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The role of gender and socio-demographics variables on food safety perceptions of Lebanese University students

Lara Hanna-Wakim, C El Sokhn, J Matta and M El Beyrouthy
Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Lebanon

The perception of the consumer in food safety plays an important role in reducing the incidence of food borne diseases. Studies show that young adults aged between 18 and 25 years are more prone to food borne illnesses than adults because of their lack of food safety knowledge. The aim of this study was to measure the degree of University students' awareness in food safety as well as to explore whether there is a relationship or not between the demographic characteristics of university students and their knowledge and practices. A valid questionnaire divided into three parts was distributed to 938 university students aged between 18-25 years living alone or with their parents from different majors and years of study. The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS program. The total scores of the students surveyed were 47.95% on their food safety knowledge and 56.45% on their practices in the matter. The final score of the food safety perception of university students in both genders was 52.2%. Female students scored higher (63.14%) than male students (39.69%) and students majoring in health related fields (67.45%) scored higher than those majoring in areas not related to public health (49.21%). These results showed an overall low level of food safety perception of university students. Educational interventions are needed to improve their food safety knowledge and practices as they will be responsible for their own family one day.

Biography

Lara Hanna-Wakim is an Associate Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Lebanon. She is the Vice-President of the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences-2015 and Member of its Steering Committee. She served as Head of Food Science Department at USEK and as Responsible of the International Relations. She has an extensive experience as Food Safety consultant. She is Member of the National Committee of Agri-Food Industries at the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, an Active Member at the Lebanese Standards Institution at the Lebanese Ministry of Industry, Member of the Lebanese Association of Food Scientists and Technologists, and also Member of the Governing Council of the International Union of Food Science and Technology. Her research interests are primarily focused on consumer perceptions and attitude toward food safety in Lebanon. She holds an Agricultural Engineering Diploma from USEK (Lebanon), an MS in Food Science from the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)/INAP-G (France) and a PhD in Food Process Engineering from AgroParis Tech (France). She holds as well an MA/PG Diploma in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education from University of Chester (UK).

larahanna@usek.edu.lb

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