

# DAILY FREE SUGAR CONSUMPTION OF UNDERGRADUATES AT RAJARATA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Consumption of free sugars beyond the recommended levels increases the risk of non-communicable diseases globally. This can be aggravated during the Covid-19 pandemic, as the food consumption patterns have been drastically changed due to pandemic. Present study was conducted to determine the daily free sugar consumption (DFSC) of undergraduates of Rajarata University of Sri Lanka (RUSL) who reside in the University premises and those who reside at their homes during the Covid-19 pandemic. A 7-day dietary recall was conducted among 278 undergraduates of 20 to 26 years age category, representing all the Faculties of the RUSL. DFSC was compared with the WHO recommendations and the data were analyzed using t-test. The average DFSC of undergraduates of RUSL was  $31.22 \pm 11.7$  g, which is significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) greater than the WHO recommendation (26 g). Among the undergraduates, 73.74% exceeds the WHO recommendation of DFSC. The DFSC of undergraduates residing in their homes ( $33.31 \pm 12.77$  g) was greater ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the undergraduates residing within the University premises ( $27.97 \pm 9.05$  g). Both groups had greater DFSC ( $p < 0.05$ ) compared to that of WHO recommendation. According to the findings, DFSC had not influenced by gender. A correlation analysis revealed that there was no correlation between DFSC and BMI ( $r = 0.003$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and DFSC and body weight ( $r = 0.025$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The study concludes that the average DFSC of undergraduates of RUSL residing in the homes and within the University premises was exceeding the WHO recommended level by 28.12% and 7.58% respectively.

**Keywords:** BMI, Daily free sugar consumption, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, WHO recommendations