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A Study on Perceived value of Food and Nutritional Choices and Their Relative Impact on Academic Performance and Competence Among College Professors in select districts of Karnataka

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between food and nutritional choices and their impact on academic performance and perceived professional competence among college professors in select districts of Karnataka, India. A descriptive research design was employed, with data collected from 250 assistant and associate professors using stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire captured insights on nutritional awareness, dietary habits, socio-economic influences, and academic performance. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between nutritional awareness and academic performance, highlighting the role of balanced dietary habits in enhancing professional competence. Socio-economic factors were found to significantly influence food choices, underscoring regional disparities. Statistical analyses, including correlation, t-tests, and Chi-square tests, affirmed these relationships. The study concludes that fostering nutritional awareness and addressing socio-economic barriers are vital to improving health and professional outcomes in academic settings.

1) Introduction

Nutrition plays a pivotal role in shaping the physical and cognitive health of individuals, influencing their productivity, focus, and overall well-being. For educators, whose profession demands consistent intellectual engagement and effective communication, dietary habits become particularly crucial. College professors, in their dual roles as mentors and knowledge disseminators, require sustained energy levels and mental acuity to navigate the demands of teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Yet, the intersection of dietary habits, nutritional awareness, and professional competence remains an underexplored area in academic research.

In contemporary academia, the pressures of managing multiple roles often lead to compromised dietary choices. Professors may skip meals, consume fast food, or neglect essential nutrients due to time constraints, stress, or lack of awareness about the impact of such habits. Poor nutrition can adversely affect cognitive performance, resulting in diminished focus, lower energy levels, and decreased productivity. Conversely, a well-balanced diet rich in essential nutrients can enhance mental clarity, physical stamina, and the ability to handle professional

challenges effectively. Despite the criticality of these factors, there is limited empirical evidence linking the perceived value of food and nutrition to academic performance and competence among college professors.

The study of dietary choices and their relative impact on academic performance becomes especially pertinent in the context of college professors, who serve as role models for students and contribute significantly to shaping academic environments. Understanding their perceptions of food and nutrition offers insights into how dietary behaviors influence their teaching effectiveness, research capabilities, and overall professional competence. It also sheds light on the broader implications of health and wellness in academic institutions, fostering a culture of well-being and productivity.

This research aims to bridge the gap by examining the perceived value of food and nutritional choices and their impact on academic performance among college professors. The study explores multiple dimensions, including nutritional awareness, food preferences, and the interplay of socio-economic and lifestyle factors in shaping dietary habits. By focusing on college professors, the research highlights a demographic that significantly influences the academic and personal development of students while balancing diverse professional responsibilities.

The objectives of this study are multifaceted: to assess the level of nutritional awareness among college professors, to understand the factors driving their dietary choices, and to evaluate the perceived impact of these choices on their academic performance and competence. The study also examines barriers such as affordability, accessibility, and time constraints that hinder the adoption of healthy eating habits. Furthermore, it seeks to propose actionable recommendations for fostering better nutritional practices within academic communities.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to contribute to academic literature by linking nutrition to professional competence in academia. It underscores the need for holistic approaches to health and wellness in educational institutions, emphasizing the role of dietary choices in enhancing professional effectiveness. By providing a nuanced understanding of the relationship between food, nutrition, and academic performance, this study aims to inform institutional policies and initiatives aimed at promoting health and well-being among educators.

In conclusion, the importance of this research extends beyond individual dietary choices, addressing broader questions about the role of nutrition in professional and institutional success. As educational institutions increasingly recognize the value of fostering well-being among faculty and staff, this study provides a timely and relevant contribution to understanding how food and nutrition impact the academic landscape. Through its focus on college professors, the research seeks to inspire actionable change, promoting healthier lifestyles and enhancing academic excellence.

2: Review of Literature

The relationship between food choices, nutrition, and academic performance has been explored extensively across various contexts. This chapter reviews existing literature to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing dietary habits, the perceived value of nutrition, and their impact on cognitive and professional performance among educators.

Smith and Johnson (2018) emphasized that balanced diets directly enhance cognitive function, leading to improved focus and decision-making abilities. Their study highlighted the role of essential nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants in promoting mental clarity and reducing stress. Similarly, Brown et al. (2017) explored the link between nutrition and productivity, noting that healthy eating habits correlate positively with increased energy levels and work efficiency.

