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Measuring The Impact of Gender on Dietary Supplement Purchasing  
Frequency: Evidence from Algeria

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Besin Takviyesi Satın Alma Sıklığında Cinsiyetin Etkisinin Ölçülmesi:  
Cezayir'den Kanıtlar

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**Measuring The Impact of Gender on Dietary Supplement Purchasing Frequency: Evidence from Algeria (Besin Takviyesi Satın Alma Sıklığında Cinsiyetin Etkisinin Ölçülmesi: Cezayir'den Kanıtlar)**

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## **Measuring The Impact of Gender on Dietary Supplement Purchasing Frequency: Evidence from Algeria**

### **Abstract**

Using the t-test for two independent samples, this paper aims to examine the impact of gender on the purchasing frequency of dietary supplements in Algeria. Based on an online survey, this study was conducted between May 13 and August 12, 2023, among 321 participants (60 men and 261 women) from Algeria. Thus, the collected data were analyzed using a t-test of two independent samples, and independent-samples Mann-Whitney U Test via SPSS V26 software. In addition to the quantitative approach, this paper explored the qualitative method to review the previous research conducted on this subject.

The result reveals that the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements is not significantly different between Algeria men and women. (Sig: 0.165).

**Keywords:** Consumer behavior, Nutritional supplements, Organic foods, Gender, Algeria, Mann-Whitney U Test.

### **Besin Takviyesi Satın Alma Sıklığında Cinsiyetin Etkisinin Ölçülmesi: Cezayir'den Kanıtlar**

### **Öz**

*İki bağımsız örnek için t-testini kullanan bu makale, Cezayir'de cinsiyetin besin takviyesi satın alma sıklığı üzerindeki etkisini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çevrimiçi ankete dayanarak bu çalışma 13 Mayıs'ta hazırlandı; ve 12 Ağustos 2023'te Cezayir'den 321 katılımcı (60 erkek; 261 kadın) arasında. Böylece toplanan veriler, SPSS V26 yazılımı aracılığıyla amaçlanan iki örneğin t-testi kullanılarak analiz edildi. Bu makale, nicel yaklaşımın yanı sıra, bu konuda yürütülen önceki araştırmaları gözden geçirmek için nitel yöntemi de araştırmıştır.*

*Sonuç, Cezayirli erkekler ve kadınlar arasında besin takviyesi satın alma sıklığının önemli ölçüde farklı olmadığını ortaya koyuyor. (Sig: 0,165).*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tüketici Davranışı, Besin Takviyeleri, Organik Gıdalar, Cinsiyet, Cezayir. Mann-Whitney U Testi.

### **Introduction**

The market for "functional foods" and "foods with functional statements" that are beneficial in preserving and promoting health has grown year after year as large food and beverage producers have entered the market with the implementation of Japan's designated health food system in 1991 (Miyamoto, 2021). The assumption that organic foods are healthier than conventionally produced foods is one of the major reasons for the growing global interest in organic foods (Hjelmar, 2011; Hughner et al, 2007; Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Thus, food supplements may contain a variety of nutrients

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and other substances, such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, essential fatty acids, fiber, and diverse plant and herbal extracts (efsa, 2023). Consumers are increasingly interested in the health advantages of foods high in nutrients and bioactive substances such as antioxidants, polyphenols, fiber, minerals, and vitamins (Sajdakowska et al, 2018).

Food supplements, often known as dietary or nutritional supplements, are intended to provide nutrients that may not be consumed in appropriate quantities (eufic, 2013). Vitamins, minerals, amino acids, fatty acids, and other substances can be administered as pills, tablets, capsules, liquids, and so on (European Commission, 2024).

Nutrition literacy, which stems from health literacy, is critical in shaping dietary habits (Banna et al., 2022). Furthermore, whole grain foods, which are high in nutrients, fiber, and phytochemicals and have been shown to have health advantages, play an important role in supporting human health and well-being (Gil, Ortega, and Maldonado 2011). Among the several elements that influence eating behaviors, nutritional literacy has lately been identified as a critical component in improving the quality, health, and general well-being of one's eating habits (Doustmohammadian et al, 2022).

Understanding customer viewpoints, attitudes, and purchasing behavior toward functional foods is critical (Calado et al., 2018; Frewer, Scholderer, and Lambert, 2003; Kraus, 2015). In the Japanese context, Yano (2020) stated that inbound demand from international visitors visiting Japan led to the growth of the health food sector. As a result, in order to introduce health claims-related items or services to the market, customers must be educated about them; effective marketing through advertising is essential. In Europe, food supplements are used by 43% of adults in Germany and 59% in Denmark (Beitz et al, 2004; Tetens et al, 2011). However, it is used less frequently in Ireland and Spain (23% and 9%, respectively) (Kiely, 2001; Rovira et al, 2013). Therefore, women consume supplements more than males (Mensink et al, 2012).

