



# Journal of Nutrition and Food Security

Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences  
School of Public Health  
Department of Nutrition  
Nutrition & Food Security Research Center



eISSN: 2476-7425

pISSN: 2476-7417

JNFS 2023; 8(2): 155-157

Website: jnfs.ssu.ac.ir

## *The Need for Revision of Food Literacy Policies in Iranian Universities during COVID-19: Solutions from the Scientific Evidence*

Mousa Bamir; PhD candidate <sup>\*1</sup>, Salman Farahbakhsh; MSc <sup>2</sup>, Salman Daneshi; PhD <sup>3</sup>,  
Reza Sadeghi; PhD <sup>4</sup> & Hamid Jafari; PhD <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Medical Library and Information Science, Sirjan School of Medical Sciences, Sirjan, Iran; <sup>2</sup> Department of Professional Health, Sirjan School of Medical Sciences, Sirjan, Iran; <sup>3</sup> Department of Public Health, School of Health, Jiroft University of Medical Sciences, Jiroft, Iran; <sup>4</sup> Department of Public Health, Sirjan School of Medical Sciences, Sirjan, Iran; <sup>5</sup> Department of Medical Emergencies, School of Medical Sciences, Sirjan, Iran.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### EDITORIAL ARTICLE

#### Article history:

Received: 27 Oct 2021

Revised: 9 Jan 2022

Accepted: 17 Jan 2022

#### \*Corresponding author

bamir@ut.ac.ir

Research Center of Foresight and Innovation in Health, Institute for Future Studies in Health, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Kerman, Iran.

Postal code: 7414846199

Tel: +98-09020833186

The World Health Organization, defines health literacy as cognitive and social skills increasing the motivation and ability of individuals to acquire information to promote and maintain their health (Tugut *et al.*, 2021). Nowadays, food literacy, as a subset of health literacy are receiving serious attention worldwide (Vamos *et al.*, 2021). Food literacy has been defined as a vital element in improving food insecurity and increasing food knowledge and skills with the aim of improving healthy eating behavior, which leads to reducing food hygiene inequalities (Steils and Obaidalaha, 2020).

The role of food literacy in improving food quality, and in the prevention and treatment of many chronic and contagious diseases is clear to all, but with the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, attention to food literacy knowledge and skills has become more important. The importance

of food literacy is due to fact that unhealthy food style can weaken the immune system and increase the risk of respiratory infectious diseases (Charlebois *et al.*, 2021).

Scientific evidence also suggests that having food literacy has potential effects on controlling the epidemic and the consequences of COVID-19. Food literacy improves individual's health by increasing proper nutritional skills (West *et al.*, 2020). Consumption of a healthy diet also has protective effects on the immune system and health consequences during the COVID-19 epidemic (Nguyen *et al.*, 2021).

The importance of this issue is such that the research group of the National Institutes of Health of the USA has developed a program to prevent and combat COVID-19 disease for 2020-2030, with the aim of increasing food literacy (Begley *et al.*, 2019).

*This paper should be cited as:* Bamir M, Farahbakhsh S, Daneshi S, Sadeghi R, Jafari H. *The Need for Revision of Food Literacy Policies in Iranian Universities during COVID-19: Solutions from the Scientific Evidence. Journal of Nutrition and Food Security (JNFS)*, 2023; 8(2): 155-157.

Researches in Iran have shown that the issue of nutrition of students in Iranian universities and taking the necessary measures to teach a healthy diet should be given serious attention by authorities and policy makers (Zamanian *et al.*, 2013). Outsourcing and privatization of students nutrition led to a reducing control measures of food quality by universities and rising student food prices. This factor resulted in more consumption of snacks and fast food among Iranian university students (Baghi Nejad Gork, 2018). In regard to lack of high food literacy and the impact of this style of nutrition on the prevalence of the diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, and various types of cancer (Baghi Nejad Gork, 2018), there is a need to promote food literacy in Iranian universities. Evidence shows that people with the underlying diseases are more vulnerable to COVID-19 (Kang, 2020).

Therefore, it is essential to determine the risk factors and protective factors that affect food quality and food literacy assessment during an epidemic for identifying appropriate public health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. As food illiteracy is increasing in Iranian universities and there is no plan to reverse it, we are looking for solutions using related keywords in various reputable global databases. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide solutions to solve the problem of food literacy promotion in Iranian universities based on scientific evidence. There are some solutions such as developing a curriculum following the characteristics and components of food literacy for students to increase the knowledge and necessary skills to have a healthy diet, nutrition and skills training programs as a food literacy intervention, and empowering students to access, understand, evaluate, and learn the use of healthy diet information through the university website during the epidemic. It can be very helpful to set up a university-based health promotion program that provides up-to-date scientific results and recommendations from nutritionists and to create a credible and reliable questionnaire to evaluate food literacy of students.

### Authors' contributions

All authors designed the study, reviewed the literature, collected the data, organized the information, developed the draft, formatted the manuscript, and read and approved the final manuscript.

### Conflicts of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

### References

- Baghi Nejad Gork B** 2018. Study of nutrition pattern of female medical students of Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences living in Al-Zahra dormitory in comparison with non-dormitories in 1990.2018. Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences: Tehran.
- Begley A, Paynter E, Butcher LM & Dhaliwal SS** 2019. Examining the association between food literacy and food insecurity. *Nutrients*. **11** (2): 445.
- Charlebois S, Music J & Faires S** 2021. The impact of COVID-19 on Canada's food literacy: results of a cross-national survey. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. **18** (10): 5485.
- Kang Y-J** 2020. Mortality rate of infection with COVID-19 in Korea from the perspective of underlying disease. *Disaster medicine and public health preparedness*. **14** (3): 384-386.
- Nguyen MH, et al.** 2021. Negative impact of fear of COVID-19 on health-related quality of life was modified by health literacy, eHealth literacy, and digital healthy diet literacy: a multi-hospital survey. *International journal of environmental research and public health*. **18** (9): 4929.
- Steils N & Obaidalaha Z** 2020. "Social food": Food literacy co-construction and distortion on social media. *Food Policy*. **95**: 101932.
- Tugut N, Yesildag Celik B & Yilmaz A** 2021. Health Literacy and Its Association with Health Perception in Pregnant Women. *Journal of health literacy*. **6** (2): 9-20.
- Vamos SD, Wacker CC, Welter VD & Schlüter K** 2021. Health literacy and food literacy for K-12 schools in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of school health*. **91** (8): 650-659.

**West EG, Lindberg R, Ball K & McNaughton SA** 2020. The role of a food literacy intervention in promoting food security and food literacy—OzHarvest’s NEST Program. *Nutrients*. **12 (8)**: 2197.

**Zamanian AM, et al.** 2013. Evaluating the nutritional status of dormitory resident students in Shahid Beheshti University of medical science. *journal of Ilam University of medical sciences*. **21 (3)**: 109-117 [persian].