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Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior

Volume 41, Issue 5, September–October 2009, Pages 340-346

Research Article

Focus Group Studies on Food Safety Knowledge, Perceptions, and Practices of School-going Adolescent Girls in South India

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2008.12.003>

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Abstract

Objective

To understand food safety knowledge, perceptions, and practices of adolescent girls.

Design

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with 32 groups selected using stratified random sampling.

Setting

Four South Indian states.

Participants

Participants

Adolescent girls (10-19 years).

Phenomena of Interest

Food safety knowledge, perceptions, and practices.

Analyses

FGDs were audio recorded, transcribed, and manually coded by topic. At each stage of coding and analysis, reports were read independently by 3 researchers. Results were presented according to 4 food safety topics: concept of safe food; home-cooked food or outside food; packaged food products and food labels; and previous exposure to food safety education.

Results

Subjects confused the concept of nutrition with food safety. They were checking food labels, but they were not aware of quality symbols like ISI (Bureau of Indian Standards), FPO (Fruit Products Order), and AGMARK (Agriculture Marking and Grading Act); trusted more in brand names/expensive packaged food; were less careful about snack food safety. Receiving food safety information through school health education was preferred.

Conclusions and Implications

Adolescent girls are not aware of food quality standards. Awareness needs to be raised on permitted food additives concerning which foods can use them. Children should be familiarized with quality symbols on food labels.



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Key Words

food safety; adolescent girls; focus group discussions; knowledge; perceptions and practices

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The study was funded by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

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