In this regard, consumers have an important role in tackling the sustainability concerns of food systems (Hedin et al, 2019; Vermeir et al, 2020; Verain et al, 2015). Consumer desire for healthy, sustainable food is increasing (Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) 2021). Consumers, on the other hand, frequently hold producers and manufacturers accountable for making food systems more sustainable (Eurobarometer, 2020; Mintel, 2021).

This research adds to the current literature by investigating the gender differences in the purchasing frequency of nutritional supplements in Algeria. Furthermore, we hope to investigate gender differences in knowledge and awareness, as well as to increase the usage of food supplements.

Overall, when examining ecofeminism in relation to green products, one key aspect is the emphasis on sustainability and ethical consumption. Ecofeminists argue that traditional models of production and consumption often perpetuate harmful practices that negatively impact both women and the environment. (Ottuh, 2020).

#### Literature Review

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Consumer interest in the environmental sustainability of food production has grown in recent years (Sörqvist et al., 2018). Food supplements, as defined by efsa (2023), are concentrated sources of nutrients (such as minerals and vitamins) or other substances with a nutritional or physiological effect that are offered in dose form (e.g. pills, tablets, capsules, liquids in calibrated doses). Many academic papers have addressed the importance of nutritional food by explaining and consumer behavior, acceptance, purchase intention, and consumption of this type of products (Hjelmar, 2011; Crane et al, 2019; Yano 2020; Grasso & Asioli, 2020; Ottuh, 2020; Nystrand & Olsen, 2020 ; Sielicka-Rózyńska.; Jerzyk and GluzaInt, 2021 ; Banna et al, 2022; Molnar et al 2023; Šedík, Hudecová and Predanócyová, 2023; Boukhedimi et al, 2023; Belmedani, Chitti, and Batache, 2023. Alotaibi et al, 2023; Boukhedimi, & Ataş, 2024).

Crane et al. (2019) analyzed food purchasing behaviors and diet quality by gender in the US (n=204). Research indicates that women account for 82.8% of household food purchases, with no gender disparities in the quantity of items purchased. In addition, men made less purchases in retailers (74.0%;  $P < .001$ ) than women (81.4%). There were no gender differences in overall food quality or source of purchase.

Perito et al. (2019) conducted a study on meals made from olive byproducts and measured customers' readiness to accept (WTA) them. In Italy. Consumers saw the use of olive byproducts as a novel technology for preparing familiar cuisine. Furthermore, buyers were interested in the technology employed in the manufacturing process rather than the product itself. The findings revealed that knowledge about the qualities of olive by-products might alleviate consumer technophobia, and the authors suggested appropriate marketing strategies focused on the by-product advantage to boost customer willingness to accept green products.

Nystrand and Olsen (2020) conducted a study on Norwegian consumers' attitudes and intentions to use functional foods. Exploring the theory of planned behavior (TPB) among 810 respondents, it was discovered that utilitarian eating values were strongly and favorably correlated with participants' attitudes toward the consumption of functional meals, whereas hedonic eating values were less strongly and negatively related to attitude. To ensure commercial success, the food sector must boost the hedonic value of functional meals.

Sielicka-Rózyńska et al's (2021) study intends to assess consumers' perceptions of gluten-free claims and the Crossed Grain sign on cookie packets, including those who do not follow a gluten-free diet. They employed a questionnaire survey with 600 respondents and an eye-tracking investigation with 67 participants. The study's findings revealed that respondents are aware of the fundamental rules of gluten-free product labelling.

However, 32% of people on the diet complained that the products were not correctly labeled. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated a substantial relationship between

customers' purchasing intentions and the amount of gluten-free claims. Respondents paid more attention to verbal gluten-free promises on packaging compared to nonverbal ones ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In the case of the Crossed Grain symbol, the addition of a spoken statement improved the information and reduced respondents' level of doubt about a specific product, which is crucial, especially for people who are new to the diet. Thus, there is no difference in visual attention to gluten-free statements across diet followers and unfollowers ( $p > 0.05$ ), implying that the perception of gluten-free claims is automatic.

Belmedani, Chitti, and Batache (2023) evaluated the influence of Facebook advertising on food supplement usage among 412 Facebook users in Algeria. The results showed that Facebook advertising has no effect on the intake of supplement meals.

