

## **IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON FOOD CONSUMER PATTERNS OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY**

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### **Introduction**

Globalization is a worldwide process which plays a significant role today, specially, in the lives of young people as they have an extensive influence of being exposed to the information. Among youths, the dietary transitions taking place are deeply rooted in the process of globalization. It affects the availability and access to food through changes in food production, distribution and bringing about a gradual shift in food culture, with consequent changes in dietary consumption patterns and nutritional status in different socio-economic strata.

When talking about social aspect of foods, food and eating are usually mentioned only in connection with the satisfaction of physiological needs. Since the man is primarily a social creature, his activities, including food intake are influenced by society and social institutions. And also the cultural and environmental system which the individual lives in significantly affects his or her knowledge, attitudes, customs, living pattern and food behaviour.

### **Methodology**

Main objective of this research paper is to identify the impact of globalization on dietary practices of the university students in Sri Lanka with special reference to the faculty of Arts students in the University of Peradeniya. The specific objectives are,

- To identify fast food consumption and dietary practices of the university students
- To examine influence of the food advertisements and promotions on students food consumption
- To assess student's attitudes and knowledge on foods
- To identify student's perception on shape of the body, appearance and their practices to maintain such factors and influence of global food items on it.
- To examine perceived changes in dietary habits since their arrival to University

This is a qualitative descriptive study which was carried out using Ethnographic research method from May to August in 2009 among the undergraduates at the Faculty of Arts in the University of Peradeniya.

A purposive sampling method was employed and FGDs (Focus Group Discussions) were done with selected male and female undergraduates belonging to all ethnic groups representing all batches of the faculty.

FGDs and observations methods were used to collect data. In total, 96 students participated in 08 FGDs and 12 members participated in one discussion. Selected food outlets in the university were also observed in order to understand overall trends in food consumption of the students. Identification of this stratified sample based on student register of the faculty

of Arts. The sample was selected at the end of a main lecture from certain years randomly. They were informed of the objectives of the study and invited to participate in the study. Participation was not compulsory and the verbal consent was given by the selected participants for the FGDs. Tamil and Muslim students who were among the participants could communicate in Sinhala language. The data were analyzed manually.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study shows that there is a specific food culture among the university students. Especially, sharing foods, food specific terms and fast foods consumption can be seen. There is a marked dietary habit changes since their arrival to the university. Most of the students from peripheral area used to get more instant foods and frequency of getting meals are increased. Among the female students “Maggi, Samaposha” are popular and among males “KFC chicken fried rice, Biriyani and Kottu” are popular. They have been highly influenced by TV commercials and banners.

Even though they are knowledgeable about nutritional foods it is hard for them to practice it due to the study-related stress and the time factor which are the main reasons for skipping meals. Though they have ideas about health and eating habits, consumption of fruits and vegetables is less. Among them, high intake of fast/junk foods could be identified. This was influenced by factors such as convenience, availability, time constrains due to stressful academic life and desires for global food items.

They like mostly to use globalized, glocalized and localized foods. This is mainly as a result of being influenced by TV commercials, Mega advertisement boards, Posters. Food labels, peer group experiences and pressure, modern trends, psychological motivation and desire for experiencing changes. Gender differences could be observed when analyzing the exposure to the globalized foods. Compared to female students, male students are more exposed to globalized foods. Both male and female students highly concern about body structure, weight and appearance. They use some traditional and non-traditional methods for it. “Dieting, using non- fat milk powders, multi-vitamins and weight gainers” are commonly among students. Most of them are used by them as a result caused through the media advertisements and sharing experiences. Comparatively university students have more exposure to the global food items and they have sub culturally created food consumption pattern which still is existing among them. On the other hand, they are not in a position to spend too much money on global food items due to financial constrains during the academic life.

To conclude, there is a specific food culture of the university students within their subculture and relatively they have knowledge on nutritional foods though it is not properly in practice due to certain factors related to the busy academic life. The awareness raising programmes for students regarding nutrition and healthy eating patterns have to be organized. Further, they need to be educated on consumption of fast and junk foods which have a considerable impact on health issues. Programmes should be implemented to provide opportunities to integrate nutrition and health issues in their studies thus affecting them. Students should be encouraged to set up a forum to discuss of their food and health related experiences and issues and the university authority should carry out some psycho-social interventions to reduce stress during the academic life.

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