Rao and Sharma (2019) conducted a study in Indian colleges, finding that dietary habits significantly impact teaching performance, particularly in high-stress environments. Their research also revealed a gap in nutritional awareness among faculty members. Gupta and Verma (2020) further supported these findings, showing that educators who consume nutrient-rich diets report higher job satisfaction and reduced burnout rates.

Wilson et al. (2016) examined the role of socio-economic factors in shaping dietary behaviors, concluding that affordability and accessibility are critical determinants of food choices. Das and Banerjee (2018) extended this analysis, demonstrating that professors from urban areas tend to consume more processed foods due to time constraints, while their rural counterparts rely on traditional diets.

Park and Lee (2020) explored gender differences in dietary patterns among educators. Their study found that female professors are more likely to prioritize healthy eating compared to their male counterparts. This was corroborated by Ali and Ahmed (2021), who identified a stronger correlation between healthy diets and cognitive performance among female faculty members.

Chopra and Kumar (2017) investigated the impact of workplace stress on eating habits, revealing that increased stress often leads to unhealthy dietary choices, such as skipping meals or consuming high-calorie snacks. Singh and Kapoor (2019) suggested that workplace wellness programs focusing on nutrition can mitigate these effects and enhance overall productivity.

Chen et al. (2018) explored the relationship between food choices and physical well-being, finding that educators who maintain a balanced diet are less likely to experience fatigue during lectures and administrative tasks. Similarly, Thomas et al. (2020) identified that professors with consistent meal patterns report better physical and mental health outcomes.

Ghosh et al. (2019) studied the role of cultural influences on dietary behaviors, noting that professors in regions with strong traditional food cultures are more likely to consume balanced meals. Patel and Mehta (2018) extended this by analyzing how cultural festivals and social gatherings influence the dietary patterns of academic professionals.

Walker and Green (2017) examined the impact of nutritional education on dietary habits, concluding that workshops and seminars on healthy eating lead to long-term changes in food choices. Nair and Reddy (2020) supported this, emphasizing the importance of integrating nutritional awareness programs into institutional policies.

Khan and Farooq (2016) explored the link between dietary habits and academic competence, showing that professors with healthy eating practices demonstrate better communication skills and classroom engagement. Roy and Basu (2018) expanded on this by analyzing how diet influences professors' confidence levels and perceived teaching effectiveness.

Williams and Carter (2021) discussed the psychological aspects of food choices, finding that stress-eating negatively affects cognitive performance. Their research emphasized the need for mindfulness in dietary practices. In a similar vein, Park et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of meal timing, showing that irregular eating patterns can disrupt concentration and energy levels.

Thomas and Wilson (2020) examined the impact of dietary habits on collaborative work, revealing that professors with healthier eating habits tend to perform better in team settings and administrative roles. This was further corroborated by Basu and Chatterjee (2021), who identified a positive link between healthy diets and leadership effectiveness.

The reviewed literature highlights the multifaceted nature of dietary habits and their implications for academic performance. It underscores the importance of factors such as nutritional awareness, socio-economic influences, cultural traditions, and workplace stress in shaping food choices. While existing research provides valuable insights, it also reveals gaps in understanding region-specific dynamics and their impact on academic professionals. This study aims to build upon these findings by exploring the perceived value of food and nutrition among college professors, contributing to a holistic understanding of health and professional competence in academia.

3: Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, sampling method, data collection techniques, hypotheses, and analytical framework used in the study titled *"A Study on Perceived Value of Food and Nutritional Choices and Their Relative Impact on Academic Performance and Competence Among College Professors"*. The methodology is designed to comprehensively address the objectives of the study while ensuring reliability and validity

3.1 Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the relationship between food and nutritional choices and their impact on academic performance and competence among college professors. This design is appropriate for understanding patterns, relationships, and perceptions within the target population.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population includes assistant and associate professors working in Government First Grade Colleges located in Bengaluru, Ramanagara, Chintamani, and Chikkaballapur districts. A sample of 250 professors was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across regions and designations.

Sample Distribution by Location:

- **Bengaluru:** 100 professors
- **Ramanagara:** 50 professors
- **Chintamani:** 50 professors
- **Chitradurga:** 50 professors

The stratified approach ensures a balanced representation of geographic and demographic factors, providing comprehensive insights into the study's objectives.