In another study, Maehle and Skjeret (2022) examined the impact of several factors on customers' attitudes, buying intentions, and willingness to pay for two microalgae-based products: bread and beer. In this regard, it is crucial to note that beer is not regarded as a healthy product, and consumers should avoid it entirely. As a consequence, an online survey of 1,011 customers was conducted, using a structural equation modeling approach.

As a result, environmental issues and subjective norms, such as societal norms toward microalgae-based food, had a significant beneficial impact on customers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward microalgae-based food. Furthermore, buying intentions, attitudes toward food innovation, and subjective norms all have a favorable and significant impact on willingness to pay for microalgae-based cuisine.

Šedík et al. (2023) used multiple correspondence analyses and non-parametric testing to compare honey tastes among age cohorts (Generation Z, Generation Y, Generation X, and Silver Generation). Based on an online questionnaire survey of 1850 honey consumers in Slovakia, the findings show that the Silver Generation prefers dark-colored monofloral honey, whilst Generation Z prefers polyfloral honey. Furthermore, there are variations between generations in the usage of honey in cosmetics.

Molnar et al. (2023) explored the market potential and consumer sentiments toward whole-grain and sustainable biscuits among 757 participants from Croatia ( $n = 472$ ), France ( $n = 166$ ), and North Macedonia ( $n = 119$ ). Differences in cookie type consumption motive, sustainability knowledge, nutritional awareness, and willingness to purchase cookies containing food byproducts were studied in detail across different nations and generations. Furthermore, the relationship between participant replies and their country of residency and generation group was investigated using analysis of variance (ANOVA), principal component, and cluster analysis (PCA).

Furthermore, the study employed categorization and a regression tree to assess the impact of socio-demographic variables (gender, generation, country of residence, and educational level) on propensity to buy biscuits. The key conclusion was that consumer attitudes and purchasing patterns varied by country and generation, with Generation Z differentiating from previous generations.

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Alotaibi et al. (2023) investigated potential gender disparities in the impact of calorie labeling policies on dietary behaviors, knowledge, and awareness. They also sought to discover factors influencing knowledge and awareness of calorie labelling legislation. During December 2020 and October 2021, they examined 802 students (360 men and 442 women) from Saudi Arabia's King Saud University, aged 18 to 35. The study found substantial ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) differences in socio-demographic parameters between men and women, excluding housing conditions.

Following the adoption of calorie labeling, the majority of individuals responded negatively regarding their food habits, with a significant difference between maintaining body weight ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) and gaining weight ( $p \leq 0.01$ ). The Likert scale revealed a significant difference between males and females in knowledge ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) and awareness ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Furthermore, the study found that there were more elements that had a detrimental impact on men's knowledge and awareness than on women.

### **3. Methods**

Between May 13 and August 12, 2023, 321 valid participants (60 men and 261 women) from Algeria were engaged in this study through an online survey. A questionnaire was used to assess the respondents' opinions regarding the impact of gender on the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements. Then, the collected data were analyzed using a t-test of two independent samples, and independent-samples Mann-Whitney U Test via SPSS V26 software. In addition to the quantitative approach, this study explored the qualitative method by reviewing previous research conducted in this field.

#### **Research hypotheses**

1. Both women and men have the same direction in terms of the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements in Algeria;
2. There is a significant difference in gender regarding the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements in Algeria.
3. The purchase frequency of nutritional supplements in Algeria is not significantly different between men and women.

### **4. Results & Discussion**

#### **4.1. Descriptive statistics**

This questionnaire includes questions about demographic characteristics such as age, gender, academic level. According to the table 1, a total of 412 participants were included in the study of which 334 (81.1 %) were women and 78 (18.9%) were men. Regarding to age count, 61.7 % aged between 26 and 45 years old, followed by 22.1 % who are aged between 46 and 65 years old, then 16 % were from 18-25 years old and 1 participant (0.1%) has 12 years old. Furthermore, 89.57 % graduate and post-graduate

respondents, while the rest (10.2 %) are under-graduated. However, there is one missed value (0.24 %).

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics of Sample

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Men	78	18.9 %
Women	334	81.1 %
<b>Age</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100 %</b>
18 - 25 years old	66	16 %
26 - 45 years old	254	61.7 %
46 - 65 years old	91	22.1 %
Other	01	0.24 %
Missed value	01	0.24 %
<b>Educational level</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>100 %</b>
Undergraduate	42	10.2 %
Graduate/post-graduate	369	89.57 %
Missed value	01	0.24 %

Source: Survey data

#### 4.2. Test for normality

Although that the central limit theorem states that the sample (n) that is equal to or superior to 30 is representative of the full population (N), a test for normality was performed in this study. Therefore, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was explored; and it has been demonstrated that the data are normally distributed (Sig= 0.000). It is important to note that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is preferred for large samples (n is greater than or equal to 50). However, the Shapiro-Wilk test is recommended for small samples (n is less than 50).

