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DIETARY PATTERNS IN AN ADULT POPULATION FROM ARGENTINA

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Background and objectives: Dietary patterns (DP) have been used to identify different combinations of foods that may be associated with mortality and risk of chronic disease. The objective of this study was to identify DP in the adult population of Argentina, and explore associations with socio-demographic features.

Methods: We defined DP among 3,000 adults between 35 to 74 years old, participating in CESCAS I, a population-based cohort study carried out in two cities in Argentina, Marcos Paz and Bariloche. Data on food intake was obtained from a validated self-administered food frequency questionnaire. Principal component Analysis (PCA) was used to identify DP. A summary score for each pattern was then derived and used in multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between DP and socio-demographic variables.

Results: Using PCA, we identified 3 major eating patterns. The first factor (Traditional dietary pattern), was characterized by a high intake of refined grains, red meat, whole fat dairy products, vegetable oils, and "mate", a traditional South American infused drink frequently consumed in Argentina; the second factor (Healthy dietary pattern), was characterized by a high intake of vegetables, fruit, low fat dairy products, whole grains, and legumes; the third factor (Processed-food dietary pattern) consisted mainly of processed meat, snacks, pizza, and "empanadas", a stuffed bread baked or fried. After adjusting for energy intake, we found that DP were associated with age, gender, and educational level. Healthy DP score was higher among women and high educational level (p=0.001) while men and young people scored significantly higher in the Processed-food DP (p=0.01).

Conclusions: Local DP has been identified in our population. This study will provide useful information to set priority targets for nutrition interventions, and promote healthy policies based on local food habits.

Key words: Dietary patterns, Argentina, adults.

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ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL ITEM FUNCTIONING IN THE HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY SCALE MODULE WITHIN A DISADVANTAGED AUSTRALIAN POPULATION

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Background and objectives: Food insecurity is the limited availability of or access to nutritious, safe and culturally-appropriate food, or inability to access these foods by socially acceptable means. Monitoring and surveillance of food insecurity is imperative for the development of policy and interventions to address the issue. The measurement of food insecurity in Australia is limited, relying on a single item that underestimates its prevalence. Recently, countries have been adopting the more comprehensive United States Department of Agriculture Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM). However, it is unknown whether items in the HFSSM are perceived differently between groups, for example ethnic minorities and women, which may confound or complicate the interpretation of sub-group differences.

Methods: We examined differential item functioning of the ten USDA-FSSM adult-related items, based on gender, country of birth (COB) and presence of children in the household. Data were collected via mail-based survey among a cross-sectional sample of 487 low-income households in Brisbane, Australia and analysed using jMetrik freeware.

Results: Items did not function differently based on COB. Between genders, moderate levels of differential functioning were evident for only the item pertaining to hunger. Items functioned differently between households with and without children, with six of ten items displaying moderate differential functioning and a further three revealing large amounts of differential functioning. This is likely due to item bias, reflecting confounding with presence of children in a household. Care should be taken with the interpretation of results between households with and without children. Alternatively a separate measure of food insecurity may be constructed, however this may complicate comparisons between other groups and studies.

Conclusions: Differences in item function in the HFSSM exist between households with and without children. Care should be taken in the interpretation of results between these sub-groups.

Key words: Food security, food insecurity, measurement