Title:

A quantitative study examining compliance to the Saudi schools nutrition policy and alignment to the IOM standards in boys' public high schools in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Abstract

Aims: This study investigated the compliance of the selected schools to one chapter of the Saudi policy and assessed the nutritional-value of food offered in the schools using the institute of medicine (IOM) standards.

Methods: A total of 76 boys' public high schools were randomly selected from four areas in Riyadh (19 north, 19 south, 19 east, and 19 west). Principals and canteen managers were interviewed using validated questionnaires. Schools were observed using a food checklist.

Results: Food offered in Saudis schools comes prepackaged with minimal cooking in schools. From calorie perspective, there was not a significant difference between the foods allowed and foods not allowed. For the Saudi policy, 94.7% of the school scored in between category 2 and 3 (moderate compliance). For the IOM standards, 96.1% of the schools scored in category 1 (low alignment).

Conclusion: While the Saudi policy is clear on what should not be served in the school cafeteria, it fails to provide guidance on what must be served to improve the nutritional-value of foods.

Keywords

Saudi school canteen policy; IOM school nutrition standards; Breakfast; Food available in schools