ABSTRACT

Stunting among children under five years old is still a problem in many developing countries including Kenya. However, there is little information linking stunting with mycotoxin contamination of complementary foods. The aim of this study was to assess knowledge about aflatoxin and fumonisin contamination in sorghum alongside postharvest handling and storage practices among caregivers of children under five years old in Kerio Valley, Kenya. A cross-sectional study was conducted to obtain data from 353 randomly selected caregivers of children aged 6–59 months. Qualitative data were obtained through Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews. Overall, majority of the caregivers of young children had poor knowledge (61.8%) about mycotoxin contamination of food, and poor postharvest handling and storage practices (74.5%). The caregiver's knowledge about mycotoxins was significantly associated with age [(AOR=4.629, (95% Cl: 2.530–8.472), $p < .001$], education level [(AOR=0.275, (95% Cl: 0.088–0.434), $p = .001$], marital status [(AOR=15.187, (95% Cl: 1.830–126.007), $p = .012$], and household monthly income [(AOR=2.623, (95% Cl: 1.550–4.439), $p <$ 0,001]. Furthermore, the caregiver's age [(AOR=3.845, (95% Cl: 1.558–9.490), $p = .003$], education level [(AOR=0.196, (95% Cl: 0.088–0.434), $p < .001$], monthly income [(AOR=3.291, (95% Cl: 1.550–6.986), $p = .002$], and knowledge on mycotoxin contamination of sorghum [AOR, 5.428 (95% Cl: 2.855–10.319), $p < .001$] were significantly associated with postharvest handling and storage practices except for marital status [AOR, 3.579 (95% Cl: 0.403–31.775), $p = .252$]. In conclusion, caregivers of young children had poor knowledge about mycotoxin contamination of complementary foods and suboptimal postharvest handling and storage practices of sorghum. This increases the risk of mycotoxin exposure to young children and necessitates mitigation measures including sensitization campaigns and social behavior change communication.

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