

# Food Acquisition and Consumption Issues of South Asian Countries: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Agenda

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to present a systematic literature review and offer a future research agenda on food acquisition and consumption of South Asian countries. The first section offers a comprehensive systematic literature review with a documentation analysis using PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. The study identifies several contemporary issues pertaining to food acquisition and consumption in these countries and proposes several research themes such as food quality standard issues, food security issues, food nutrition issues, organic food consumption patterns, dietary diversity and food intake issues. The second section includes a future research agenda on food acquisition and consumption patterns on the key constructs, context and methodology. This study contributed to the existing literature by offering several contemporary issues and the scope of future research areas pertaining to food acquisition and consumption, which may help policy makers, practitioners and scholars in investigating the solutions.

## Keywords

Contemporary issues, systematic literature review, food acquisition, food consumption, South Asian countries

## Introduction

The investigation of contemporary issues pertaining to food acquisition and consumption in South Asian countries is an important topic, for example, when considering Sri Lanka, which is a lower-middle-income country with a GDP per capita of USD 3,852 (2019) and a total population of 21.8 million. The rapid globalization, economic development, technological developments and the changes in agricultural systems transformed the diets across the world (Alahakoon et al., 2016; Pahari et al., 2023). Communally, these factors have led to a changeover from the reliance on staple grains, legumes, vegetables and fruits to dietary patterns that include more processed foods, away-from-home foods, animal-source foods, refined carbohydrates, edible oils and sugar-sweetened beverages.

It is evident that the present status of food consumption and acquisition in developing countries is often shaped by the historical development of food and nutrition policies. Several researchers worked on the food and nutrition policies from a historical perspective to identify the challenges of food security and nutrition (Alahakoon et al.,

2016; Pahari et al., 2023). Since several South Asian countries are in economic transition, undergoing a nutrition transition facing the triple burden of malnutrition—over-nutrition, under-nutrition and micronutrients—is common (Alahakoon et al., 2016; Pahari et al., 2023).

One of the major growing health issues in these countries is diabetes mellitus. The diet and physical activity are vital to prevent the risk factors affecting the incidence, severity and management of diabetes mellitus. The adherence to precautionary practices is still poor, for example, in Sri Lanka and India, due to lack of knowledge on the health issues (Alahakoon et al., 2016; Pahari et al., 2023). For example, as per the WHO records, the number of people with diabetes increased from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. In low- and middle-income countries, prevalence has been increasing more rapidly than in high-income countries (WHO, 2022). Between 2000 and 2019, there was a 3% increase in diabetes mortality rates by age.

As a result of limited resources and poor management, the food control infrastructure in many developing countries is inadequate. For example, the least developing countries,

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