

## ABSTRACT

### **Healthiness of food sold by supermarkets around selected basic schools in Accra Metropolitan Assembly**

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**Background:** Most foods available in the school food environment have been reported to be unhealthy. Exposure to unhealthy foods in-store can influence preference, purchasing, and consumption of such foods. Intake of unhealthy foods such as energy-dense nutrient-poor foods is linked to the onset of obesity and dietary non-communicable diseases.

**Objective:** This study determined the healthiness of food sold at supermarkets located near selected basic schools in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) of Ghana.

**Method:** The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional study design. A quantitative data collection approach was employed. An in-store measurement tool was used to determine the shelf length and breadth of the various food groups available in the supermarket. The food groups were further categorized as healthy or unhealthy based on the study's definition and also based on the NOVA classification system. Descriptive analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel Worksheet 2010 and IBM SPSS Version 21.

**Results:** The study assessed a total of nine supermarkets found within communities of selected schools. Three of the nine supermarkets were classified as large-sized, two as medium-sized supermarkets, and four as small-sized supermarkets. Refined grains and refined grain products were the most available food groups in the supermarkets (5962.0m<sup>2</sup>) with seafood (33.0m<sup>2</sup>) and fresh fruits (86.9m<sup>2</sup>) being the least available food groups in the supermarkets. In all the supermarkets, unprocessed staples, fresh meat, fish, and poultry were not identified. Close to 90% of the total area occupied by food products in the supermarkets was allotted to unhealthy foods and 12.8% of the area was occupied by healthy foods. Using the NOVA classification, 203 (56.7%) food products identified in the supermarkets were categorized as ultra-processed foods, 57 (15.9%) were processed foods, 20 (5.6%) as processed culinary foods, and 78 (21.8%) as unprocessed or minimally processed foods. Overall, the ratio of healthy to unhealthy foods at each supermarket ranged from 0.00 to 0.29.

**Conclusion:** This study demonstrates the prevalence of unhealthy foods such as sugar-sweetened foods available in supermarkets found within communities in which the selected basic schools in AMA are located.