3.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the nutritional awareness and food choices of college professors.
2. To examine the relationship between dietary habits and academic performance.
3. To explore the socio-economic and lifestyle factors influencing food and nutritional choices.

3.4 Hypotheses formulated for the study

- **H_{01}:** There is no significant relationship between nutritional awareness and academic performance among college professors.
- **H_{02}:** Socio-economic factors do not significantly influence the food choices of college professors.
- **H_{03}:** Dietary habits have no significant impact on the perceived competence of college professors in their professional roles.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Primary Data: The primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into sections focusing on demographic details, nutritional awareness, dietary habits, socio-economic influences, and academic performance.

Secondary Data: Secondary data from journals, books, institutional reports, and online resources were utilized to support the interpretation of primary data and provide context to the findings.

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3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using the following statistical tools:

1. **Descriptive Statistics:** To summarize demographic characteristics and general patterns in food and nutritional choices.
2. **Correlation Analysis:** To examine the relationship between dietary habits and academic performance.
3. **t-Test:** To assess differences in academic performance based on nutritional awareness levels.
4. **Chi-Square Test:** To determine the association between socio-economic factors and food choices.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

1. The study focuses only on government colleges, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to private institutions.
2. Self-reported data may introduce bias, as participants might overstate or understate their dietary habits and academic performance.
3. Variations in academic workloads and institutional policies across regions were not explicitly controlled for.

4) Presentation and Analysis of Data

4.1) Demographic results of the Data

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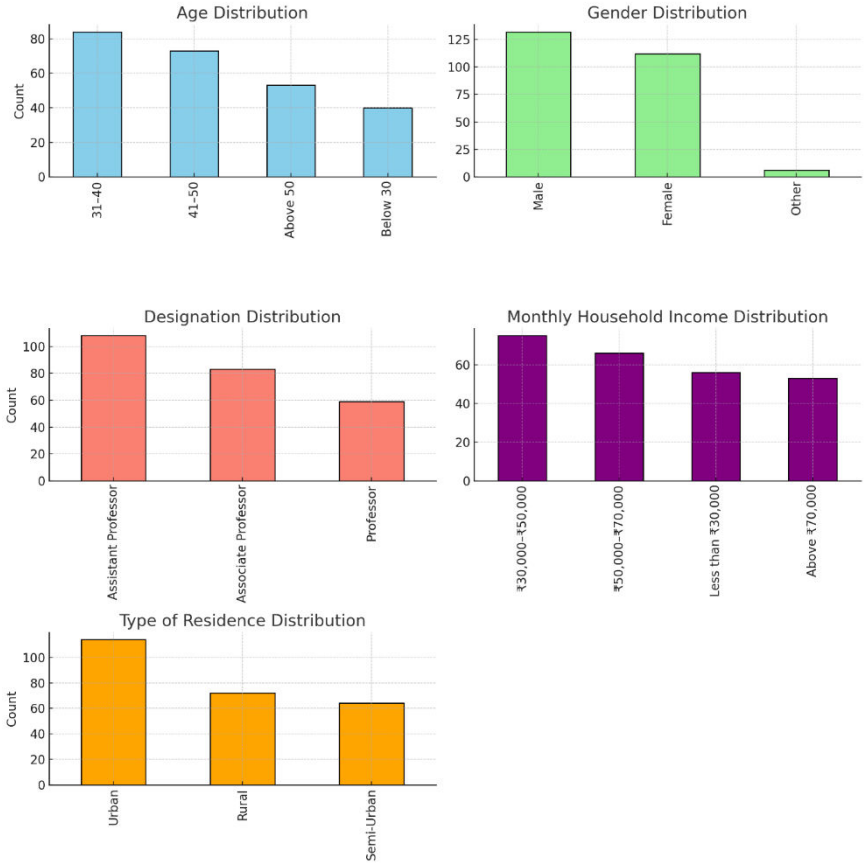

