrition facts were always examined by only 50 per cent and 38 per cent of respondents, respectively. Storage instructions (28%) and country of origin information (24%) were the least frequently consulted food label components.

Table 3. Information Checked on Food Labels During Purchase

Information Checked	Respondents (N = 100) Percent
Product Name	85
Manufacturer Name	59
Instructions for Use	43
Storage Instructions	28
Production/Expiry Date	87
Net Quantity	60
Ingredient List	50
Nutrition Facts	38

Reasons for Reading Ingredient Lists

Health-related concerns were the primary motivation for reading ingredient labels. The most common reason was choosing healthier foods (67%), followed by avoiding high-sugar foods (43%), avoiding high-fat foods (38%) and preventing food-related diseases (38%). Other reasons included food allergy or intolerance concerns (36%), avoiding weight gain (32%) and avoiding high-salt foods (29%). These findings indicate increasing awareness regarding healthy eating practices among students.

Challenges in Food Label Utilization

Several barriers were identified that limited the effective use of food labels. Lack of interest was the most reported barrier (51%), followed by lack of time (42%), brand loyalty (40%), small font size (29%), lack of trust in food labels (20%) and lack of understanding (18%). These findings highlight the need for simplified and consumer-friendly food labels that can improve readability and encourage greater utilization.

Recognition of Food Additives

Awareness regarding food additives varied among respondents. Added sugar was recognized by 90 per cent of students, followed by palm oil (79%) and hydrogenated oils (57%). Awareness regarding sodium nitrate (30%), monosodium glutamate (28%) and aspartame (13%) remained comparatively low. The findings indicate limited knowledge regarding commonly used food additives and preservatives, emphasizing the importance of nutrition education programmes.

Conclusion

Food labels play a vital role in promoting informed food choices and healthy dietary practices. The present study revealed high awareness regarding product name and production/expiry date, positive attitudes toward food labelling and selective food label reading practices among students. While food labels were commonly used to obtain basic product information, detailed nutritional information and food additive information received comparatively less attention. Health consciousness was the major reason for reading ingredient labels, whereas lack of interest and time constraints were the primary barriers to food label utilization. Overall, the findings highlight the need for nutrition education programmes, improved food label literacy and better label readability to enhance consumer understanding and encourage healthier food purchasing decisions.

References

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