

Food Acquisition and Consumption Issues in Sri Lanka

Overview on food acquisition and consumption patterns in South Asia

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. There has been a significant transformation in the diets of people around the world as a result of rapid globalization, economic development, technological development and changes in agricultural systems. As a result of these factors, the majority of people are shifting from relying heavily on staple grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruits to eating more processed foods, away from home foods, animal-based foods, refined carbohydrates, edible oils and sugar-sweetened beverages instead of the staple grains, legumes, vegetables, and fruits they used to eat.

It is evident that the present status of food consumption and acquisition in developing countries are often shaped by the historical development of food and nutrition policies. Several researches worked on the South Asian countries' food and nutrition policies from a historical perspective to identify the challenges of food security and nutrition. Since several South Asian countries are in economic transition, undergoing a nutrition transition facing triple burden of malnutrition named as; over nutrition, under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency is common. One of the major growing health issues in South Asian countries are the 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 are still poor in for example in Sri Lanka and India, due to lack of knowledge on the health issues.

As a result of limited resources and poor management, the food control infrastructure in many developing countries is inadequate. For example, the least developed countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal is experiencing a higher number of economic transition, undergoing a nutrition transition



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sition facing triple burden of malnutrition named as; over nutrition, under nutrition and micronutrient deficiency is common. On the other hand, it is common for food control laboratories to be inadequately equipped and to lack analytical staff who are properly trained in developing countries within South Asia such as India, Pakistan and Maldives. The majority of South Asians are not aware of best practices regarding food acquisition and consumption. There are three main reasons why it is imperative to investigate the current issues pertaining to food acquisition and consumption in a developing nation. First, to protect the poor from crises. Second, to develop long-run markets that enhance efficient resource use, and Third is to increase food production that will in turn promote an increase in income. However, few researches focused on how people interact with food sources to acquire foods as part of daily life in South Asia.

Household consumption patterns: Food nutrition issues

At present, specially Sri Lanka is experiencing the worst economic



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crisis it has ever faced since it became an independent nation in 1948. In the present situation, the country is not able to pay the import bills for food, fuel, gas and other essential commodities that are necessary for the day-to-day living of citizens, and repaying the massive foreign debts is a distant dream that will never come true. Food prices have been steadily rising since the last quarter of 2021, reaching a record high in August 2022, with the year-on-year food inflation rate at nearly 24 percent, further limiting the purchasing power of the average household. Food prices have been on an upward trend since the last quarter of 2021. Taking a historical perspective, Weerabawa et al. (2018) have explored Sri Lanka's agronomy and food security policies and identified the strategies that can be used to address Sri Lanka's present food security and nutrition challenges from a policy perspective.

During the period 1942 to 1979, the government of Sri Lanka introduced open economic policies and a food stamp program, both of which increased the availability and accessibility of energy and proteins among the most vulnerable people of the country. These people include the

pregnant mothers and pre-school children. As well as the policies that Sri Lanka is implementing in the present era, the past policies have had some positive effects on the level of food prices in the country. According to a recent study conducted in two rural districts of Sri Lanka found that barriers to healthy dietary choices among secondary school students occur at many levels, supporting the use of multifactorial programs to make healthy eating easier for them. Therefore, it has been identified that the food nutrition issue is a major threat to the development of the youth in Sri Lanka as a result.

Household consumption patterns: Organic food consumption patterns

Using food disappearance data published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation examined the patterns of food consumption in Sri Lanka from 1985 to 2009. Further, this study found that grain products were the main source of calories and protein, while non-grain vegetable products and animal products provided most of the fat and calories. Sri Lankans consumed fewer calories from protein than recommended. During the period studied, there has been a shift away from roots and tubers, fruits and cereals in favour of sugars, pulses, oils and animal products. There was a relatively low contribution from animal products, less than 8%. There is a need to increase awareness of the health benefits of organic foods among the general public in order to increase their consumption patterns. For example, green tea is lower cholesterol levels. Tea, mostly black tea, is the second most consumed drink in the world after water, coffee, beer, wine, and carbonated soft drinks and 'tea wine' can be identified as an alternative to tea drinks. According to Selvarajah and Gnanapavan (2017), organic food consumption patterns were identified among consumers in three urban areas of Sri Lanka. As per this



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study, organic food consumption is associated with total knowledge, consumer perception, consumer motivation, product related factors, health consciousness, environmental consciousness, number of household members and monthly income. Additionally, a number of factors contribute to the purchase of organic foods, including environmental concerns, health concerns, safety concerns, product quality concerns, and a sense of trust. However, trust, price, accessibility, assortment, shelf life, taste, and a lack of time are the main factors that limit the consumption of organic foods in the study area.