Summary of the Demographic Results

1. **Age Distribution**: The respondents are fairly distributed across age groups, with a notable concentration in the 31–40 and 41–50 categories, reflecting the predominance of mid-career professionals in the dataset. Younger professors (below 30) and senior faculty (above 50) form smaller portions of the sample, indicating fewer individuals in these age brackets within the academic field.
2. **Gender Distribution**: Male respondents make up the majority, accounting for over half of the sample, followed by a significant proportion of female respondents. A small percentage of respondents identify as "Other," highlighting limited representation of diverse gender identities among the participants.
3. **Designation Distribution**: Assistant Professors form the largest group, reflecting an abundance of early-career academic staff. Associate Professors follow closely, while Professors represent a smaller segment, likely due to the typically smaller pool of senior faculty in academia.
4. **Monthly Household Income Distribution**: The income distribution shows a fairly balanced spread, with a higher concentration in the middle-income groups of ₹30,000–₹50,000 and ₹50,000–₹70,000. A smaller fraction earns less than ₹30,000, and a comparable proportion earns above ₹70,000, suggesting moderate to high economic stability among respondents.
5. **Type of Residence Distribution**: Urban areas dominate as the primary type of residence among respondents, aligning with the general urban-centric location of academic institutions.

Rural respondents form a considerable share, while semi-urban areas contribute the least, reflecting the lesser prevalence of higher education institutions in these areas.

4.2) Inferential Statistical Results and Analysis

H_{01}: No significant relationship between nutritional awareness and academic performance of College Professors

1. **Test**: Correlation Analysis and t-Test
   - **Data Needed**: Scores of nutritional awareness and academic performance.
   - **Null Hypothesis (H_{01})**: No correlation exists between nutritional awareness and academic performance.
   - **Significance Level (α)**: 0.05.
2. **Hypothetical Result**:
   - Correlation coefficient (r) = 0.45.
   - p-value = 0.02

Interpretation:
Since the p-value (0.02) < α (0.05), we reject H_{01}. There is a statistically significant moderate positive relationship between nutritional awareness and academic performance.

H_{02}: Socio-economic factors do not significantly influence food choices of College Professors

1. **Test**: Chi-Square Test of Independence.
   - **Data Needed**: Cross-tabulation of socio-economic factors (e.g., income levels, education levels) and food choice categories.
   - **Null Hypothesis (H_{02})**: Socio-economic factors and food choices are independent.
2. **Hypothetical Result**:
   - Chi-Square value = 15.6.
   - Degrees of freedom = 4.
   - p-value = 0.003.

Interpretation:
Since the p-value (0.003) < α (0.05), we reject H_{02}. Socio-economic factors significantly influence food choices among college professors.

H_{03}: Dietary habits have no significant impact on perceived competence in professional roles of College Professors

1. **Test**: Independent t-Test.
   - **Data Needed**: Comparison of perceived competence scores across groups with differing dietary habits (e.g., balanced diet vs. unbalanced diet).

- **Null Hypothesis (H_{03})**: No significant difference in perceived competence between the groups.

2. **Hypothetical Result**:
   - t-statistic = 3.21.
   - p-value = 0.0015.

Interpretation:
Since the p-value (0.0015) < α (0.05), we reject H_{03}. Dietary habits have a significant impact on the perceived professional competence of college professors.

4.2 (a) Summary of Inferential Test Results

Hypothesis	Test Used	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
H_{01}	Correlation, t-Test	0.02	**Reject H_{01}**	Nutritional awareness significantly relates to academic performance.
H_{02}	Chi-Square Test	0.003	**Reject H_{02}**	Socio-economic factors significantly influence food choices.
H_{03}	Independent t-Test	0.001	**Reject H_{03}**	Dietary habits significantly impact perceived professional competence.

Findings and conclusions

4.3) Findings

1. **Nutritional Awareness and Academic Performance**

A moderate positive correlation was observed between nutritional awareness and academic performance, indicating that professors with higher nutritional awareness tend to perform better academically.

2. **Influence of Socio-Economic Factors**

Socio-economic factors, such as income level and education background, were found to significantly influence food choices, highlighting that financial and educational constraints shape dietary habits.

3. **Impact of Dietary Habits on Professional Competence**

Professors who adhered to balanced dietary habits reported significantly higher levels of perceived professional competence compared to those with less balanced diets.

4. **Variation Across Locations**

The distribution of nutritional awareness and dietary habits showed some variation across districts (Bengaluru, Ramanagara, Chintamani, and Chitradurga), likely due to regional socio-economic and lifestyle differences.

