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Examining Eating Out Patterns among Individuals in Kumasi Metropolis, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Eating out refers to consuming meals at food service establishments. Over the past decade, individuals' eating out behavior has changed significantly. This study examined eating out patterns in Kumasi Metropolis. Guided by a positivist paradigm, a cross-sectional quantitative survey was conducted with 400 respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests with SPSS. The study found that eating out was common at various urban food premises. Most respondents ate out on weekdays, with fewer doing so on weekends. Lunch was the most frequently consumed meal, and local dishes were preferred over continental cuisine. Gender, age, marital status, and education were significantly related to eating out patterns. Younger respondents favored fast food and continental meals, while older individuals preferred restaurants and chop bars serving local foods. It is recommended that food vendors target younger individuals and females with promotions and convenient meal options. Chop bars and restaurants should improve offerings and marketing to attract older and male customers. Dining establishments should also adapt menus to suit different socio-demographic preferences, such as providing both local and continental dishes to broaden their appeal.

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Introduction

Urbanization continues to reshape urban environments, particularly in large cities and emerging townships, to meet the growing demands of urban populations for employment, transportation, social services, and housing [1][2]. Local authorities, as governing bodies of urban centers, face significant challenges in managing rapid population growth and evolving lifestyle patterns to achieve sustainability and improve quality of life [3]. Among these challenges, food security and dietary behaviors have emerged as critical issues, as urbanization profoundly influences food systems and consumption patterns [4].

The demand for food has increased not only due to population growth but also because of shifting eating behaviors influenced by urbanization [5][6]. Urban lifestyles have led to changes in meal patterns, with eating-out becoming a prominent feature of modern life [1][7][8]. Recent studies highlight that urbanization has accelerated the adoption of convenience-oriented eating habits, driven by time constraints, dual-income households, and the proliferation of food outlets [9][4].

Eating-out is no longer a sporadic activity but a habitual practice for many urban dwellers, influenced by factors such as income, education, occupation, and proximity to food outlets [10] [11]. A study by [9] found that urban residents in developing countries are increasingly relying on ready-to-eat meals and street food due to busy schedules and limited time for home cooking. Similarly, the rise of food delivery platforms, such as Uber Eats and Glovo, has further normalized eating-out and home delivery services, particularly among younger generations [12]. Recent research continues to emphasize the role of socioeconomic and demographic factors in shaping eating-out behaviors. Income remains a key determinant, with higher-income households spending more on food away from home [4][11]. Age and education also play significant roles, as younger, more educated individuals are more likely to eat out frequently due to their exposure to global food trends and preferences for convenience [9].

The COVID-19 pandemic has further influenced eating-out patterns, with a temporary decline in restaurant visits due to lockdowns and a subsequent surge in home deliveries and takeaway services [12]. Post-pandemic, hybrid work models have altered meal patterns, with many urban workers opting for lunch at nearby food outlets or ordering deliveries to their workplaces [3].

Previous research has suggested that modes of eating out have become a principal form by which social distinction could be expressed through consumption [13]. Not long ago, most people socialized at home, now, however, a significant number of adults report that dining out with family and friends gives them an opportunity to socialize and is a better use of their leisure time [14]. Additionally, people also want some adventure in their meals. The trend right now

is that people are getting a little tired of all the franchises and they are looking for new styles [15]. Individuals tend to eat out more often, at cafeterias, canteens, fast food outlets, chop bars and restaurants.

Food and its consumption may be examined at several different levels. Depending upon one's purpose, attention may be focused on one or more of the following: nutrients, ingredients, dishes, meals or cuisines. Each poses different kinds of analytical problem and generates different kinds of popular concern. The analytical decomposition of food into their component nutrients engages the interest and concern of biologist, biotechnologists, nutritionists and health professionals. Notions of diets, healthy eating, using food to protect against illness depends on the isolation, measurement and understanding of nutrients. A number of studies have highlighted the increased nutritional importance of eating out in Europe and the USA [16] [17]. However, the increase in eating out is potentially worrying, whenever it ends the individual in overeating, irregular eating, late eating, imbalanced diet, eating at unclean premises among others; since studies have documented that frequent eating out contributes to higher energy intakes, overweight and obesity [18] [19].

While eating-out offers convenience and social opportunities, it often comes with health risks. Studies have consistently linked frequent eating-out to higher caloric intake, poor dietary quality, and increased risks of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) [18][19][6]. A recent study by [9] found that urban residents in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) who frequently consume street food or fast food are more likely to have imbalanced diets high in fats, sugars, and salt. Moreover, the hygiene and safety of food sold at informal outlets, such as street vendors and chop bars, remain a concern, particularly in developing countries [4]. A study in Ghana by [20] revealed that many street food vendors operate in unsanitary conditions, increasing the risk of foodborne illnesses among consumers.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs helps explain the eating-out habits of consumers in Kumasi by linking dining choices to different motivational levels. At the base, physiological needs drive people to eat out for convenience and hunger satisfaction, while safety needs influence preferences for hygienic and reliable food vendors [21]. Social needs encourage communal dining at restaurants and chop bars for bonding [22], whereas esteem needs motivate patronage of upscale eateries for status display [23]. Finally, self-actualization may inspire some to seek unique culinary experiences, such as organic or gourmet meals [24]. Thus, Maslow's theory provides a structured way to understand how varying needs shape Kumasi's dining culture.

Eating out is not a new phenomenon in Kumasi, but the changing life style in the urban area has encouraged greater numbers of the population to eat out. Both external forces and

internal drives in the urban environment has resulted in the current trend of behaviour in food taking.

In Kumasi, Ghana, urbanization has significantly influenced eating-out behaviors. The city's rapid population growth and expanding food industry have led to a proliferation of eateries, ranging from fast-food chains to local chop bars and street food vendors [25]. A recent study by [26] found that eating-out is increasingly common among Kumasi residents, driven by factors such as convenience, affordability, and the desire for variety.

However, the study also highlighted concerns about the nutritional quality and safety of food consumed outside the home. Many respondents reported consuming high-calorie, low-nutrient meals, particularly from fast-food outlets and street vendors [26]. These findings align with global trends, underscoring the need for interventions to promote healthier eating-out options in urban areas.

Food eaten outside home is on the increase [27]. Studies on eating out have been conducted in developed countries like USA, France, Norway, Sweden, and England, but these studies are western in nature with their findings being drawn from various regions and states making it difficult to generalise for a developing country like Ghana, and Kumasi in this context [28][7][13][1][10]. Despite these studies, some researchers still argue that, there has not been enough research done to understand why an individual may decide to eat outside the home [13][28][1] [10] [29]. Most studies in Ghana have been on eating behaviour in general and have been more concerned with the nutritional, health and safety aspects rather than the practical and symbolic significance of eating out and are mostly skewed towards educational institutions with lecturers, students, and children being the study focus (independently) [30][20][27]. This warrant the study of eating out patterns among individuals in Kumasi Metropolis.

