

How Schwartz' Basic Human Values Influence Food Choices in Kenya and Tanzania

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Objectives: To identify and describe how values drive food choice of vulnerable consumers in two East African countries, Kenya and Tanzania.

Methods: Secondary data analysis was conducted on focus group discussions from studies in Kenya and Tanzania. A codebook was developed based on Schwartz's theory of basic human values. A priori coding was conducted in NVivo 12 followed by a narrative comparative analysis, which included review by original principal investigators.

Results: Values of conservation (security, conformity, tradition), openness to change (self-directed thought and action, stimulation, indulgence), self-enhancement (achievement, power, face), and self-transcendence (benevolence dependability and caring) were prominent

drivers of food choice in both settings. While tradition was an important value in food choice, new social situations and food environments rendered reprioritization, especially pertaining to youth and animal source foods. Openness to change values were readily cited, especially in peri-urban Kenya with many new foods and diverse neighborhoods. Values of independent thought and action were drivers of mothers' food choices for families. Benevolence security and caring were drivers of choices for child feeding and selecting trustworthy food vendors. Many participants described how values existed in tension. For example, changes in livelihood led to a reprioritization of values like stimulation or indulgence over tradition.

Conclusions: Values were important drivers of food choice in both settings, particularly for meat. Future efforts to promote healthy, sustainable diets will require policy and broad consumer support to succeed. Examining the values that drive food choice in different contexts is necessary especially to minimize unintended consequences, controversy, and perhaps opposition in the implementation of policies and programs.

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