

Students' and Parents' Perspectives on Current Status of School Food Literacy Education and School Food Environment

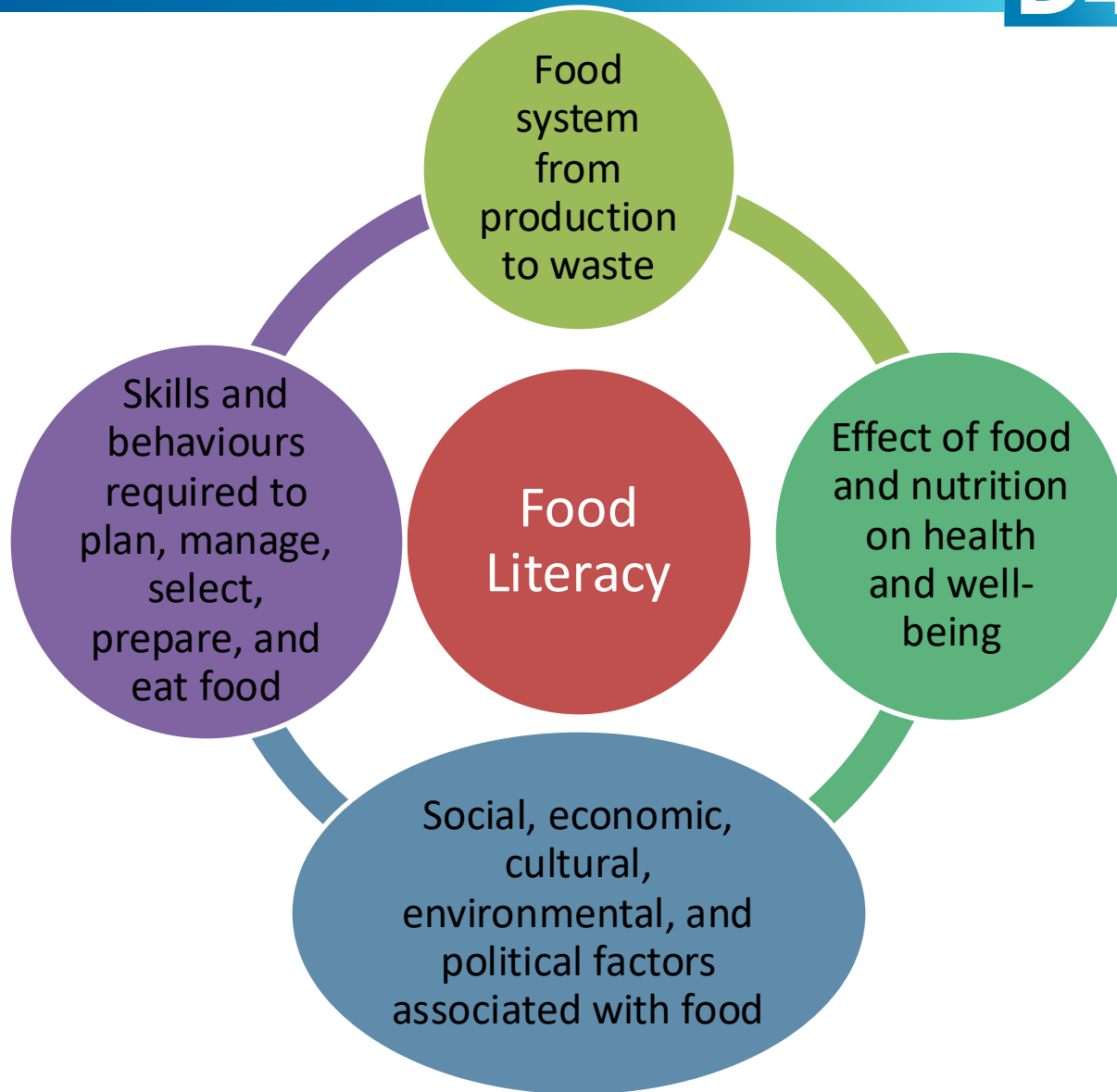
A study from Sri Lanka



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Importance of food literacy education for adolescents

Provide opportunities for them to become informed citizens in future (Renwick, 2013)

Help adolescents to maintain their health and that of others (Colatruglio and Slater, 2014)

• Why We Selected Students?

They are a key stakeholder group involved in food literacy education, through the teaching-learning process.



• Why We Selected Parents?

- Parents significantly shape students' dietary habits.
- Influence school food policies through advocacy and participation in parent-teacher associations.