Material and Methods

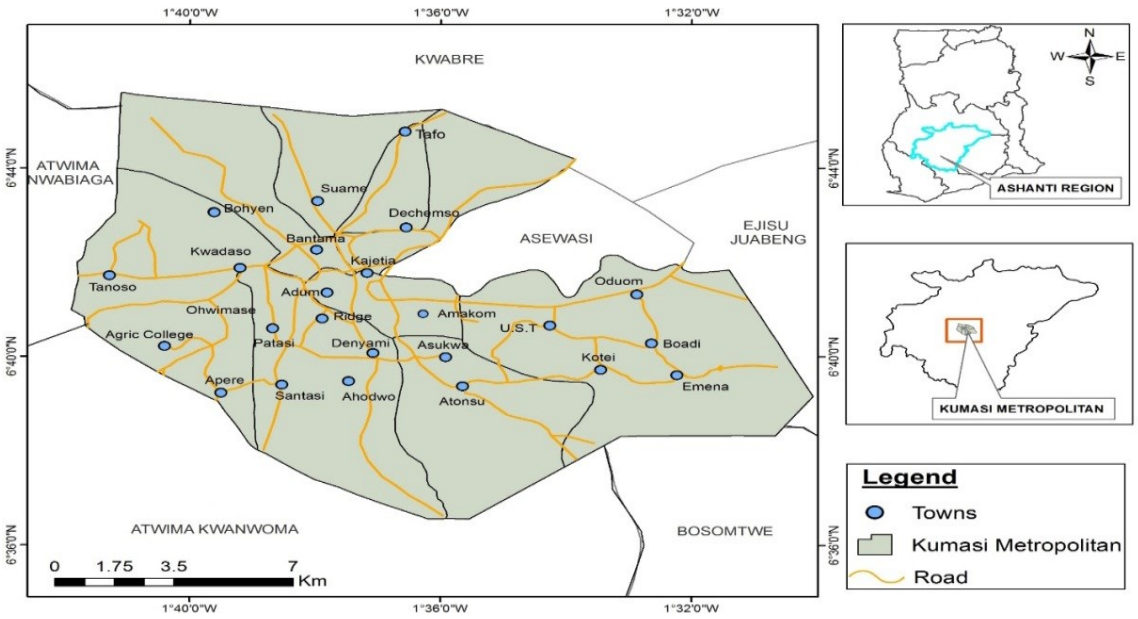
A. Study Area

Kumasi Metropolis is one of the thirty districts in Ashanti region. It became the capital city of the new Ashanti state built from a voluntary amalgamation of about a dozen city states [31]. Kumasi is the administration, cultural, educational and commercial centre of Ashanti region. Its beautiful layout and greenery accorded it the accolade of being the 'Garden City of West Africa' [32]. Today, Kumasi is the second most populous city in the country, next to the national capital Accra [25]. The metropolis has the Kumasi Central Market, Bantama market, Adum shopping centre, Suame and Asafo Magazine, Kaase/Asokwa industrial enclave and Sokoban wood village as presented in Figure 1. This

partly explains why Kumasi has become a converging point for brisk commercial activities with all the major trade routes converging on it.

On account of Rattray's visit to Kumasi, he reported that guests who came to Kumasi from neighbouring Akan states were hosted in various homes (families) that they belonged to in their generating regions and also other visitors who were non-Akan's were provided similar hospitality in the various "zongo's" [33]. This created stronger alliance between members of same families believed to have one maternal background as well as other visitors from different ethnic groups [31]. Due to this kind of hospitality, almost all the ethnic groups (with their cuisines) in Ghana resides in the Metropolis, this has accorded the Metropolis to be called the hub of cultural tourism in Ghana. Rattray [33], again gives an account of where some individuals in Kumasi reported to break the link with their ancestors when they eat outside their homes.

".....Since I was a young man I have eaten in the room under the floor of which my ancestor is buried, and in whose presence I have daily partaken of food, and I do not wish now to do otherwise." (p.137).



Source: Authors construct (2024)

Fig 1. Map of Kumasi Metropolis.

Through the process of globalization and urbanisation, the traditional forms of hospitality is gradually breaking down; families no longer host family members as they used to do, and inhabitants also eat out frequently today [34][35][32]. Traders and people who come to Kumasi tend to cater for their own accommodation and food. Due to these characteristics of the Metropolis, a number of restaurants, fast food outlets and traditional

catering services with a wide variety of menu of both continental and local dishes have been increasingly multiplying to cater for the increasing population, excess demands and changing behaviours in eating. It is in this spirit that Kumasi was used as a study area for this study to examine the eating out behaviour among individuals.

B. Research Approach and Design

The research philosophy underlying this study is the positivist paradigm. The positivism philosophy underpins the quantitative methodology which this study employs, thus it adopts the cross sectional research design. Accordingly, the study employed the sample survey, and by that it selected a proportion of individuals who ate a meal(s) within the Kumasi metropolis. Cross-sectional studies are relatively inexpensive and quick to conduct (researchers can test many people of different ages at the same time). This design was used because of the short time period for the study and the inadequate resource available.

C. Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study was individuals who ate a meal(s) out of home within the Kumasi Metropolis. The focus of this study was on individuals who ate out within the Metropolis and for that matter each sample unit represents an individual person who ate meal(s) outside home within the Kumasi Metropolis. Similar studies employed the same approach and found relatively reliable results [13][28][10].

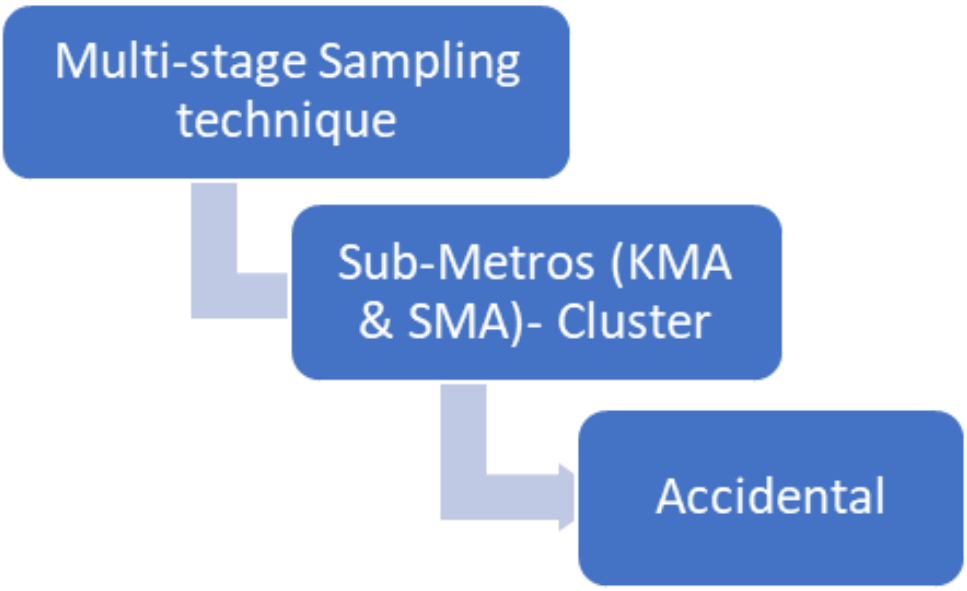


Fig 2. Multi-stage sampling technique.

The multi stage sampling procedure was used to select the respondents for the study. The stages included the cluster sampling, and accidental sampling [36]. The following

gives a description of how the various stages were used in gaining the desired sample for the study.

Firstly, Kumasi Metropolis is the second most populous city in Ghana, since studying the entire population over a short time frame in almost impossible, aspects of the population was drawn from particular areas within the metropolis for the study. The metropolis was grouped into clusters. By cluster, the metropolis has nine (9) major sub-metros; Bantama, Suame, Kwadaso, Nhyieso, Subin, Asokwa, Oforikrom, Manhyia and Tafo sub-metros. These are the various clusters within the metropolis used for the study.

