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Effectiveness of an Awareness Program on Lunch Sheets Pollution: A Case study at Faculty of Applied Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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Abstract

The research was based on irregular disposal practices among the FAS students and giving knowledge about alternatives instead of non-degradable lunch sheets. Among all years of students, including from 1st year to 4th year, 62 students were randomly selected from different combinations and data was collected by sharing a Google form. The collected data was based on the type of lunch sheets used (biodegradable/non-biodegradable); the way of discarding the used lunch sheets; knowledge of the decomposition period of non-biodegradable lunch sheets; awareness of alternatives and lunch sheets ban in Sri Lanka; knowledge of environmental and health impact; and their interest in biodegradable lunch sheets. A poster was shared with information on the environmental and health impacts of non-degradable lunch sheets and the alternatives that can be used to reduce the usage of lunch sheets. After the awareness program, the resurvey was conducted by sharing the Google form among the 62 students who had joined the survey to identify how their behavior had changed. Among 62 students, 93.2% of students used separate bins as a disposal method early and after the awareness program, it was upgraded to 96.7%. At the same time, 11.9% of students disposed of their lunch packaging by burning it, and it was reduced to 3.3%. Before the awareness program, only 27.1% of students knew the decomposing period (10-20 years). After the awareness program, 95% of students selected the correct answer. In the beginning, only 52.5% of students knew about the ban on non-degradable lunch sheets in Sri Lanka. According to the results of resurvey, their awareness about banning lunch sheets increased to 95%. In addition, the students were more knowledgeable than before about the impacts of lunch sheets on the environment and animals after the awareness program. As a result of the resurvey, the awareness of reusable food packaging has improved by up to 98.3%. Furthermore, results showed that 91.7% of students preferred to buy biodegradable packaging materials that are five times more expensive than currently used non-degradable lunch sheets. However, reducing the production cost of biodegradable packaging materials requires further research and investigations. In conclusion, after this study, students were made aware of lunch sheet pollution, environmental impact, and alternatives for lunch sheets. Further investigation into this research will be carried out based on other faculties belonging to the University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

Keywords: Lunch sheet, Pollution, Non-degradable, Environmental effects