

ABSTRACT

The consumption of ultra processed food (UPF) has been rapidly increasing globally. This is concerning, as UPFs are characterised by high levels of sugar, fat, sodium and has been associated with the increasing prevalence of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Despite the growing concern over UPFs, there has been little attention given to UPF consumption in elderlies, who are particularly vulnerable due to physiological declines associated with ageing. This study aims to identify dietary patterns in respect to UPF in French and Bulgarian elderlies, compare the number of food choices in each NOVA category between the different dietary patterns within each study population and possible sociodemographic determinants associated with the dietary patterns. A self-administered semi-quantitative finite food choice and frequency web-based questionnaire was distributed. The datasets were run through multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). All resulting dimensions from MCA were included in a subsequent hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) to identify clusters with similar dietary patterns. Three dietary patterns were identified in both French and Bulgarian elderlies. Identified dietary patterns in French elderlies were: “Health-conscious”, “Convenience food” and “UPF oriented”. Identified patterns in Bulgarian elderlies were “Traditional diet”, “No cooking” and “UPF oriented”. The “UPF oriented” dietary pattern of the French elderlies had a significantly higher number of UPF food choices compared to the “Health-conscious” dietary pattern (7.36 ± 2.01 vs 3.90 ± 1.95 , $p < 0.001$). Bulgarian elderlies with the “UPF oriented” dietary pattern had a significantly higher number of UPF food choices compared to the “Traditional diet” dietary pattern (5.08 ± 1.25 vs 3.77 ± 1.23 , $p < 0.001$). This study also found no association between age, gender, professional status, marital status, and the presence of a health-restraining diet with the different dietary patterns.

Keywords: *ultra processed food, dietary pattern, elderlies, healthy ageing, cluster analysis*