Secondly, the Bantama and the Suame Sub metros were selected for the study. These places were selected because of their characteristics; population size, their location, their household composition and the economic activities which are undertaken there. The Bantama sub-metro is in the middle of Kumasi and is the busiest of all the sub-metros and has the Bantama market, the Komfo Anokye Teaching hospital, Centre for national culture, the Kumasi Zoological Gardens, part of Kejetia market and other paramount places being part of it [32]. The Suame sub-metro has the Suame Magazine being the biggest auto-mechanic industry in West Africa. Most of the people in the other sub-metros as well as other visitors outside Kumasi either work or visit these important places more often than they do for other places [32]. The accidental sampling technique was used to reach various respondents. Data was collected concurrently by the researcher and field assistants.

The choice of using these techniques was informed by the absence of a sample frame which makes it difficult for the adoption of a probability sampling technique [37]. The advantages of using this sampling technique (multi-stage) include the fact that research could be done quickly as well as being representative and economically moderate [37]. Finally, similar studies employed the same approach and found relatively reliable results [13][10].

Since there was no idea about the size of the population under the study, the sample size was determined by using the formula proposed by International Fund for Agriculture Development [38]for an unknown population. The formula is:

$$n = \frac{t^2 \times \mathrm{p}(1-\mathrm{p})}{m^2} \quad (1)$$

n= desired sample size
t= confidence level set at 95% (Z score = 1.96)
P= estimated proportion of target population with similar characteristics (set at 50% *or* 0.5)
m= margin of error set at 5% (standard value= 0.05)

By substituting the value into the formula:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.50\ (1-0.50)}{(0.05)^2} \quad (2)$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25}{0.0025} \quad (3)$$

$$n = 384.16 \quad (4)$$

A calculated 384.16 was obtained as the desired sample size. Based on this, it suggests that at least 384 individuals in Kumasi should be involved in the study. The study was also deemed to generate reliable results given the sample size adequate for the estimations techniques used for the data analyses. It is maintained that sample size of 150 respondents and above is sufficient for reliable inference using parametric techniques [39]. Researchers such as [10][13][30], raised issues of non-responds of questions, uncompleted questionnaire and inability to run some analysis in their study and as such rendered some of the instruments not useful and the size not sufficient. As a result of that 4 percent of the initial sample size calculated (which is equivalent to 16 respondents) was added to the desired sample size, to cater for any non-responses that might occur during data collection. Thus the actual sample size of 400 was used for the study.

D. Data Collection Instrument

The instrument for the data collection was questionnaire. The adoption of the questionnaire method of data collection was based on [40] assertion that the use of questionnaire is best suited for collecting quantitative data and guarantees respondent's confidentiality and anonymity. The instrument was structured into four (4) sections. The first section covered the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals such as sex, marital status, age, educational level, occupation, religion and income. The second section also covered the eating out patterns of individuals within the Metropolis. Specifically, individuals were asked to indicate where they ate out frequently, which outlets they ate out more often, with whom they ate out more often as well as the number of times they ate out. The third section covered the reasons why individuals ate out. Options were given for respondents to select from. These options were placed on a Likert scale of 1 to 4 where 1 was strongly disagree, 2 was disagree, 3 was agree and 4 was strongly agree. The last section covered the factors individuals considered in choosing a place to eat out within the Metropolis. The items measuring the factors affecting individuals in their choice of eating out venue were selected from earlier studies on eating out behavior [7][10]. These factors were placed on a yes or no scale for respondents to select which option they agree or otherwise affects their selection of place for eating out. The questions for the study were worded in English language because it is the official language of Ghana, however, in cases

where respondents encountered difficulties, issues were explained in the local language (Ashanti-Twi) for clearer understanding.

E. Pre-testing of the Instrument

A pre-test was carried out from 21st February to 27th February, 2024 at Cape Coast using 70 respondents to ensure clarity of the questions as well as ensure content validity of the instrument for the actual data collection. For instance, it was realised that some questions were ambiguous while others were double-barrelled, and hence were rephrased. The pre-test also enabled the researcher to assess the reliability of the multi-items intended to measure the constructs explaining the reason for eating out. Inclusion of a variable in the scale was set at the generally accepted Cronbachs' alpha threshold ≤ 0.50 [41]. Pre-testing also served as a mock administration of the research instrument to the field assistants. Thus, it afforded field assistants the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the challenges they may encounter during the actual fieldwork.

F. Ethical Statement

Research was conducted in an ethical manner observing the principles of informed consent, respect for privacy, truthfulness, avoidance of conflict of interest and respect for cultural sensitivity. To ensure this, permission letter was sought from the University of Cape Coast before data was collected. This identified the researcher and the field assistants as well as the nature and essence of the study. Subsequently, the actual fieldwork reiterated the purpose of the study to the respondent and obtained their consent. This covered what the research was about, who was undertaking it, why it is being undertaken and the implications of the study. Respondents had the freedom to decline participating in the study or in responding to questions they considered personal. The participants' confidentiality was assured. Information provided was promised not to be given out to persons not directly involved in the study. Finally, anonymity was assured. This was done by designing the research instruments such that it was devoid of questions that require participants' identity or any contact information.

G. Data Analysis/Presentation

The data collected from respondent were presented using percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, and chi-square through the Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS) version 25. The percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations were used as a measure of central tendencies to explain the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. The Chi Square test of independence was used to analyse the

association between the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and the various eating out pattern dimensions

Results

A. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

With reference to gender, about 64% of the respondents were males whiles 35% of them were females. This indicates that, more males ate out often as compared to females. Also, about 48.0% of the respondents were between the ages of 21-35yrs. This was followed by those within the ages of 36-50 years representing 30.8% of the respondents. Furthermore, respondents above age 50 years accounted for about 10.0% of the total percentage of the sample. In addition, more than half of the respondents were employed (77%), whereas 23% were unemployed.

About 55.0% of respondents had at least a secondary high school education with only 45.0% having at most a secondary high school background. About 35% earned a monthly income of less than 500 Ghana cedis. This is followed by respondents who earned between 500-1000 Ghana cedis (31.5%). Also, respondents who earned 1100-2000 was 19.5% of the total sample, in addition only 27 respondents (19.5%) indicated that they received 2100-3000 Ghana cedis monthly whereas finally 7.0% of the respondents earned an income above 3000 Ghana cedis. The respondents were predominantly Christians (76.0%) whereas Muslims accounted for 19.3%. Only 4.8 % of respondents were distributed among varied religions (African tradition religion, Hindu, Buddhism, and Atheist etc.). The study also revealed that, majority of the respondents were single (57.7%) whereas only 42.3 % were married. Last but not least, majority of the respondents (78.3%) who ate in the Metropolis were residence whereas only 21.8% of the entire respondents were people who lived outside the Metropolis but ate regularly within the Metropolis.

B. Eating Out Pattern of Individuals in Kumasi

Various researchers have explored the eating out pattern of people from various settings. On that account, this study also sought to explore the eating out pattern of individuals within the Kumasi Metropolis. Table 1 illustrates that close to 48% of the individuals ate out whenever they desired whereas about a third of respondents indicated they ate out during week days. However, 82 respondents representing 20.5% of respondents ate out during weekends. The study also revealed that, in terms of outlets individuals ate out most often, about 39% of respondents indicated they ate out mostly at restaurants whereas 106 respondents representing 26.5% indicated that they ate out at

chop bars. Meanwhile 95 respondents representing almost 24% indicated they ate mostly at fast food outlets. Only 46 respondents (11.5%) indicated they ate out at canteens.

