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The level of knowledge, perception and usage of fermented foods by caregivers for feeding young children in Heilbron, Free State Province

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Introduction

Use of fermented foods and probiotics has the potential to improve nutritional status when fed to young children. However, there has been insufficient research in South

Africa determining level of knowledge, perceptions and usage of fermented foods among the children's caregivers.

Objective: Study aimed to assess the caregivers' level of knowledge, perceptions and usage of fermented foods for feeding young children in Heilbron, Free State Province.

Study methods: Descriptive quantitative study which obtained data from participants using structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was employed summarize and present data. Chi Square test was used to determine demographic characteristics associated with feeding of fermented foods. Statistical significance was confirmed for p-values less than 0.05.

Results: From the 325 respondents, majority aged between 18 and 35 years and female dominated. Commercial fermented foods used by caregivers to feed young children were inkomazi (62%) commercial mageu (82%) and yoghurt at (86%). Majority of caregivers prepared fermented foods in the household to feed young children. Most of them 61% (n= 164) reported to be preparing ting ya mabele, followed by ting at 42% (n= 113) and fermented soft porridge 26% (n= 69). Most respondents had adequate knowledge and positive perceptions about fermented foods both commercially prepared and homemade.

Conclusion: This study showed that respondents had substantial knowledge about fermented foods. However, there were mixed perceptions on fermented foods usage.