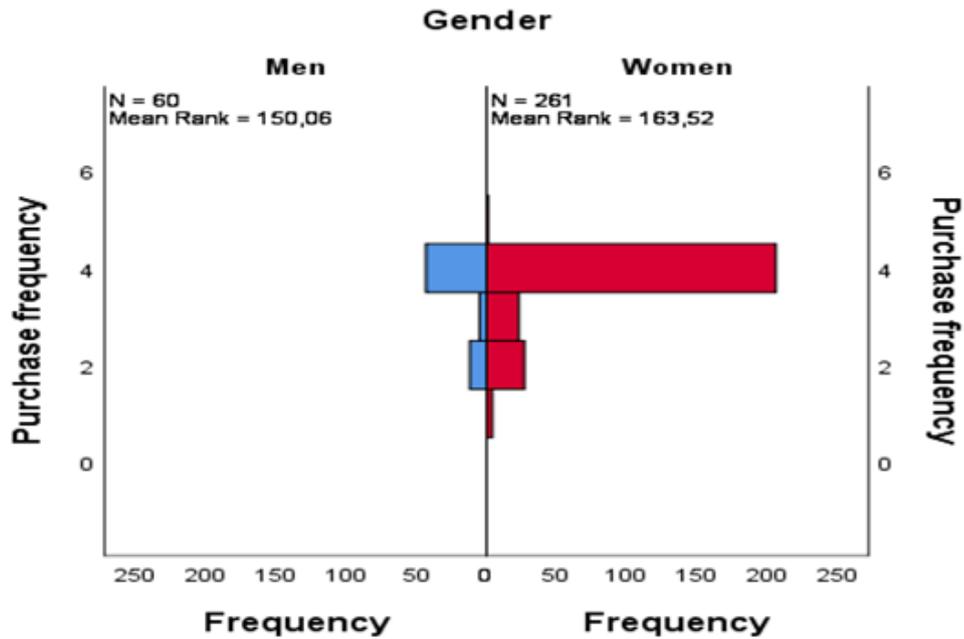
#### 4.3. Independent-Samples t-test

Responding to the question about the frequency of buying of food supplements in Algeria, the final sample size is 321 (i.e. 77.9 %), counting 60 men (Mean: 3.516; SD: 0.812) and 261 women. (Mean: 3.662; SD: 0.729) Moreover, It has been found that the LEVENE test is inferior to the significant level (Sig: 0.028 <0.05), which means that the variances aren't homogeneous. The result of the t-test indicates that the independence between the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements and the gender of respondents is ensured (Sig: 0.172). Due to the non-homogeneity of variances, it is important to move to a non-parametric test, which is the Mann-Whitney U test.

#### 4.4. Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test

The result of Mann-Whitney U test indicates that the independence between the purchase frequency of nutritional supplements and the gender of respondents is ensured (Sig: 0.165), It means that the last hypothesis is confirmed. Although there is a difference between men and women, it is not significant.

Figure 1: Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test



Source: Survey data

Specifically, the sample respondents were asked about their purchase frequency of supplement foods. In this sense, it should be noted that (4), (3), (2) and (1) refers never bought, less than 3 times, less than 5 times, and more than 5 times respectively.

As reflected in the figure above, most of the respondents did not purchase supplement foods, while a minority are users. On the other hand, there are no significant differences between men and women considering their purchase attitude.

Table 2. Hypotheses results

Hypotheses	Result	<i>p</i> -value
H1	Rejected	
H2	Rejected	0.165
H3	Accepted	

Source: Survey data

Based on the study's findings, the purchasing frequency of nutritional supplements in Algeria is not vastly different between men and women, as the third hypothesis suggested.

## 5. Conclusion

Referring to Mann-Whitney U test result, it has been demonstrated that there are no significant differences between men and women regarding the purchase of food supplements in Algeria. Consequently, the findings of this research could be very pertinent to future studies by considering the results obtained.

The limit of this study is that the survey was conducted online via Google Form. Therefore, the findings would be more meaningful, if it was driven by a face-to-face study. Another limitation is that the respondents showed concentration above some variables, such as women (81.1 %), graduates and postgraduates (89.57 %) and age range of 26–45 years old (61.7 %). Therefore, it is recommended to take into consideration other characteristics.

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