Table 1. Eating out pattern of individuals within Kumasi Metropolis.

Eating out pattern	Freq. (N=400)	Percentage (%)
Time individuals normally ate out		
Weekends	82	20.5
Weekdays	128	32.0
Whenever I desire	190	47.5
Total	400	100
Outlets individuals ate out at most often		
Restaurant	153	38.3
Fast food outlet	95	23.8
Canteen	46	11.5
Chop bar	106	26.5
Total	400	100
Company individuals ate out with more frequently		
Alone	192	48.0
With family	63	15.8
With friends	96	24.0
Colleagues	49	12.3
Total	400	100
Meal individuals ate out most often		
Breakfast	48	12.0
Lunch	250	65.5
Dinner	84	21.0
All	18	4.5
Total	400	100
Number of times individuals ate out within a week		
Once	69	17.3
Twice	99	24.8
Thrice	129	32.3
More than thrice	103	25.8
Total	400	100
Type of Food normally eaten out		
Local	264	66.0
Continental	136	34.0
Total	400	100

With respect to the type of company individuals ate out with in the Metropolis, it was found that close to half of respondents (48.0%) ate out alone whereas a total of 96 (24.0%) respondents reported that, they ate out often with their friends. Some 63 respondents identified they ate out with their families most often. Lastly, it was observed that about 12% of the respondents ate out with their colleagues.

Respondents were made to indicate the meals they ate out most and the study revealed that, more than half of the respondents (65.5%) reported they ate out mostly during lunch times whereas 21.0% of the respondents also indicated they ate out mostly during dinner (supper) times. Only 48 respondents (12.0%) indicated they ate out mostly

during breakfast. Interestingly, about 5% of respondents indicated that they ate out at different times regularly and therefore there was no specific meal that they ate mostly.

The study sought to find out the number of times individuals ate out within a typical week. It was revealed that close to a third (32.3%) of respondents reported that in a typical week, they ate out only thrice. Also, 103 respondents (25.8%) indicated they ate out more than thrice within a typical week. However, 24.8% of respondents stated they ate out twice every week, and 17.3% of the respondents revealed they ate out only once within a typical week.

Furthermore, respondents were asked to indicate which food they ate mostly when eating out. More than half of respondents (66.0%) revealed that they ate local dishes whereas 34.0% indicated they ate continental dishes mostly.

C. Eating Out Pattern by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

It is an established fact that eating out pattern of individuals are influenced by socio-demographic characteristics of respondents (Arora et al, 2014). After identifying the eating out patterns of individuals within Kumasi, the study further probed on the extent to which the various eating out pattern dimensions vary across their socio-demographic characteristics using chi square test for independence. This is presented in Table 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Table 2 presents the chi square results between gender and the eating out pattern of respondents. Significant relation was observed to exist between the gender of respondents and eating outlets respondents utilize most ($\chi2=17.67$, $p=0.000$); meals respondents consumed ($\chi2 =10.32$, $p=0.016$); and the number of times respondents ate out ($\chi2 =8.532$, $p=0.036$). However, no significance association existed between gender and the other eating out pattern variables. Specifically, close to half of both males (47.7%) and females (47.2%) reported they ate out whenever they desired, 22.7% of the males and 16.7% of females respondents reported that, they ate out normally during weekends. However, whereas 36.1% of the females reported they ate out normally during weekdays, only 29.7% of the males reported that they ate out during weekends. Furthermore, some respondents (males=38.3% and females=38.2%) reported that they ate out at restaurants more frequently than the other outlets.

Although respondents at all the various educational levels indicated that they ate out normally whenever they desired, higher percentage was recorded for graduate respondents (53.6%). Equal percentage was however recorded for respondent with up to senior high education with regards to weekdays (41.1%) and whenever they desired

(41.1%). This means that almost equal number of respondents indicated they ate out mostly during weekdays and whenever they desired. It was also revealed that, 23.1% of post graduates normally ate out on weekends as compared to the other groups.

Table 2. Eating out period and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Time Individuals Ate Out Often			
	Weekends (%)	**Weekdays (%)**	**Whenever Desire (%)**	**X2 (P)**
Gender				
Male	22.7	29.7	47.7	2.81
Female	16.7	36.1	47.2	(0.246)
Age				
Below 20	26.7	31.1	42.2	6.64
21 to 35	20.8	32.2	46.9	(0.356)
36 to 50	20.3	35.0	44.7	
Above 50	12.5	22.5	65.0	
Marital Status				
Married	19.5	34.3	46.2	0.74
Single	21.2	30.3	48.5	(0.691)
Employment Status				
Employed	20.5	31.5	48.1	0.195
Unemployed	20.7	33.7	45.7	(0.907)
Level of Education				
≤ Senior High	17.8	41.1	41.1	12.72
Graduate	22.6	23.8	53.6	0.013**
Post Graduate	23.1	26.9	50.0	
Monthly income (Ghana cedis)				
< 500	15.6	37.6	46.8	14.29
500- 1000	26.2	29.4	44.4	(0.075)
1100-2000	24.4	34.6	41.0	
2100 - 3000	14.8	22.2	63.0	
3000 <	14.3	17.9	67.9	
Religion				
Christian	18.4	32.6	49.0	4.24
Muslim	28.6	31.2	40.3	(0.375)
Others	21.1	26.3	52.6	
Place of Residence				
Within Kumasi	21.7	31.9	46.3	1.47
Outside Kumasi	16.1	32.2	51.7	(0.478)

*significant difference exist at p≤0.01** and p≤ 0.05

It was also established that, males (32.0%) patronized chop bars (32.0%) than fast food outlet (21.9%) and canteen (7.8%). Also the study revealed that females patronized fast food outlets (27.1%) to chop bars (16.7%) and canteens (16.6%) (Table 3). It was further revealed that higher percentages (28.0%) of married respondents and 25.9% of single individuals ate at chop bars. Meanwhile some single respondents (28.6%) and about 17% married persons ate at fast food outlets. More than half of married respondents indicated that they normally ate alone (50.3%) whilst 17.2% indicated they normally ate in the company of their family. Most single respondents (46.3%) also indicated that they normally ate out alone whilst 28.3% revealed they normally ate in the company of their colleagues than to eat with friends (27.3%).

Most graduate respondents (45.2%) and post graduates respondents (59.6%) reported they ate out normally at restaurant, whiles about 39% of respondents with educational level up to senior high reported they normally ate out at chop bars. It was also discovered that, graduates (26.2%) and respondents who have educational level up to senior high (25.6%) indicated they normally ate out at fast food outlets, whiles only 9.6% of postgraduates ate at fast food outlets.

