

TITLE: PREFERENCE RANKING OF SELECTED CARBOHYDRATE ENERGY STAPLES BY VERY ACTIVE MANUAL WORKERS IN NAIROBI, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, “Ugali”, made from milled whole sifted dry maize (corn) flour, is the popular staple food consumed by nearly 80% of the population. The overreliance on “Ugali” has posed a major problem socially, economically and politically. Ugali is generally perceived to have higher energy and satiety compared to other carbohydrate staple foods. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using 322 purposefully selected respondents. The objective was to determine the preference ranking of selected commonly consumed carbohydrate energy staple foods by Very Active Manual Workers (VAMW). The VAMW require high energy in order to sustain their very active lifestyle. Three group categories were targeted: VAMW, moderately active Civil servants (CS) and University students (US). Structured questionnaires were administered to respondents to indicate their top ranking and preferred staple foods among six commonly consumed carbohydrate energy foods - Ugali, rice, chapati, Irish potatoes, bananas (Matoke), and “others” category (foods such as Githeri (mixed maize and beans), cassava, spaghetti, noodles, Sweet potatoes, and bread among many alternatives). The foods were ranked according to the most preferred to the least preferred on a scale of 1 to 6. Results indicated a higher preference for Ugali by all respondent groups. The mean rank for Ugali by VAMW was 1.134 ± 0.492 , followed by chapati 2.588 ± 0.976 , third was rice 3.27 ± 1.242 , fourth was Irish Potatoes 4.299 ± 0.970 , fifth bananas (matoke) 4.588 ± 1.068 , and sixth was “others” 5.165 ± 1.296 . US preference ranking for Ugali was 1.628 ± 1.067 , rice 2.5 ± 1.085 , chapati 2.564 ± 1.083 , Irish potatoes 4.053 ± 0.943 , bananas 4.394 ± 0.918 , and others 5.872 ± 0.421 ; CS ranking for Ugali was 1.471 ± 0.930 , rice 2.608 ± 1.101 , chapati 3.09 ± 1.264 , bananas 4.029 ± 1.173 , Irish potatoes 4.51 ± 0.972 , and others 5.284 ± 1.396 . Combined groups mean was 1.410 ± 0.064 and food preference ranking was very significantly different, $P < 0.0001$. Pairwise comparison of mean ranks indicated a significant difference between rank means of all groups, but there was no significant difference between the ranking for rice versus chapati, and Irish potatoes versus bananas. However, the VAMW had a higher preference for Ugali compared to the moderately active groups.

Key words: “Ugali,” Preference ranking, Carbohydrate energy staple, Satiety, Very active manual workers