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Topic: Food and nutrition security

Title: Comparison of South African Food Based Dietary Guidelines and food group knowledge between Grade R boys and girls in suburban schools in Durban, South Africa.

Presentation Type: Oral

The aim of study was to determine South African (SA) Food Based Dietary Guideline (FBDG) and food group classification knowledge of boys and girls in Grade R (5-7 year olds) in government and private suburban schools. In SA many urban children suffer from malnutrition affecting school performance, attendance, intelligence and health. The literature explains that a relationship exists between nutrition knowledge (NK), attitude and dietary behaviour. Girls generally do better academically than boys due to the difference in the rate of brain development and girls are considered better listeners than boys.

The classroom study involved 130 Grade R learners in three Durban pre-primary schools, 46 boys (35%) and 84 girls (65%). A validated NK questionnaire was completed to assess SA FBDGs (section one, with 10 questions) and food group (section two, using pictorial representation) knowledge. The results will be presented on the knowledge of the boys compared to the girls.

The Grade R children had some nutrition knowledge and for the whole test the percentage of children with correct answers was similar between boys (71.86%) and girls (70.56%). More children obtained correct answers for FBDG knowledge (boys 86.09%, girls 84.39%) than food group knowledge (boys 43.40%, girls 42.92%) with one exception relating to fruit and vegetables (boys 87%, girls 92.80%).

This age group requires greater knowledge in respect to food groups and FBDGs. A fun appropriate nutrition education programme is advocated to increase knowledge which would impact on the reduction of nutrition-related diseases and improve nutritional status of SA children.