Table 3. Outlets for eating out and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Outlets where Individuals Ate Out Often				
	Restaurant (%)	**Fast food outlet (%)**	**Canteen (%)**	**Chop Bar (%)**	**χ^2 (p)**
Gender					
Male	38.3	21.9	7.8	32.0	17.67
Female	38.2	27.1	16.6	16.7	0.000**
Age					
Below 20	40.0	26.7	13.3	20.0	18.37
21 to 35	31.8	29.7	12.0	26.6	0.031*
36 to 50	40.7	16.3	11.4	31.7	
Above 50	60.0	15.0	7.5	17.5	
Marital Status					
Married	43.8	17.2	11.8	28.0	7.78
Single	34.2	28.6	11.3	25.9	0.051*
Employment Status					
Employed	39.0	21.4	12.3	27.3	4.33
Unemployed	35.9	31.5	8.7	23.9	(0.228)
Level of Education					
≤ Senior High	25.6	25.6	10.0	38.9	40.63
Graduate	45.2	26.2	12.5	16.1	0.000**
Post Graduate	59.6	9.6	13.5	17.3	
Monthly Income (Ghana cedis)					
< 500	17.0	32.6	9.2	41.1	88.66
500- 1000	40.5	23.8	9.5	26.2	0.000**
1100-2000	47.4	19.2	21.8	11.5	
2100 - 3000	63.0	7.4	11.1	18.5	
3000 <	85.7	7.1	3.6	3.6	
Religion					
Christian	38.2	26.6	10.2	25.0	18.72
Muslim	42.9	15.6	18.2	23.4	0.005**
Others	21.1	10.5	5.3	63.2	
Place of Residence					
Within Kumasi	40.6	21.4	11.5	26.5	5.36
Outside Kumasi	29.9	32.2	11.5	26.4	(0.147)

*significant difference exist at p≤0.01** and p≤ 0.05

It was discovered in the study that, fast food outlet is most frequented by low income earners particularly those who earn below 500 cedis (32.6%). Again, it was exposed in the study that, lower income earners normally ate alone whereas higher earning respondents

ate with friends (42.9%). About 39% of respondents who earned more than 3000 cedis normally ate alone whiles 7.1% and 10.7% ate with family and colleagues respectively. All respondents within the various income categories reported that they normally ate out during lunch.

Table 4. Eating partners and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Company Whom Individuals Ate Out With Most Frequently				
	Alone (%)	**Family (%)**	**Friends (%)**	**Colleagues (%)**	**χ2 (p)**
Gender					
Male	50.4	14.1	23.4	12.1	2.24
Female	43.8	18.8	25.0	17.6	(0.525)
Age					
Below 20	44.4	13.3	35.6	6.7	21.56
21 to 35	46.4	15.1	26.0	12.5	0.010**
36 to 50	56.1	13.0	21.1	9.8	
Above 50	35.0	30.0	10.0	25.0	
Marital Status					
Married	50.3	17.2	19.5	13.0	3.27
Single	46.3	14.7	27.3	28.3	(0.352)
Employment Status					
Employed	50.3	15.9	19.5	14.3	17.46
Unemployed	40.2	15.2	39.1	5.4	0.001**
Level of Education					
≤ Senior High	52.2	12.2	27.2	8.3	13.24
Graduate	43.5	16.7	23.8	16.1	0.038*
Post Graduate	48.1	25.0	13.5	13.5	
Monthly income (Ghana cedis)					
< 500	49.6	12.1	27.7	10.6	24.88
500- 1000	50.0	12.7	27.8	9.5	0.015*
1100-2000	47.4	14.1	20.5	17.9	
2100 - 3000	40.7	25.9	14.8	18.5	
3000 <	39.3	42.9	7.1	10.7	
Religion					
Christian	45.1	14.8	27.3	37.2	29.23
Muslim	48.1	23.4	16.9	11.7	0.000**
Others	94.7	0.0	0.0	5.3	
Place of Residence					
Within Kumasi	47.0	14.7	25.2	13.1	3.10
Outside Kumasi	51.7	19.5	19.5	9.2	(0.376)

*significant difference exist at p≤0.01** and p≤ 0.05

The Chi square test shows that there was significant association between gender (χ2 =88.66, p=0.000), age (χ2 =18.37, p=0.031), marital status (χ2 =7.78, p=0.050), monthly income (χ2 =88.66, p=0.000) and religious affiliations (χ2 =18.72, p=0.005) and the outlets that respondents eat out often. All the effects were moderate (Cramer's V=0.210, 0.124, 0.139, 0.266, 0.225, 0.161 respectively).

More than half of the males (50.4%) reported that they ate alone, whilst 43.8% of females said they ate out alone. About 24% of males and a quarter (25%) of the females indicated they ate in the company of their friends. Almost one third of the males reported that they ate in the company of their family (14.1%) and colleagues (12.1%). Meanwhile, 18.8% males and 17.7% of females reported they ate in the company of family and colleagues, respectively. The study revealed that, more than half of both males and females indicated they ate out mostly during lunch times. According to the study, respondents ate out not more than three times within a week. The study also revealed that most respondents prefer local dishes mostly when they ate out (males=68.0% and females=62.5%).

Although greater number of respondents within the various educational level reported they ate out mostly alone, higher percentage was recorded by respondents with educational level up to senior high (52.2%). It was also revealed that, graduates (23.8%) and those with level up to senior high (27.2%) normally ate out more with friends. About a quarter of postgraduates indicated that, they ate out with their family. About 12% of respondents with educational level up to senior high also reported that they ate with family mostly.

With reference to age of respondents and their eating out pattern, significant relationship existed between the age of respondents and outlet respondents patronized when eating out ($\chi 2$ =18.37, p=0.031), company respondents ate out in ($\chi 2$ =21.56, p=0.010), number of times respondents ate out within a week ($\chi 2$ =30.70, p=0.001), and food respondents normally ate out ($\chi 2$ =11.42, p=0.01). Interestingly, whereas most individuals within age groups 'below 20' (26.7%) and '21-35 years' (29.7%) indicated they ate at fast food joints, older respondents reported that chop bars were their most frequented eating outlet.

Although higher percentages were recorded for ages above 50 years (40.7%) and ages between 36-50 years (40.7%) in their choice for restaurants as a frequented option when eating out, majority of respondents in other age groups affirmed this. For all the age groups, it was revealed in the study that, higher percentages were recorded for individuals who frequently ate alone, followed by those who ate mostly with friends, those who frequently ate with family and those who ate in the company of their colleagues. Similar observation was not made for those above 50 years; although eating alone had the highest frequency (35.0%), most of them ate in the company of their colleagues (25.0%) and 10% of the respondents ate in the company of their friends.

More than half of employed respondents indicated (50.3%) they normally ate alone. Eating out with family was the company (39.1%) respondents indicated whereas close to 16% of respondents reported that they ate mostly in the company of their friends.

The Chi square test shows that there was significant association between gender ($\chi 2$ =10.31, p=0.016), religious affiliations ($\chi 2$ =15.26, p=0.018) and the company individuals ate out with most frequently. All the effects were moderate (Cramer's V=0.138, 0.172 respectively.

