

**DAIRY MILK VERSUS SOY MILK CONSUMPTION AMONG UNIVERSITY OF THE
WEST INDIES STAFF AND STUDENTS: APPLICATION OF NUTRITION AND
HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR**

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Background: Dairy milk versus soy milk consumption is a topic of divided opinions on the positive and negative implications of each towards health and nutrition. It is important to examine food consumption behaviours towards dairy milk and soy milk and the factors of health and nutrition knowledge and attitude in influencing these behaviours as it provides baseline information on the population essential for designing and implementing nutrition education strategies.

Objectives: the purpose of this study was to determine whether health and nutrition knowledge and attitude influence behaviour towards dairy milk and soy milk consumption in the sample population.

Design: Staff and students of the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine campus were randomly selected from the faculties of Engineering, Social Sciences, Humanities and Education, Medical Sciences, Law and Science and Agriculture to participate in a cross-sectional survey. A two-page questionnaire was administered which contained questions on demographic characteristics, consumption patterns of dairy milk and soy milk, attitudes and preferences towards dairy milk and soy milk, and knowledge questions about dairy milk and soy milk.

Results: The results show that 15.5% of staff and 17.7% of students generally they did not like the taste of milk. However, 62.1% of staff and 72.6% of students favoured dairy milk over soy

milk. The staff (5.2%) and students (3.7%) who used soy milk did so because of mainly because of health reasons. Staff consumed dairy milk more frequently (5 to 6 times per week) than students (once per week). The main reasons for consumption of dairy milk among both staff and students were because of taste, appearance, affordability and availability. The staff and students were only knowledgeable about the generally-known associations about dairy milk as being good for bone health. Staff and students were less informed about soy milk, except for those who consumed it more frequently. Knowledge about the positive and negative health and nutrition implications associated with dairy milk and soy milk consumption were not known by a majority of the staff and students. The attitude towards dairy milk was more positive than that of soy milk. It was found that attitude had a greater influence on dairy milk and soy milk consumption compared to health and nutrition knowledge. A significant association at the 5% level was found between age group and type of milk consumed $X^2=22.665$, $p=0.031$, and at the 1% level between age group and the frequency of soy milk consumption, $X^2=76.498$, $p=0.000$. This indicated that age is an strong influencing factor in the consumption behaviour of dairy milk and soy milk within the study population. It was found that attitude towards soy milk had a significant linear relationship with the behaviour to consume it, $B=19.7$, $p=0.016$.

Conclusion: Soy milk was perceived as a healthier choice of milk. However, this did not influence behaviour to consume more of it, possibly because it was also thought to be more expensive and not as readily available. Conversely, dairy milk was perceived to be less expensive and more readily accessible and this influenced the behaviour to consume more of it. The study shows that health and nutrition knowledge and attitudes about dairy milk and soy milk does influence behaviour but age is an important factor that must be considered as well. This study emphasises the importance of health and nutrition education with a general objective and

more specific education about dairy milk and soy milk, as even within a tertiary level education institution there were still misperceptions and uncertainty about the positive and negative health implications of consuming dairy milk and soy milk.