Household consumption patterns: The dietary diversity and food intake issues

Sirasa et al. (2020) explored the dietary diversity and food intake of urban living Sri Lankan pre-school children, and suggested the need for population-based interventions to promote healthier dietary habits. It is also found that most people are unaware of food patterns which can reduce the weight loss and more healthy dietary options such as green tea and ginger. Moreover, Subashinie et al. (2016) revealed the importance of educating patients

with type 2 diabetes on dietary changes and more importantly the involvement in regular physical exercises as more South Asian countries with high obesity and diabetic levels suffer due to lack of knowledge on the sickness. Basically, the dietary diversity and food intake issues happen due to lack of knowledge about the sicknesses and symptoms of the sicknesses such as heart attacks and diabetes. Further, researches discussed factors that have undervalued the dietary changes in Sri Lanka from its early colonization to the post-colonial period with field experts and senior people in marginal areas and examined the Sri Lankan traditional food system and how it changed after the colonial period, including the main changes and their impact on current micronutrient deficiencies and non-communicable diseases. Affluence, education, employment, household size, rice fragrances, per capita rice consumption, and frequency of purchase drive packaged rice demand. Further, people with higher education levels and higher occupation levels had a greater purchasing power which lead to a higher consumption of different food varieties. The lower maternal education or lack of knowledge among pregnant women about the nutrition levels were also found as a major factor which causes malnutrition among children. Further it was identified that Sri Lankans consume excess amount of starches foods which leads to the dietary diversity and variety with obesity among Sri Lankan adults.

The full project titled "Food Acquisition and Consumption Issues of South Asian countries: A Systematic Literature Review and a Future Research Agenda" is to be published in "FIB Business Review" which is published by Sage Journals.

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Be part of ICBM 2024 and the Research Week of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce

University of Sri Jayewardenepura, commences from February 26, to March 1, 2024

The Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, is gearing up to host the 20th International Conference on Business Management (ICBM), during the research week starting from February 26 to March 1, 2024. This flagship academic event, which has become a landmark in the Academic calendar, is set to convene under the theme "Resilience and Reinvention for Sustainable Development in the VUCA world".

In an era characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA), the ICBM 2024 takes on a role of paramount importance by addressing how resilience and reinvention can drive sustainable development. As the global community faces multifaceted challenges, this conference needs to unite Researchers, Scholars, Practitioners and Industry leaders in exploring strategies that can help businesses and societies to navigate the dynamic landscape.

We are excited to share that ICBM 2024 has established a significant collaboration with Emerald Publication as its academic partner. Renowned for its unwavering dedication to advancing Academic research and scholarly publishing, Emerald Publication's involvement elevates the conference's mission



to facilitate knowledge dissemination and scholarly exchange. As our Academic collaborator, Emerald Publication will lend its expertise to elevate the quality and influence of research conversations throughout the conference, solidifying

ICBM's position as a leading forum for promoting ideas and sustainable development within the worldwide academic sphere.

Making a week-long intellectual journey, the ICBM 2024 is designed to cater to the diverse needs



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of Researchers. The anchor event, the Main Conference, is scheduled for February 29, 2024, where experts from various disciplines will present their research findings and engage in thought-provoking discussions.

On March 1, 2024, the conference will host a PhD Colloquium, providing an invaluable platform for doctoral students to present their work and receive constructive feedback from established scholars. Simultaneously, a Business Forum will take place, inviting industry leaders to share insights on how

organizations can effectively adapt to the ever-evolving business landscape.

A highlight of the conference is the Networking session, which will offer participants a chance to establish meaningful connections and collaborations across Academia and industry.

Pre-conference workshops are scheduled for February 26 and 27, 2024, with the aim of inspiring Researchers and enhancing their skills. These workshops will cover a wide range of topics, from research methodologies to emerging trends

in business management. Recognizing the importance of fostering research at all levels, the conference includes an Undergraduate Research Symposium on February 28, 2024. This platform will allow undergraduate students to showcase their research and engage in intellectual discourse with their peers and mentors.

"The ICBM 2024 represents not only a milestone in our academic journey but also a collective effort to address the challenges presented by our dynamic world. We believe that by promoting resilience and embracing reinvention, we can steer ourselves toward sustainable development," said Dr. B.S. Galdage, one of the Co-Chairs of the ICBM 2024.

As the conference draws near, anticipation is growing among the academic and business communities. The ICBM 2024 promises to be an enriching experience, fostering new ideas, collaborations, and insights that will contribute to the advancement of business management in an ever-changing global landscape.

For more details and registration information, please visit the official conference website at <https://icbm.sjp.ac.lk>