Table 5. Meals eating out and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Meals Individuals Ate Out Most Often				
	Breakfast (%)	**Lunch (%)**	**Dinner (%)**	**All (%)**	**$\chi 2$ (p)**
Gender					
Male	14.1	65.2	17.6	3.1	10.32
Female	8.3	57.6	27.1	6.9	0.016*
Age					
Below 20	4.4	62.2	26.7	6.7	15.22
21 to 35	10.9	61.5	20.8	6.8	0.085
36 to 50	16.3	64.2	17.9	1.6	
Above 50	12.5	62.5	25.0	0.0	
Marital Status					
Married	15.4	60.4	21.9	2.4	6.08
Single	9.5	64.1	20.3	6.1	(0.11)
Employment Status					
Employed	12.7	63.0	20.5	3.9	1.75
Unemployed	9.8	60.9	22.8	6.5	(0.63)
Level of Education					
≤ Senior High	12.2	63.9	17.8	6.1	7.63
Graduate	9.5	64.3	23.2	3.0	(0.27)
Post Graduate	19.2	51.9	25.0	3.8	
Monthly Income (Ghana cedis)					
< 500	12.8	68.1	14.9	4.3	12.294
500- 1000	11.1	59.5	23.0	6.3	(0.42)
1100-2000	12.8	62.8	20.5	3.8	
2100 - 3000	7.4	59.3	29.6	3.7	
3000 <	14.3	50.0	35.7	0.0	
Religion					
Christian	9.5	63.2	21.7	5.6	15.26
Muslim	23.4	58.4	16.9	1.3	0.018**
Others	5.3	68.4	26.3	0.0	
Place of residence					
Within Kumasi	11.8	63.9	19.5	4.8	2.27
Outside Kumasi	12.6	57.5	26.4	3.4	(0.57)

*significant difference exist at p≤0.01** and p≤ 0.05

For all age categories, whereas higher percentages were recorded for lunch as the most frequented meal time respondents ate out, followed by dinner, then by breakfast then lastly by respondents who indicated they ate at all times equally, same cannot be said for

respondents who are below 20 years. It was also revealed that, 6.7% of respondents below 20years ate at all the meal times than to associate it specifically to breakfast (4.4%) which was the general trend in the other age groups (Table 5).

Equally worth noting is the relationship that existed between religion and outlet frequented most when eating out ($\chi 2$ =18.72, p=0.005), company respondents normally ate out ($\chi 2$ =29.33, p=0.000) and the meal eaten often when eating out ($\chi 2$ =15.26, p=0.018). Specifically, whereas both Christians (38.2 %) and Muslims (42.9%) reported they ate out at restaurants, respondents belonging to the other religious groups indicated they normally ate out at chop bars (63.2%). It was also discovered that, respondents who belonged to the other religions ate alone (94.7%) and do not normally eat in the company of either friends or family. The findings also showed that Christians ate in the company of their colleagues (37.2%) and family (27.3%) than their friends (14.8%). Meanwhile, although majority of Muslims normally ate alone (48.1%), most of them opted to eat with friends (23.4%), than to eat with family (16.9%) or their colleagues (11.7%).

There was a general acceptance by respondents on lunch being the most meal frequently eaten out. Respondents belonging to the other religious groups recorded the highest percentage (68.4%). They as well indicated that, diner was the second most important meal that they ate out, whilst breakfast was the least (5.3%). Christians also indicated that, after lunch the meal they ate out most was dinner (21.7%) whereas Muslims revealed breakfast as the second meal they ate out (23.4%). No significant relationship existed between place of residence of respondents and the various factors of eating out pattern.

The Chi square test shows that there was significant association between gender ($\chi 2$ =10.32, p=0.016), religious affiliations ($\chi 2$ =15.26, p=0.001), and the meals individuals ate out most often. All the effects were moderate (Cramer's V=0.161, 0.138 respectively).

It was evident in the study that, whereas most people within age group 21-35 years (28.6%) and 36-50 years (42.3%) indicated they ate out only 3 times within a typical week, majority of respondents above 50 years indicated they ate out more than three times within a week and majority of respondents below age 20 added that they ate out mostly once within a typical week (Table 6). Unemployed respondents reported that, they ate out mostly once (20.7%). Also, higher percentage was recorded for employed respondents (39.0%) who ate out at restaurants. Whereas about a third of single respondents (30.3%) indicated they ate out only twice within a week, about 38% of married respondents indicated they ate out normally three times within a week.

About a third of graduates (32.1%) and postgraduates (40.4%) specified three times a week as the number of times they ate out, a number of respondents with educational level up to senior high school indicated they ate out more than three times within a typical week. Interestingly, whereas more than half of graduates (67.3%) and up to senior high (70.0%) respondents indicated ate local dishes, postgraduates (51.9%) specified continental dishes as the food they ate out mostly (Table 6).

Table 6. The frequency of eating out and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Number of Times Individuals Ate Out Most Often				
	Once (%)	**Twice (%)**	**Thrice (%)**	**>Thrice (%)**	**χ^2 (p)**
Gender					
Male	15.2	21.9	33.2	29.7	8.532
Female	20.8	29.9	30.6	18.8	0.036*
Age					
Below 20	28.9	24.4	26.7	20.0	30.70
21 to 35	21.9	28.1	28.6	21.4	0.001**
36 to 50	6.5	22.8	42.3	28.5	
Above 50	15.0	15.0	25.0	45.0	
Marital Status					
Married	14.2	17.2	37.9	30.8	14.12
Single	19.5	30.3	28.1	22.1	0.003**
Employment Status					
Employed	16.2	24.4	31.2	28.2	4.62
Unemployed	20.7	26.1	35.9	17.4	(0.202)
Level of Education					
≤ Senior High	14.4	22.2	30.0	33.3	17.33
Graduate	23.2	26.8	32.1	17.9	0.008**
Post Graduate	7.7	26.9	40.4	25.0	
Monthly income (Ghana cedis)					
< 500	21.3	22.0	27.0	29.8	17.40
500- 1000	13.5	32.5	30.2	23.8	(0.135)
1100-2000	20.5	17.9	42.3	19.2	
2100 - 3000	7.4	29.6	33.3	29.6	
3000 <	14.3	17.9	39.3	28.6	
Religion					
Christian	18.4	23.4	30.6	27.6	7.27
Muslim	13.0	32.5	35.1	19.5	(0.296)
Others	15.8	15.8	47.4	21.1	
Place of Residence					
Within Kumasi	16.0	24.3	31.9	27.8	3.86
Outside Kumasi	21.8	26.4	33.3	15.5	(0.27)

The Chi square test between monthly income and eating out pattern factors did not reveal any significant relationship except for outlet frequented ($\chi 2$ =88.66, p=0.000) and company they mostly ate out with ($\chi 2$ =24.88, p=0.015). Contrary, [13] found a positive association between household income and frequency of eating out. Respondents indicated that they ate out mostly whenever they desired, however, higher percentage was recorded

for respondents who earned more than 3000 cedis (67.9%). Whereas a little over a third of respondents who earned below 500 cedis (41.1%) revealed they ate at chop bars. The rest of the respondents indicated that they ate at restaurant with respondents earning more than 3000 cedis (85.7%) having the highest percentage. Respondents who earned 3000 cedis reported that they ate at fast food outlets and chop bar.

Chi square test between marital status and the eating out pattern dimensions revealed significant relationship between the marital status of respondents and the number of times they ate out within a typical week ($\chi 2$ =14.12, p=0.003) and outlets frequented mostly when eating out ($\chi 2$ =7.78, p=0.05). No significant relationship was however revealed for the other dimensions.

Table 7. Type of food normally eaten out and socio-demographic characteristics.

