School meals and consumption of ultraprocessed food in Brazilian adolescents

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Schools covered by school meals are less likely to consume ultraprocessed salty foods and soft drinks. Students who attend schools with cafeterias are more likely to consume ultra-processed salty foods, sweets and soft drinks.

BACKGROUND

- School meals plays a key role in student development and health. Public Brazilian schools offer free meals through the National School Feeding Program (PNAE).
- Studying that to identify the influence of food offered by the PNAE and sold by school cafeterias on the consumption of ultra-processed salty foods, soft drinks, and sweets in schools are vital to prevent unhealthy eating habits.
- We evaluated the association between meals offered by the PNAE and school cafeterias and the consumption of ultraprocessed foods among Brazilian adolescents.

METHODS

- Cross-sectional study of 102,072 students (11-19 years old);
- Data: National School Health Survey (PeNSE) 2015 (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics);
- Outcomes: consumption of ultra-processed salty foods, sweet foods, and soft drinks;
- Multivariate analysis using the Poisson regression model.

RESULTS

• Regular consumption of ultra-processed salty foods and soft drinks were associated with residing in a capital (PR=1.09, CI=1.06–1.11; PR=1.14, CI=1.11–1.17).

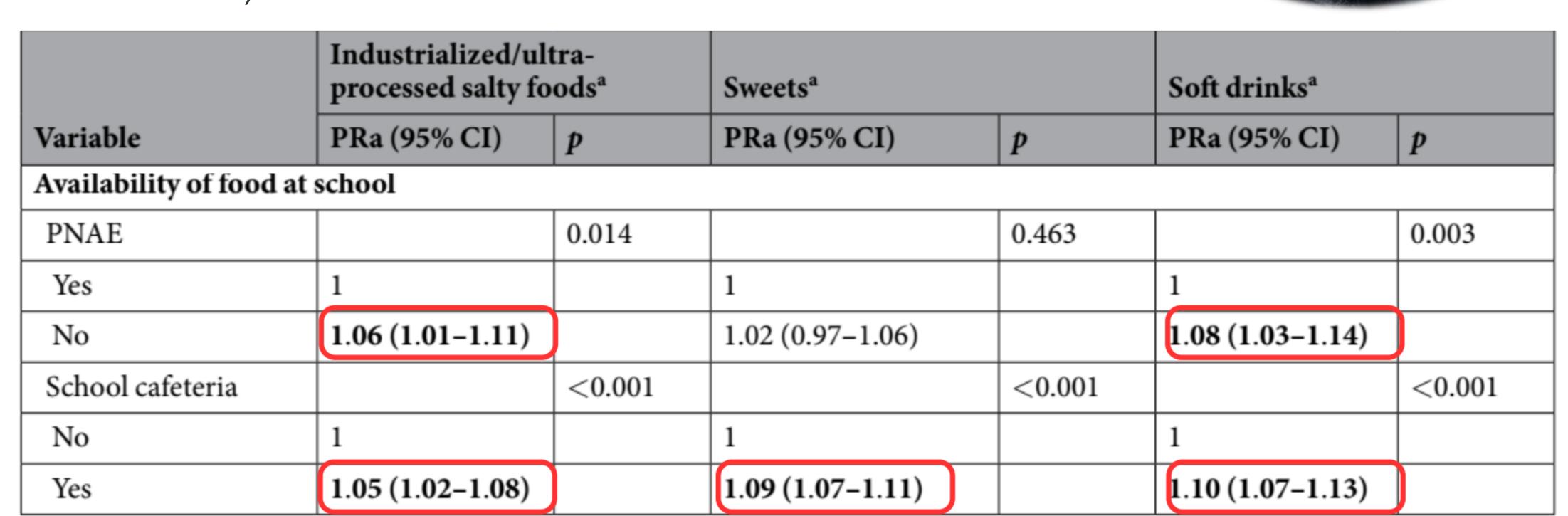
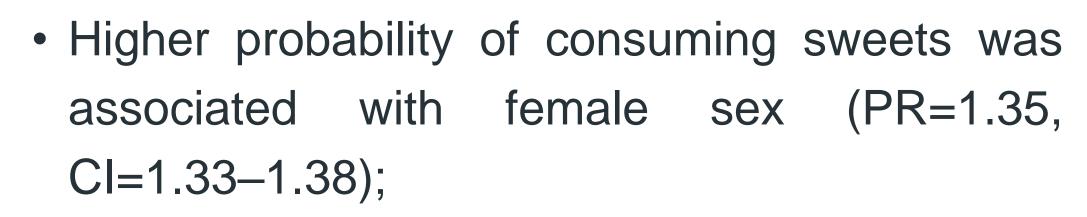


Table 1. Multivariable analyses of factors associated with the consumption of industrialized/ultra-processed salty foods, sweets, and sof drinks by 9th-grade adolescents in the 2015 PeNSE in Brazil. Effect measure is the PR 95% CI. Model adjusted for all explanatory variables. PeNSE: National School Health Survey; PNAE: Brazilian School Food Program. Bolded p-values denote significance (p<0.05). Regular consumption (at least 5 of the previous 7 days).

RESULTS CONTINUED





• Regular soft drinks consumption was associated with public school attendance (PR=1.12, Cl=1.06–1.18) and male sex [PR=1.10, Cl=1.08–1.13).



CONCLUSIONS

- School meals are associated with less consumption of ultraprocessed foods by Brazilian adolescents, whereas the presence of a school cafeteria was related to a higher consumption of this food group.
- School meals can reduce food insecurity and the PNAE is a long-lasting program. These findings may support intervention strategies to promote healthy eating patterns by adolescents and young adults.

ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMATION

Conflicts of Interest: No competing interests exist.

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