Aim of the Study

To explore Sri Lankan students' and parents' opinion

On current food literacy education

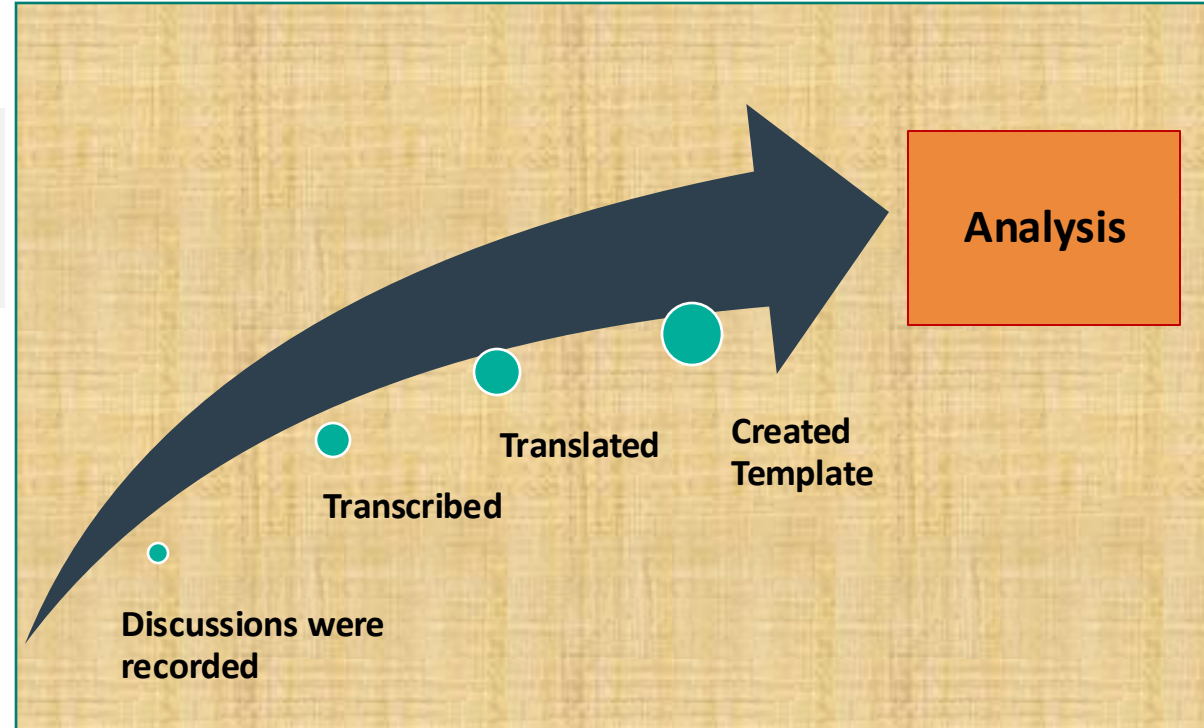
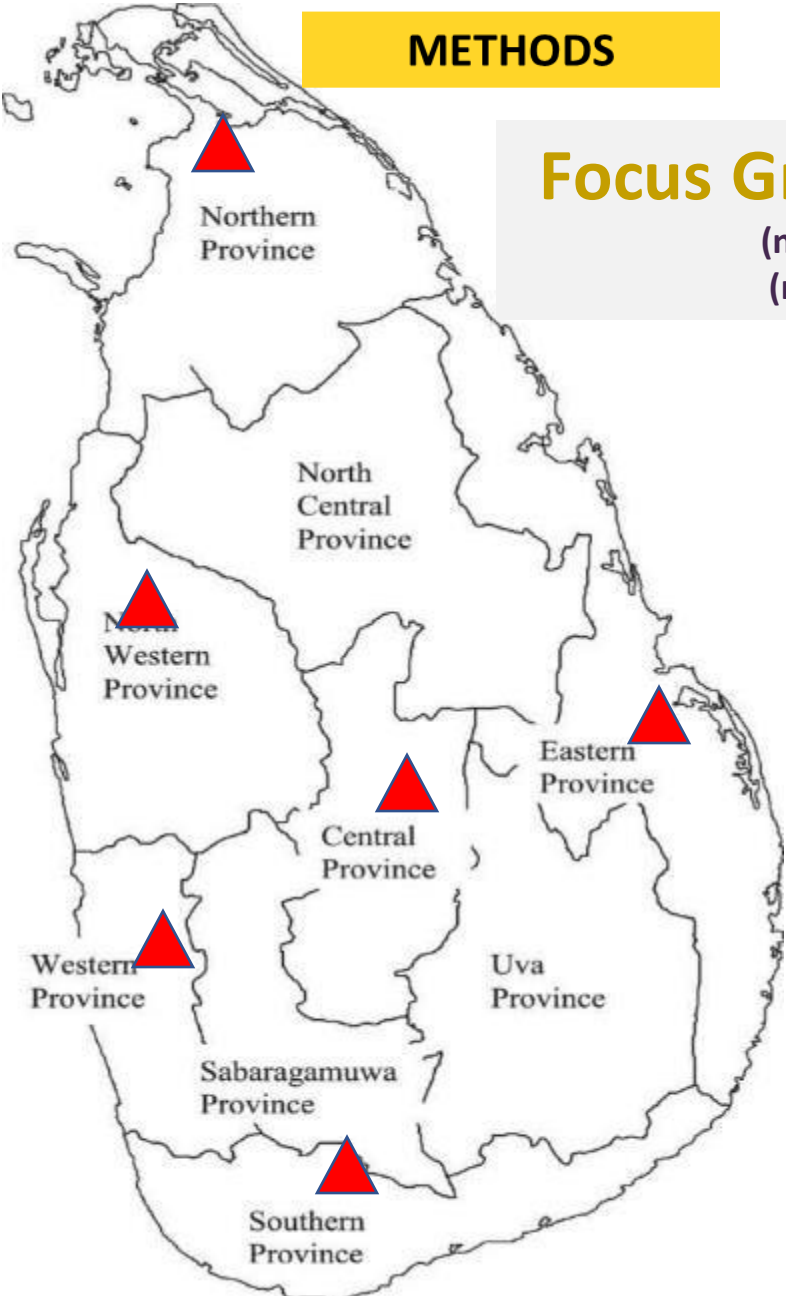
School food environment