	Type of Food Usually Eaten Out		
	Local (%)	**Continental (%)**	**$\chi 2$ (p)**
Gender			
Male	68.0	32.0	0.997
Female	62.5	37.5	0.318
Age			
Below 20	46.7	53.3	11.42
21 to 35	68.2	31.8	0.010**
36 to 50	72.4	27.6	
Above 50	57.5	42.5	
Marital Status			
Married	71.0	29.0	2.89
Single	62.3	37.7	(0.089)
Employment Status			
Employed	68.2	31.8	2.43
Unemployed	58.7	41.3	(0.119)
Level of Education			
≤ Senior High	70.0	30.0	8.85
Graduate	67.3	32.7	0.012**
Post Graduate	48.1	51.9	
Monthly Income (Ghana cedis)			
< 500	72.3	27.7	9.11
500- 1000	68.3	31.7	(0.059)
1100-2000	61.5	38.5	
2100 - 3000	51.9	48.1	
3000 <	50.0	50.0	
Religion			
Christian	66.1	33.9	0.69
Muslim	63.6	36.4	(0.707)
Others	73.7	26.3	
Place of Residence			
Within Kumasi	67.7	32.3	1.56
Outside Kumasi	59.8	40.2	(0.208)

*significant difference exist at p≤0.01** and p≤ 0.05

Moreover, the Chi square test shows that there was significant association between gender ($\chi 2$ =8.532, p=0.036), age ($\chi 2$ =30.70, p=0.001), marital status ($\chi 2$ =14.12, p=0.003), education ($\chi 2$ =17.33, p=0.008), and the number of times individuals ate out most often. All the effects were moderate (Cramer's V=0.160, 0.188, 0.211, 0.147 respectively).

Slightly over half of both employed (68.2%) and unemployed (58.7%) respondents reported that they preferred local dishes to continental dishes. It was also revealed that, whereas most respondents within other age groups ate local dishes, majority of respondents (53.3%) below age 20 indicated they ate continental dishes mostly. Furthermore, significant relationship existed between educational level and outlet frequented ($\chi 2$ =40.63, p=0.000), number of times respondents ate out within a week ($\chi 2$ =17.33, p=0.008), food normally eaten out ($\chi 2$ =8.85, p=0.012), company normally eaten out with ($\chi 2$ =13.24, p=0.038), time respondents normally ate out ($\chi 2$ =12.72, p=0.013) (Table 4).

Contrary, it was discovered that respondents who earned more than 3000 cedis ate out at dinner frequently (35.7%) than the other groups. Most respondents indicated they ate local dishes mostly. Respondents who earned lower than 500 cedis recorded the highest percentage (72.3%) whilst respondents who earned more than 3000 cedis recorded the least percentage (50.0%). Respondents who earned more than 3000 cedis ate both local (50%) and continental dishes (50%) equally.

Moreover, the Chi square test shows that there was significant association between age ($\chi 2$ =11.42, p=0.010), education ($\chi 2$ =8.85, p=0.012), and type of food normally eaten out. All the effects were moderate (Cramer's V=0.169, 0.149 respectively).

Discussions

A. Eating Out Pattern of Individuals in Kumasi

Nearly half of the people who participated in the survey (48%) went out to eat whenever they wanted. Also, about 32% of people ate out during the week, whereas 20.5% of people did so on the weekends. The meal that was consumed outside of the home the most frequently was lunch (65.5%), followed by dinner (21.0%) and breakfast (12.0%). Five percent of those who participated in the survey ate out at different times, without a particular preference. This mirrors global trends where eating out has become a common practice due to convenience, urbanization, and changing lifestyles [42]. The prominence of lunch aligns with studies that identify it as a key meal consumed during working hours, particularly in urban settings [43].

On eating out outlets, 39 percent of the respondents mostly eat at restaurants, making them the most frequented establishments. The next most frequented establishments were fast food outlets (24%) and chop bars (26.5%), while canteens were the least frequented facility (11.5%). Nearly half of the respondents, or 48.0%, went out to eat by themselves. Out of the people that went out to eat, 24.0% were friends, 15.8% were family, and 12.0% were coworkers. About 32.3 percent of people ate out three times per week, and 25.8 percent ate out more than three times each week. While 17.3 percent of people only ate out once a week, 24.8% of people ate out twice a week. With the kind of food consumed, local foods were the most popular, with 66.0% of respondents consuming something from the area. Also, 34.0% of respondents reported eating foods from the continental cuisine.

B. Eating Out Pattern by Socio-Demographic Characteristics

1. Patterns of eating out and gender

There were found to be significant associations between gender and the choice of dining outlet ($\chi^2 = 17.67$, $p = 0.000$), the number of meals consumed ($\chi^2 = 10.32$, $p = 0.016$), and the frequency of eating out ($\chi^2 = 8.532$, $p = 0.036$).

There was a widespread practice among both males (47.7%) and females (47.2%) to eat out whenever they pleased. On weekdays, a greater proportion of females (36.1%) than males (29.7%) ate out, whereas on weekends, a greater proportion of males (22.7%) ate out.

It was found that males were more likely to frequent chop bars (32.0%) than they were to frequent fast food outlets (21.9%) or canteens (7.8%). On the other hand, ladies were more likely to prefer fast food outlets (27.1%) against chop bars (16.7%) and canteens (16.6%).

On average, people of both sexes ate by themselves, with males (50.4%) doing so somewhat more frequently than females (43.8%). Both males and females ate out with friends at a rate of approximately 25%, with males eating with relatives at a rate that was slightly higher than that of females (17.7%). It was shown that local foods were chosen by both males (68%) and females (62.5%), with lunch being the meal that was eaten out the most frequently. This resonates with studies highlighting gender differences in food preferences, often influenced by cultural norms and perceptions. For instance, men tend to prefer hearty, traditional meals, whereas women may prioritize convenience or lighter meals [44]. Additionally, both males and females predominantly ate alone, a pattern also noted in studies on individualism and urban dining habits [13].

2. Eating out and age

It was discovered that there were significant connections between age and the outlet that was patronised (χ^2 = 18.37, p = 0.031), the dining company (χ^2 = 21.56, p = 0.010), the frequency of eating out (χ^2 = 30.70, p = 0.001), and the food that was consumed while eating out (χ^2 = 11.42, p = 0.01). The younger respondents (those under the age of 20: 26.7%; those between the ages of 21 and 35: 29.7%) frequently ate at fast food restaurants, whilst the older respondents (those between the ages of 36 and 50 and those over the age of 50: 40.7% each) favoured restaurants and chop bars.

There was a significant correlation between dining alone and eating with friends and family, with the former being the most common. Those respondents who were above the age of 50, on the other hand, reported eating with their coworkers 25% of the time more frequently than other groups. The meal that was consumed the most frequently across all age categories was lunch, followed by dinner and then breakfast for the children. There was a modest deviation among respondents under the age of 20, with 6.7% of them reporting that they ate at all meal times.

This aligns with studies that suggest younger populations are drawn to fast food for its affordability and modern appeal, while older individuals prefer more traditional dining environments [45]. Furthermore, older respondents were more likely to eat with coworkers, reflecting workplace socialization as a determinant of eating habits [44].

C. Eating Out Pattern and Socio-Demographic Characteristics

1. Eating out and age

It was usual for respondents between the ages of 21 and 35 (28.6%) and 36 and 50 (42.3%), respectively, to eat out three times each week. Those who were younger than 20 years old typically only ate out once per week, but those who were older than 50 years old ate out more than three times each week. On the other hand, the majority of respondents under the age of 20 (53.3%) chose continental cuisine. The majority of age groups preferred local dishes.

2. Patterns of eating out relationships and marital status

There was a correlation between the marital status of the respondents and the frequency with which they went out to eat (χ^2 = 14.12, p=0.003), as well as the outlet that they visited (χ^2 = 7.78, p=0.05). Thirty-three percent of respondents who were single ate out at least twice per week, whereas 38 percent of respondents who were married ate out once per week.

