



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**SOCIO-CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF FOOD CHOICE AMONG
IRANIAN STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

By

ASHRAF NAMAKYAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master**

February 2010

DEDICATION

To friendly, hospitable and diligent people of Malaysia



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Abstract of thesis presented to the senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master

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Chairman: Rosita Jamaluddin, PhD

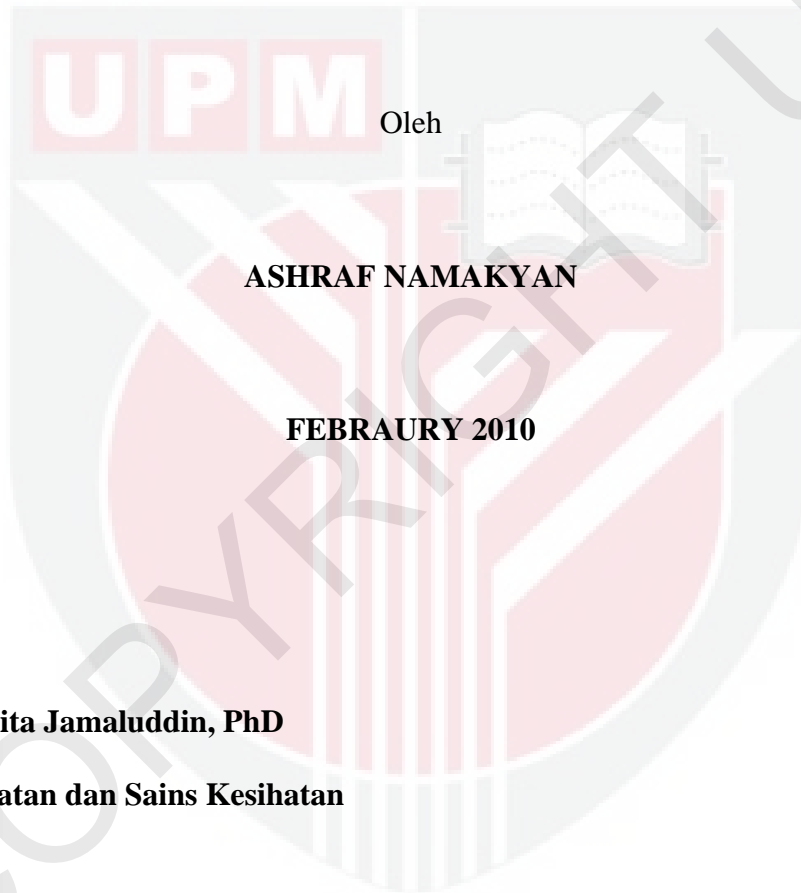
Faculty: Medicine and Health Sciences

There are more than 5000 Iranian students in Malaysia and this number is increasing according to local authorities. Iranian students in Malaysia face the problem of food choice as Malaysian and Iranian food cultures are totally different. Due to the cultural differences, they are not so keen to adopt local food pattern and local food ingredients. The high price of Iranian foods in Malaysia discourages the practice of Iranian food when dining out. The unavailability of some Iranian food ingredients also restricts the students' option for preparing Iranian foods. Thus, the socio-cultural factors are important determinants of the students' food choice which can cause a tendency to unhealthy food habits and consumption of low nutrient dense foods like fast foods and snacks. The objectives of this study are to explore major food problems among Iranian

students at Universiti Putra Malaysia, and to compare the food intake and food pattern of the students before and while staying in Malaysia. To determine socio-demographic and cultural factors affecting the food choice of the students in Malaysia is another main objective of the study. The research design includes an explorative study through focus groups followed by a self-administered questionnaire assessing socio-demographic factors, food frequency questionnaire and acculturation. Iranian students, who had stayed in Malaysia for more than three months, were recruited through convenient sampling. A total of 308 subjects participated in the study, of which 164 were male (53.2%) and 144 (46.8%) were female. Results showed a significant increase in skipping main meals, consumption of fast foods and snacks and a significant decrease in the consumption of vegetable, dairy products and seafood among Iranian students in Malaysia in comparison to while living in Iran ($P < 0.05$). These changes also showed some correlation to socio-economical situation of Iranian students in Malaysia. Positive attitude towards Malaysian foods and consumption of Malaysian foods were affected by acculturation and length of stay in Malaysia. On the other hand, consumption of Malaysian foods, acculturation and length of stay in Malaysia had negative relationship with the consumption of fast foods. Furthermore, acculturation, length of stay in Malaysia and the positive attitude towards Malaysian foods are significant predictive factors in the food choice of the students. The study suggests that subjects need to get accustomed to local food ingredients and actively receive information about local food resources to be able to gain a healthier diet.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master of Science

**PENENTU SOSIO-BUDAYA DALAM PEMILIHAN MAKANAN DALAM KALANGAN
PELAJAR IRAN DI UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**



Oleh

ASHRAF NAMAKYAN

FEBRAURY 2010

Pengerusi : Rosita Jamaluddin, PhD

Fakulti : Perubatan dan Sains Kesihatan

Terdapat lebih daripada 5000 pelajar Iran di Malaysia dan mengikut pihak berkuasa tempatan, bilangan ini sedang bertambah. Para pelajar Iran di Malaysia menghadapi masalah pilihan makanan kerana budaya pemakanan di Malaysia berlainan sekali dengan budaya pemakanan di Iran. Disebabkan perbezaan kebudayaan ini, mereka tidak begitu berminat untuk menerima corak pemakanan tempatan dan mereka tidak biasa menggunakan ramuan-ramuan makanan tempatan.

