

23348 | Relationship between the organic operation of SASUP canteens and the food supply of vending machines

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Background & Aim: Higher education institutions play a crucial role in promoting healthy environments. However, vending machines often provide food products with high energy density, making them a frequent choice for students who spend long hours on campus, especially in the absence of alternative food sources like canteens. This study aims to assess whether the presence and operating hours of SASUP canteens may influence the food offerings in vending machines within the University of Porto campus. **Methods:** Data were collected through the OCCA (Observatory of Eating Behavior and Consumption) questionnaire and statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 29.0. The study included 23 institutions, of which 8 (34.8%) had SASUP canteens, and 2 (25%) of these served dinner. Regarding food vending machines, 62 (58.5%) were located in institutions with SASUP canteens, with 43 (40.6%) of these being in institutions that did not provide dinner service. **Results:** The findings indicated that the presence of SASUP canteens were not significantly related to the percentage of permitted food items available in vending machines (12.0% vs 22.1% vs 17.9%, $p = 0.061$). However, institutions with SASUP canteens offering dinner services showed a lower percentage of occupied vending machine rows (91.7% vs. 100%, $p = 0.023$). Pairwise comparisons showed significant differences between SASUP canteens with and without dinner service ($p = 0.050$), while no significant difference was observed between other groups. The association between occupied rows and the percentage of permitted food was weak and non-significant ($r_s = 0.229$, $p = 0.125$). **Conclusions:** The results suggest that the availability of a canteen does not necessarily lead to healthier vending machine options. These findings highlight the need for further studies and discussions on improving food offerings in higher education institutions to promote healthier choices.

Keywords: Vending machines, university canteens, food environment, dietary choices.