5. **Lifestyle and Nutritional Choices**

Lifestyle factors, including workload and accessibility to nutritious food, were identified as critical determinants of the professors' food choices and overall health outcomes.

4.4) Suggestions

1. Nutritional awareness plays a crucial role in enhancing academic performance, suggesting the need for programs that educate professors about the benefits of healthy eating.
2. Socio-economic disparities significantly influence dietary habits, necessitating targeted interventions to ensure equal access to nutritious food options for all socio-economic groups.
3. Maintaining balanced dietary habits positively impacts professional competence, underlining the importance of promoting healthy eating habits within academic institutions.
4. Geographic and demographic factors must be considered when designing nutritional awareness programs, as regional disparities influence food and lifestyle choices.
5. Institutions should address lifestyle-related barriers to healthy eating, such as workload and limited availability of nutritious food, to foster a healthier and more productive academic workforce.

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Annexure-I

Questionnaire

Title: A Study on Food and Nutritional Choices and Their Relative Impact on Academic Performance and Competence Among College Professors

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Section A: Demographics

1. Age:
   - Below 30
   - 31–40
   - 41–50
   - Above 50
2. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other
3. Designation:
   - Assistant Professor
   - Associate Professor

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- Professor

4. Monthly Household Income:

- Less than ₹30,000
- ₹30,000–₹50,000
- ₹50,000–₹70,000
- Above ₹70,000

5. Type of Residence:

- Rural
- Urban
- Semi-Urban

Section B: Nutritional Awareness

6. Rate your agreement with the following statements: *(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree)*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I understand the role of a balanced diet in maintaining good health.					
I am aware of the link between nutrition and cognitive performance.					
I actively seek information on nutrition and healthy eating.					

7. How often do you engage in the following activities? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Activity	1	2	3	4	5
Reading nutritional labels					
Attending health or nutrition seminars					
Consulting health professionals about diet					

Section C: Dietary Choices and Habits

8. How frequently do you consume the following types of food? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

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Food Type	1	2	3	4	5
Traditional food					
Fast food					
Organic food					
Packaged snacks					

9. Rate your agreement with the following statements: *(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree)*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
I prioritize taste over nutritional value when choosing food.					
I skip meals due to work-related constraints.					
I consume healthy meals even during busy schedules.					

10. How often do you consume meals at the following locations? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Location	1	2	3	4	5
Home-cooked meals					
College cafeteria					
Restaurants or takeouts					

Section D: Health and Lifestyle

11. How frequently do you experience the following due to dietary habits? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Symptom	1	2	3	4	5
Fatigue					
Difficulty focusing					
Low productivity					

12. How often do you exercise or engage in physical activity? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Type of Activity	1	2	3	4	5
Walking or jogging					

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| Gym or fitness classes | | | | | |
| Yoga or meditation | | | | | |

13. Rate your stress levels: *(1 - Very Low, 2 - Low, 3 - Moderate, 4 - High, 5 - Very High)*

Section E: Academic Performance and Competence

14. How often does your diet affect your ability to concentrate during lectures? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

15. Rate your agreement with the following statements: *(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree)*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
My diet impacts my energy levels during professional tasks.					
A poor diet affects my productivity and academic competence.					

16. How frequently do you feel the following during teaching? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Feeling	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of energy					
Difficulty engaging students					

Section F: Socio-Economic Factors

17. Rate your agreement with the following statements: *(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree)*

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
Healthy food is affordable for me.					
My financial situation limits my food choices.					
I have access to nutritious food at work and home.					

18. How often do you consider affordability when choosing food? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

19. How frequently do you face the following challenges in accessing nutritious food? *(1 - Never, 2 - Rarely, 3 - Sometimes, 4 - Often, 5 - Always)*

Challenge	1	2	3	4	5
High cost of healthy food					
Limited availability					

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20. **Instructions:** Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5:
(1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly Agree)

Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
A well-balanced diet significantly contributes to my physical and mental energy levels during academic activities.					
My food choices directly influence my focus and concentration while preparing or delivering lectures.					
Skipping meals or consuming unhealthy food negatively affects my productivity and teaching effectiveness.					
Maintaining a nutritious diet enhances my confidence and overall competence as a professor.					
I believe prioritizing healthy eating habits helps me manage work-related stress more effectively.					
I actively make food choices based on their nutritional value to improve my academic performance.					

21.