

## FAST-FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AMONG FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE UNDERGRADUATES OF THE EASTERN UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA

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### Abstract

Fast food is among the most consumed and well-liked food in Sri Lanka. Globalization and modernization have shaped Sri Lanka's fast food business, and we can observe that consumers are shifting from eating at home to choosing convenient options, particularly among young people and those with hectic schedules. When meeting their energy and dietary needs, university students who spend most of their time away from home typically look at criteria like availability, convenience, and eating style. This could result in an imbalance in their nutritional status and raise their risk of non-communicable diseases linked to diet. To see whether becoming an undergraduate has preferred fast food consumption patterns and to understand the factors influencing their consumption of fast food, a study was conducted among undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture, Eastern University, Sri Lanka (EUSL). Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed among randomly selected 100 students from five batches in the Faculty of Agriculture, EUSL. Pretested structured questionnaires were used to collect data, which were analysed using the SPSS package. Descriptive statistics, frequencies, and chi-square analysis were done. The factors influencing fast food consumption patterns like price, place, taste, variety of menu, and enjoyment differed among undergraduates. The research findings showed that most undergraduates preferred to consume short-eat items like samosas, rolls, and sandwiches. They considered mostly taste factors while choosing fast food items, but when they frequently consumed fast food per week, they mostly considered the variety of the menu. Further, the variety of menu, limited time for cooking, tasting, and eating with friends or family influenced the fast food consumption frequency per week. Promoting the benefits of healthy eating and the risks associated with excessive fast food consumption is essential. Moreover, a supportive environment for undergraduates must be created, empowering them to make healthier food choices and reducing their dependence on fast food options.

**Keywords:** Fast food, Food consumption, Health impacts, Undergraduates

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