

A Study on Diet Consciousness of IT Employees

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ABSTRACT- Diet denotes the aggregate of food consumed by a living organism for gaining energy needed for executing the routine activities of life. Diet involves the intake of adequate nutrition which may be oriented towards gaining good health or for managing weight. Human dieting is driven by taste preferences, health consciousness or ethical beliefs. Usually, human beings prefer to take balanced and healthy diet. People in developed nations enjoy the privilege of having adequate wealth to ensure that they get access to healthy diet without any constraint. Limited consumption of processed meat, hot and soft drinks and intake of food originating from plants is healthier. This descriptive study has endeavored to assess the diet consciousness of IT employees in Chennai & Puducherry and the association of such diet consciousness with their nature of weekend food, opinion about outside food, skipping the usual meal pattern and consuming nutritious food. Results reveal that quite a large number of IT employees skip breakfast and prefer home prepared food even during weekends. Green and vegetables are consumed to a better extent than dairy products, eggs, meat and fish by the respondents who enjoy only average level of family support on grounds of them complementing their healthy diet and making them feeling guilty for not consuming healthy diet. Finally, outside food has been rated average by the IT employees on grounds of price, hygiene and quality while they have appreciated its taste.

Keywords: Diet conscious, Family support, Nutrition, Outside food, Skipping meals.

Introduction

Diet denotes the aggregate of food consumed by a living organism for gaining energy needed for executing the routine activities of life. Diet involves the intake of adequate nutrition which may be oriented towards gaining good health or for managing weight. Human dieting is driven by taste preferences, health consciousness or ethical beliefs. Usually, human beings prefer to take balanced and healthy diet. People in developed nations enjoy the privilege of having adequate wealth to ensure that

they get access to healthy diet without any constraint. Limited consumption of processed meat, hot and soft drinks and intake of food originating from plants is healthier.

Importance of Diet

Diet is imperative for the very life. Food intake may be planned to accommodate certain objectives. A person confronting obesity problem may try to take food which burns calories rapidly so that he can save himself from running the risk of being affected by cardiac or diabetes problems (medlineplus.gov,

On the other hand, persons suffering from under-weight have to consume more to gain weight. Both excessive and lesser weight is harmful for health and it is imperative to ensure that weight loss or weight gain is accomplished in a phased manner and not at a rapid pace.

Dieting should be planned such that it doesn't result in eating disorder (medlineplus.gov, 2020) whereby food is consumed neither excessively nor insufficiently.

With advancement, people started attaching prestige to diet. Food has become an integral part of celebrations and gatherings with hotels and food courts offering unique venues for consuming food during occasions (Saul, 1995). Gradually, these venues have become symbols of "global cosmopolitanism and sophisticated myth" (Grazian, 2008).

Pattern of Diet

Usually, people consume food twice or thrice a day (Lhuissier et al., 2012). British doctors advocate food intake thrice a day with an aggregated intake of 1600 to 1800 calories a day. It is imperative to intake 1800-2000 calories of food every day (iloveindia.com) to lead a healthy life.

Sitting at ground and eating is healthier than eating on tables (Brito et al., 2012; Sandy, 2010). Studies have exposed that anxious person with obesity engage in excessive intake of food while those with normal weight start to decrease their food intake (McKenna, 1972).

Persons with obesity are subject to excessive negative emotions than those with normal weight which results in unhealthy consequences (Lowe & Fisher, 1983). The study revealed that college students with obesity tend to consume excessive

snacks rather than food due to the possibility of eating snacks in isolated manner.

Food habits of different species help in maintaining a good ecosystem in the world. Animals feeding on plants in turn act as food for animals which feed on them. Thus, excessive consumption of plants is also restricted. Similarly, food habits of reptiles also help in preserving food crops for human beings.

Pattern of diet of human beings has drastically changed with time due to factors such as changing work and working conditions, differing standard of living and exposure to technology.

Different Forms of Diet

Forms of diet change according to ethical considerations and taste of human beings. Different forms of diet are:

1. Vegan Diet-feeding only on vegetables;
2. Fruitarian Diet-feeding only on fruits;
3. Flexitarian Diet-reduced or restricted feeding on meat;
4. Macro biotism-conscious planning of balanced and ideal diet;
5. Low Calorie Diet-feeding on food yielding minimum calories;
6. Puris diet-excessive feeding on junk food involving high element of fats and glucose;
7. Mediterranean Diet-feeding excessively on fruits & vegetables, moderately on fish and less on meat;
8. Functional Food-feeding on food yielding proper blend of vitamins, proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

It is difficult to conclude about which form of food is healthy and which is not healthy. However, a balanced food with sufficient nutrition is imperative for leading a healthy life.

Considering the importance of diet for a healthy and happy human life, this study has made an attempt to analyse the dieting pattern of IT

employees in Chennai and Puducherry by endeavouring to assess their diet consciousness and associating this diet consciousness with different dieting aspects such as intake of nutritious food, skipping of either of the three daily meals, nature of weekend diet preferred and opinion about taking outside food.

Review of Literature

Manchester and Clauson (1995) have exposed the boosting of food expenses due to intake of outside food while Binkley (2006) has hinted that people prefer outside food not for gaining nutrition.

Nayga and Capps (1986- 1998) have found that certain characteristics such as ethnic affiliation, racism, seasonal variations, size of family, age, earnings and nature of job significantly influence intake of outside food.

Jackson and McDaniel (1985) exposed that working woman had greater inclination towards outside food due to lesser inclination towards self-cooking when compared with the housewives.

Roberts and Wortzel (1979) have also talked about a similar issue and says that employment of more women in the society has increased the intake of outside food among families.

