FOOD EXPERIENCES OF OVERSEAS STUDENTS FROM SCIENCE WITHOUT BORDERS PROGRAM.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze the experiences and eating habits of students from the University of Campinas - Unicamp during the academic exchange of Science Without Borders program.

Key words: *eating out; university students; exchange*

Introduction

In the last years a high number of Brazilian university students have participated to academic exchange programs, such as the Science Without Borders (BETT, 2012). These adolescents and young adults have often extensive hours of studies and present lack of skills in the kitchen (ALVES, 2007), which collaborates to the higher consumption of processed food, also known as "ultra-processed food", justified by the lack of required time for meal preparation. These factors can contribute to changing eating habits that lead to an increase in chronic diseases (PINHEIRO et al., 2004). Thus, the aim of this study was to analyze the experiences and eating habits of students from UNICAMP who participated to the Science Without Borders program (SWB).

Results and Discussion

All exchange students who participated to the SWB (2011-2015) were invited by e-mail to participate and to completed an online survey. The collected data were analyzed and the results reported according to the following categories:

- Characteristics of the SWB students: 80% of students (n = 215) who answered the survey has between 21 and 24 years. About gender, 48% were female and 52% were male. Most of these students (58%) were enrolled in Engineering, especially being 15.3% from Food Engineering (15.3%), Chemical Engineering (12.5%) and Mechanical Engineering (11.6%). UNICAMP students went to 18 different countries especially the United Kingdom (22.8%), Australia (18.6%), United States (13.5%) and Canada (11.2%). The majority (74%) remained in the country for two semesters.

When asked about weight gain or weight loss, 78% of participants reported change in weight during the exchange and 68% with weight gain.

- Feed characterization on campus: 47.2% of participants reported having University Restaurant (UR) on the university campus and among this, 71.56% reported attending the UR.

Chart 1. Characteristics of meals at the University restaurant (n = 73)

Frequency of use of the UR	(n)	(%)	Meal quantity at the UR	(n)	(%)
1-2 times per week	21.0	28.76	One	19.0	26.02
3-4 times per week	17.0	23.28	Two	12.0	16.43
5-6 times per week	11.0	15.07	Three	22.0	30.13
Daily	24.0	32.89	Four or more	20.0	27.41
Total	73.0	100.0	Total	73.0	100.0

Chart 2. Characterization of the University restaurant meals (n = 73)

	Similar meals		Similar schedule		Paid meals		Subsidy		Enjoyed the meals	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Yes	6.0	8.21	42.0	57.53	61.0	83.56	26.0	36.62	60.0	82.2
No	67.0	91.79	31.0	42.47	12.0	16.44	47.0	64.38	13.0	17.8
Total	73.0	100.0	73.0	100.0	73.0	100.0	73.0	100.0	73.0	100.0

Chart 3. Availability of other types of meal on the University campus (n = 215)

	Cafes		Dining hall		Restaurants/fast-food		Residence near the university	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Yes	208.0	96.74	164.0	76.28	108.0	50.23	159.0	73.95
No	7.0	3.26	51.0	23.72	107.0	49.77	56.0	26.05
Total	215.0	100.0	215.0	100.0	215.0	100.0	215.0	100.0

Conclusions

There were differences between the eating habits of students when they were in another country observed for weight gain during the exchange. Although, 50% of the target universities do not present UR, but there are available cafes for students as well as dining hall equipped with microwave or other equipment for heating or for meal preparation. Future analysis will be applied on the collected data in order to observe the relationship between the results.

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