

# Factors affecting food consumption patterns of the elderly in Ruambitii Sub-Location Kirinyaga District

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## Abstract:

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The purpose of the study was to determine food consumption and the influence of some socio - demographic and economic characteristics, social support systems as well as the individual's characteristic on food consumption. More specifically the study addressed the following objectives; to determine the food intake patterns of the elderly; and to identify factors which influence the food consumption patterns of the elderly. A sample of 55 elderly persons were interviewed in a survey in Ruambiti sub-location of Kirinyaga district. The study comprised of 21 males and 34 females. The informants were largely peasant farmers among whom 74% had no formal schooling. Data was collected using structured interview schedule. Data was analyzed and presented in frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that the elderly persons food intake patterns were poor in that they were high consumers of staple foods (91%) grown subsistently, high consumers of starch/cereals (95%), low consumers of fruits (89%) and rarely consumed animal protein (47%). The factors that led to these food intake patterns were; their poor economic status, poor dental health, chronic and persistent medical problems among others. The study recommended that extension health workers pay door to door visits to the elderly to monitor, educate and encourage the care takers on good eating habits to promote good nutrition and health.