(to understand the current state of food literacy education)

METHODS

Focus Group Discussions

(no. of students=86)
(no. of parents=53)



Students' Perspectives

- Importance of Food literacy
- Students' experience
- Barriers
- School food environment
- Suggestions for improvement

Parents' Perspectives

- Food literacy of the children
- The school food environment
- Existing barriers
- Suggestions for improvement

Students recognized the importance of food literacy education

For healthy lives

To know about food, and food preservation techniques

To learn cooking techniques

To aware many others in the society

Food is necessary to live a healthy life

We can know about food, food preservation techniques, cooking in different way

We may able to aware many others in the society



Experiences of the students

Students valued practical experiences, such as cooking and gardening at school



but had mixed opinions on their current practical applications

Many struggled to adopt healthier eating habits

The practical in the syllabus is enough

I wish we could have more practical

Although I know it is not healthy, I can't stop eating bites.

We like to eat tasty food...



Barriers recognized by the students

Insufficient resources (such as poor kitchen facilities)

Lack of qualified teachers

Especially in small rural schools



School food environment in students' view

School canteens were criticized for offering unhealthy food

They mentioned some programs executed in some schools (eg. Cooking competitions, school gardening)

There are short eats, and bites at our canteen.

A cooking competition was there.



We cultivated many crops in our school.

Students suggestions to improve food literacy education

Increasing practical sessions

Providing ingredients and equipment

Promoting school gardening

Introducing food literacy as a separate subject

Expanding beyond textbooks

Promoting local food in school canteens.

It is boring to study the agriculture like things in the classroom.

We need some ingredients and equipment to do our practical



Activities should be increased

Food literacy of the children- parents' perspectives

Parents were generally satisfied with their children's food and nutrition knowledge

However, concerned about their practical skills and attitudes

They have knowledge to write in the exams. But they are less practical.

Some parents give money to buy things from the canteen. We don't give like that. Then our children say that the others eat from the canteen and why not we?



Children learn healthy food consumption pattern under health subject.

School food environment –as parents see

Views on school food environments varied due to cultural, socioeconomic, and health factors

Some parents prioritizing convenience over nutrition

Many were not actively involved in school activities and lacked awareness of food literacy programs and curricula

I have seen some parents near food outlets filling empty lunchboxes with food for their children.

The programs are also fewer targeting children

They compare their food with others, asking, 'Why don't I get noodles or fried rice like them?'

We participated in school meal programs only up to grade 5.



Barriers according to parents

Parents identified barriers like inadequate resources and communication gaps



Some students are interested in learning it, but there's not even a Home Economics teacher

There's no home economics lab, though it's important.

Teachers try only to cover the syllabus. They don't apply it practically.

I think it is better to educate both mother and father through MOH clinics



Parents' suggestions for the improvements

Parents emphasized the need for practical skills in gardening, food preparation, and healthy eating.



Suggested enhancing school food programs and increasing parental involvement in education.

They need to be taught to plant, harvest, and cook. Many children don't know these things.

Parents involvement must increase

Children enjoy eating the greens and vegetables they grow.



Conclusion

Although the children have knowledge, they do not practice healthy food habits. Support of the school food environment is not adequate to improve food literacy.

Implications of this research for policies and programs in South Asia

- **Enhance food literacy education targeting behavioural changes**
 - With more practical initiatives (cooking, gardening).*
 - Providing better resources (kitchen facilities, qualified teachers).*
 - Curriculum reforms focusing more practical*
- **Ensure active engagement of students, parents, and communities for long term success**
- **Ensure support from policy-makers and parents to sustainable implementation of interventions within schools**

Additional research

- Assess the long-term effects of parental and community involvement in food literacy initiatives.
- Develop sustainable strategies to effectively promote healthier eating habits among students in South Asia*
- Research exploring the impact of parental engagement in school-based food literacy programs is needed to develop more effective strategies for promoting healthy eating habits within the community.

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Thank You!