Chop bars were preferred by married individuals by 28.0% of respondents, but some single respondents also frequented chop bars (25.9%) or fast food outlets (28.6%).

Fifty-three percent of married respondents ate by themselves, followed by 17 percent who ate with their families. In a similar vein, respondents who were unmarried either ate alone themselves (46.3%) or with their coworkers (28.3%). These findings align with studies showing that marital status influences eating habits, as married individuals often prioritize traditional meals and family-oriented dining, whereas singles lean toward convenience and social dining [46].

3. Employment status and eating out patterns

There was a correlation between employment position and company during meals, with a coefficient of 17.46 and a p-value of 0.001. The majority of employed respondents ate by themselves (50.3%), while some ate with their families (39.1%) or friends (16%). Twenty-seven percent of those who were unemployed went out to eat once a week, while 39 percent of those who were employed frequently went to restaurants. It was found that respondents who were employed (68.2%) and those who were jobless (58.7%) favoured local foods over continental dishes. These patterns are supported by research showing that employment status influences financial capacity and time availability, which subsequently affect dining choices [47]. Employed individuals, with higher disposable incomes, tend to prefer formal dining settings, whereas unemployed individuals opt for cost-effective options [48].

4. Educational level and patterns of eating out

There was a significant correlation between educational level and parameters such as the outlet that was frequented, the frequency of eating out, the sort of food that was consumed, the company that was consumed, and the timing. Those with up to senior high school education were evenly split between eating out on weekdays (41.1%) and whenever they desired (41.1%). Graduates, on the other hand, ate out for the majority of their meals whenever they desired (53.6%). Also, 23.1 percent of postgraduate students preferred to eat out on the weekends.

Graduates and postgraduates were more likely to eat at restaurants (45.2% and 59.6%, respectively), but individuals with up to senior high school education were more likely to attend chop bar (39%). It was found that individuals of all educational levels frequently ate by themselves, with the largest percentage being senior high school (52.2%). It was more common for postgraduates to eat meals with their families (25%).

The majority of respondents from senior high school frequently ate out more than three times each week, whereas graduates and postgraduates ate out three times per week. This is consistent with studies linking higher education to an appreciation for diverse cuisines and structured dining experiences [49]. Conversely, those with lower education levels favored chop bars, reflecting an inclination toward traditional and familiar settings.

5. Income level and eating out patterns

The choice of dining establishments and dining business was greatly impacted by the monthly income of the individual. Restaurants were the preferred choice of 85.7% of individuals with higher incomes (>3000 cedis), whereas individuals with lower incomes (<500 cedis) were more likely to frequent chop bars (41.1%) or fast food outlets (32.6%). Most people with lower incomes ate by themselves, whereas those with higher incomes ate with their friends 42.9% of the time. At all income levels, the most common meal that was had outside of the home was lunch. Additionally, 35.7% of high earners ate dinner on a regular basis. Those with lower incomes consumed a greater proportion of regional cuisine (72.3%), whereas those with higher incomes consumed a balance of regional (50%) and continental (50%) dishes. This aligns with research showing that higher incomes enable greater access to diverse and upscale dining options, while lower-income groups prioritize affordability [13]. Additionally, high-income respondents displayed a balanced preference for local and continental cuisines, indicative of exposure to global food cultures [50].

6. Patterns of eating out and religious beliefs

There were found to be significant correlations between religion and the outlets that were frequented, the company that was there, and the meals that were consumed outside the home.

When it came to dining out, the majority of Christians and Muslims went to restaurants (38.2% and 42.9%, respectively), but people of other religions were more likely to attend chop bars (63.2%). Christians ate with their families (27.3%) or with their co-workers (37.2%), Muslims ate alone (48.1%) or with their friends (23.4%), and the majority of other people ate alone (94.7%). All religions reported that lunch was the meal that was consumed outside of the home the most frequently, with other religions registering the highest percentage (68.4%). It was shown that there was no significant correlation between the place of residence and the frequency of eating out. This aligns with studies showing that religious practices influence food choices and dining behaviors, often reflecting cultural and social norms [51]. The preference for

lunch across all religions indicates its universal importance as a meal, regardless of religious affiliation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Descriptive cross-sectional survey was conducted for 400 respondents in Kumasi Metropolis to describe their eating-out patterns. Respondents ate out at their convenience, with lunch being the most commonly consumed meal. Restaurants were the most popular dining outlets, followed by chop bars and fast food outlets. Respondents ate out alone, with local foods being the preferred choice over continental cuisine. Males preferred chop bars and ate alone more frequently while females preferred fast food outlets and ate out more on weekdays. Both genders predominantly consumed local foods, with lunch being the most frequent meal eaten out. Younger respondents favoured fast food outlets and continental cuisine, while older respondents preferred restaurants and chop bars, favouring local foods. Frequency of eating out increased with age, with those over 50 eating out more than three times a week. Lunch remained the most common meal consumed across all age groups. Single respondents ate out more frequently and preferred fast food outlets while married individuals frequented chop bars and typically ate alone. Married individuals showed a stronger inclination toward traditional dining options.

Employed respondents were more likely to eat alone and frequent restaurants, while unemployed individuals opted for chop bars and fast food outlets. Higher income earners predominantly chose restaurants and balanced their consumption between local and continental cuisines, while lower-income earners favoured local food. Education levels influenced dining patterns, with higher-educated respondents favouring restaurants and dining more frequently during the week. Senior high school respondents were more likely to frequent chop bars and eat out more than three times weekly, while postgraduates preferred family dining and ate out three times weekly. Christians and Muslims predominantly patronized restaurants, while individuals of other religions preferred chop bars. Christians and Muslims ate with family or friends, whereas those of other religions largely dined alone. Lunch was the most commonly consumed meal across all religious groups.

It is suggested that restaurants and other dining establishments in Kumasi Metropolis should adapt menus to cater for the preferences of various socio-demographic groups. They should offer local foods alongside continental dishes to attract a wider customers. Younger individuals and females in Kumasi, who favour fast food outlets, can be targeted with promotional deals and convenient meal options. Also, chop bars and restaurant operators in Kumasi Metropolis should enhance their offerings and marketing strategies to attract older

and male customers. Since most people eat alone, creating family-friendly or group-oriented dining environments could foster social connections. Restaurants and chop bars can offer discounts or promotions for group dining. Food service outlets and operators targeting employed individuals could consider healthy lunch options, while other food vendors might support unemployed individuals and students by providing affordable meals.

Dining establishments in Kumasi should consider religious dietary restrictions and cultural preferences, which could involve incorporating Akan food options or traditional dishes to attract diverse clientele.

Limitations

This study was based on primary data collected from sample consumers by cross-sectional method. The limitation of the study was the inability of cross-sectional studies (such as this one) to predict a phenomenon over time. As many of the consumers furnished the required information from their memory and experience, the collected data was subjected to recall bases. As a result of this, respondents may be bias in answering the questionnaire, hence a longitudinal study is proposed. The study area was limited to only Kumasi Metropolis and the findings may not be applicable to other areas, as vast differences may exist among the consumers with regard to demographic characteristics. Hence, the findings of the study may be considered appropriate for situations similar to the study area and extra care should be taken while generalizing the results.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there was not any conflict of interest.

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