

## Urban Fijian Indigenous Families' Positive and Negative Diet, Eating and Food Purchasing Experiences During the COVID 19 Safety Protocols

[https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2021.41\(2\)-2](https://doi.org/10.33318/jpacs.2021.41(2)-2)

Shazna M. Buksh<sup>1</sup>, Phillipa Hay<sup>2</sup> and John B.F. de Wit<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

The Greater Suva Urban Area (GSUA) is the most densely populated area in Fiji and was greatly affected by the second wave of the COVID-19 outbreak. This study explores how lockdown and other COVID-19 safety protocols impacted the diets, eating behaviour and food purchasing behaviour of iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) families living in the GSUA. In-depth interviews with 13 iTaukei mothers from diverse socio-economic and occupational backgrounds highlight that loss of income was related to food insecurity, which also affected access to balanced meals and dietary diversity. Women also noted positive changes, including (1) reduced consumption of red and processed meat, (2) increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, (3) reduction in eating out and greater reliance on home-cooked meals, (4) reduction in food wastage, (5) increase in home gardening, and (6) greater concern for health and well-being. Unhealthy eating behaviours were also recorded, including greater reliance on energy-dense foods, increased cooking and baking of unhealthy foods, increased snacking, and replacing dinner with tea, snacks and sugary foods. These findings raise concerns about the long-term effects of COVID-19 safety protocols on health and well-being and provide insights into opportunities for promoting healthier eating lifestyles, better management of resources, and enhancing food security.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Diet; Eating Behaviour; Food Insecurity; Food Purchasing Behaviour

---

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Lecturer, School of Law and Social Sciences, The University of the South Pacific, Fiji. Visiting Fellow, School of Medicine, Western Sydney University, Australia. Email: shazna.buksh@usp.ac.fj

<sup>2</sup> Foundation Chair of Mental Health, Eating Disorders and Body Image (EDBI) Translational Health Research Institute, School of Medicine, Western Sydney University; Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals, Australia.

<sup>3</sup> Chair, Interdisciplinary Social Science: Public Health; Head, Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science, Utrecht University, Netherlands.