Harga tinggi makanan Iran tidak manggalakkan pengamalan santapan ala Iran apabila menjamu selera di luar rumah. Ramuan-ramuan makanan Iran yang sukar diperolehi juga mengehad pilihan para pelajar semasa menyediakan makanan Iran. Oleh yang demikian, faktor-faktor sosio-budaya adalah penentu penting dalam pemilihan makanan para pelajar yang boleh menyebabkan kecenderungan pada tabiat pemakanan yang tidak sihat serta pengambilan makanan yang rendah kepadatan nutrientnya, seperti makanan segera dan makanan ringan. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka masalah makanan yang utama dalam kalangan pelajar Iran di Universiti Putra Malaysia, serta membanding pengambilan makanan dan corak pemakanan antara para pelajar sebelum dan semasa tinggal di Malaysia. Satu lagi objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan faktor sosio-demografi dan kebudayaan yang mempengaruhi pemilihan makanan para pelajar tersebut di Malaysia. Rekabentuk penyelidikan ini termasuk kajian eksploratif melalui kumpulan tumpuan diikuti oleh soal-selidik sendiri yang meliputi faktor-faktor sosial-demografik, soal-selidik frekuensi makanan dan soalan akulturasi. Kajian ini dilaksanakan dalam kalangan pelajar Iran di Universiti Putra Malaysia. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa kenaikan pengambilan makanan segera dan makanan ringan yang signifikan, serta pengurangan signifikan dalam pengambilan sayur-sayuran, hasil tenusu dan makanan laut, adalah kelakuan yang tidak sihat dalam kalangan pelajar Iran di Malaysia berbanding dengan mereka yang tinggal di Iran ($P < 0.05$). Perubahan ini juga menunjukkan sedikit sebanyak korelasi dengan keadaan sosio-ekonomi para pelajar Iran dalam Malaysia. Akulturasi, tempoh tinggal di Malaysia serta sikap mereka terhadap makanan Malaysia adalah faktor ramalan yang signifikan dalam kecenderungan pemakanan para pelajar tersebut. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa subjek perlu membiasakan diri dengan ramuan makanan tempatan serta menerima maklumat tentang sumber makanan tempatan secara aktif untuk memperoleh gaya pemakanan yang lebih sihat.

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At last but not least, I would like to convey my greatest and deepest thanks and appreciation to my family for their love, care and understanding throughout the period of conducting my research project.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on February 4th 2010 to conduct the final examination of Ashraf Namakyan on her Master thesis entitled "Socio-cultural Determinants of food Choice among Iranian Students at Universiti Putra Malaysia" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysias and Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree of Master of Sciences.

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citation which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

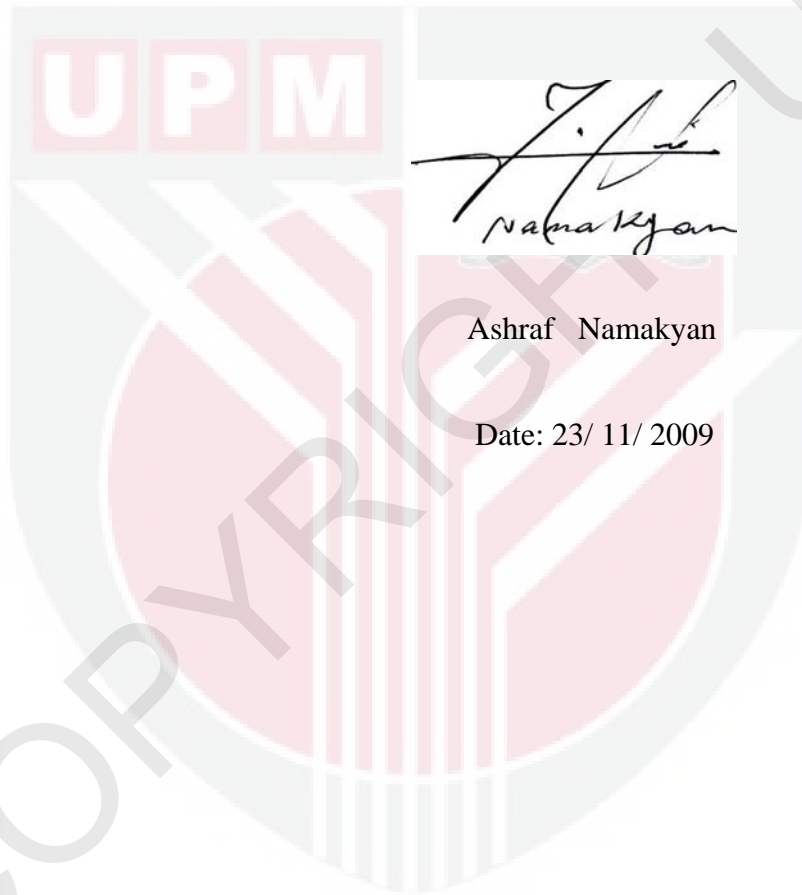


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