

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN URBAN AREAS: A CASE STUDY IN *MALKADUWAWA* AREA, *KURUNEGALA* DISTRICT

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The COVID-19 pandemic has made unprecedented threat to both the health status and economies while triggering food insecurity of urban dwellers. This study examines the household food security adaptation strategies of urban dwellers during the COVID-19 pandemic in *Malkaduwawa* area of *Kurunegala* district. Randomly selected 150 households from the *Malkaduwawa* Grama Niladhari division were used for the study and primary data were collected through an online survey. Data were analyzed through descriptive, Wilcoxon signed rank test, and factor analysis. A 44% of households had more than Rs.75, 000 of average monthly income and 57% had two earning hands in the household. About 24% of households spent between Rs.16000-20000 on their food requirement before the pandemic. During pandemic this has reduced to Rs.11000-15000, mainly due to salary reductions (42%) and job losses (16%). The Wilcoxon analysis, showed a significant difference ($p=0.000$) in household food expenditure before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The usual food expenses during the pandemic had reduced in 64% households, increased in 8% households while unchanged in 28% households. According to the factor analysis on food security adaptation strategies, home gardening (95%), prioritizing children over adults (68%), food preservation for the future (38%), use of preserved food (70%) were recognized as cultural strategies. Exchanging food with neighbours (64%) and borrowing food from neighbours (14%) were the social strategies adopted while relying on less expensive food (76%), pawning jewelry (24%), using savings on food (68%), buying food on credit (22%) were the noticeable financial strategies. Reduced food portion size (61%), limiting daily number of meals (29%), and use of food with less nutritive value (81%) were seemed as dietary strategies. In conclusion, urban dwellers in the *Malkaduwawa* area of the *Kurunegala* district were able to withstand the food insecurity brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic by adapting various strategies.

Keywords: Adaptation strategies, COVID-19 pandemic, Household food security, Urban dwellers