The fourth round of National Family and Health Survey has revealed that Indians spend nearly 50%

Data Analysis

Profile of the Respondents

Of the 669 respondents studied, 26.5% are Married, 72.5% are Unmarried and 1.0% are separated.

Skipping of Regular Meal

of their income on feeding. Consumption of dairy products has augmented while those of meat and green vegetables has decreased. Urban people have more money and hence are taking more diversified food. However, females intake vegetables more while men prefer fish, eggs and meat.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the diet consciousness of IT employees in Chennai and Puducherry;
2. To assess the pattern of diet followed by IT employees in Chennai and Puducherry in the form of nature of weekend diet, consumption of nutritious food, skipping of breakfast, lunch or dinner and their opinion about outside food;
3. To explore the association between diet consciousness of the IT employees in Chennai and Puducherry and their pattern of diet.

Methodology

This research is descriptive in nature, based purely on primary data, collected by administering a structured questionnaire to 669 IT employees residing in Chennai and Puducherry, selected using judgement sampling technique. Data collected were analysed using SPSS 25, employing the statistical tools of Mean, Frequency, ANOVA, Chi-square Analysis, Cluster Analysis and Correspondence Analysis.

The usual diet format is a breakfast in the morning followed by lunch in the noon and dinner in the evening. However, some skip one or two of these. Details about the respondents skipping the normal pattern of diet is displayed in table 1.

Table 1: Skipping of Regular Meal

Meal Skipped	Daily	Occasionally	Never
Breakfast	102	297	270

Lunch	84	192	393
Dinner	86	215	368

Table 1 suggests that breakfast is skipped daily by fewer number of respondents while the three meals are never skipped by quite a large number of respondents. Among the meals, respondents

Usual Weekend Diet

Some have the habit of taking their weekend food outside their home while some may not prefer so.

skipping breakfast daily and occasionally is large in number while those managing not to skip lunch is larger in number.

An attempt has been made to assess the likely weekend diet pattern of the IT employees and the outcome is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Usual Weekend Diet

	Pattern of Diet	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Home prepared	521	77.9
	Restaurant	129	19.3
	Precooked meal	19	2.8
	Total	669	100.0

Table 2 suggests that bulk of the respondents (77.9%) prefer to take homemade food even during weekends while a little under one-fifth of them (19.3%) prefer to spend their weekends on outing

Frequency of Consuming Nutritious Food

The frequency of IT employees consuming nutritious food such as egg, fish, meat, milk, Beverages, fresh juice, fruits and vegetables has

by visiting restaurants for taking food. A very little proportion of the respondents prefer to take pre-prepared food in the form of packed food during the weekends.

been obtained in Likert's five-point scale ranging from never to very often and the outcome is displayed in table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of Consuming Nutritious Food

Food Item	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Dairy Food	3.0643	0.004	-0.808
Vegetables	3.3812	-0.077	-0.944
Fruits	3.1629	0.014	-0.674
Meat	2.9716	-0.025	-0.722
Fish	2.8759	0.110	-0.857
Egg	3.0643	-0.054	-0.774
Green	3.3722	-0.223	-0.727
Beverages	2.4141	0.536	-0.653
Juice	3.0075	0.133	-0.557

Table 3 highlights that the respondents are consuming nutritious food such as dairy products, meat, fish, fruits and eggs only to a moderate extent while they are consuming beverages to a little extent. However, they are consuming vegetables and green to a larger extent as the mean values in respect of the two is around the 3.38 mark.

Grouping Respondents based on their Consumption of a Nutritious Food

Cluster Analysis has been used to group the respondents based on their consumption of nutritious food and the outcome is displayed in table 4.

Table 4: Grouping IT Employees based on their Consumption of a Nutritious Food

Food Item	C1	C2	C3	F	Sig.
Dairy food	2.28	3.65	3.67	181.702	0.000
Vegetables	2.55	3.82	4.41	280.251	0.000
Fruits	2.42	3.63	3.93	212.553	0.000
Meat	2.50	3.98	1.97	366.485	0.000
Fish	2.46	3.86	1.77	240.808	0.000
Egg	2.47	4.00	2.49	292.652	0.000
Green	3.06	3.61	3.60	20.838	0.000
Beverages	2.00	2.93	2.31	47.243	0.000
Juice	2.40	3.51	3.37	125.263	0.000
No. of Cases	288	258	123		

Table 4 highlights the formation of three distinct clusters based on the intake of nutritious food by the respondents. Since the F values in respect of all the statements used to gauge the consumption of nutritious food are significant at one per cent level, it can be said that all the statements play a significant role in the clusterisation process.

The first cluster consists of respondents who are consuming nutritious food to a little extent and hence, this group is labeled as “Less Nutrition Takers”. The second cluster comprise of respondents who are consuming nutritious food to a large and moderate extent and hence, this group is designated as “Moderate Nutrition Takers”. The

third cluster comprise of respondents who are consuming some nutritious food to a large extent while some other food to a little extent. Hence, this cluster is named as “Better Nutrition Takers”. The three clusters encompass 288, 258 and 123 respondents respectively.

Family Support Available to Facilitate Consumption of Nutritious Food

Good family support is imperative to enable consumption of nutritious diet. Availability of support from family for the IT employees to enable them consume nutritious food has been obtained in Likert’s five-point scale and the outcome is highlighted in table 5.

Table 5: Family Support Available to Facilitate Consumption of Nutritious Food

Statement	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Family members compliment my actions towards a healthy diet	3.12	0.312	-0.723
Family members makes me feel guilty for not eating healthy food	3.09	0.199	-0.646
Family members takes care of my healthy diet	3.52	-0.176	-0.627
Family members brings healthy food for me to try	3.63	-0.151	-0.717

Table 5 suggests that the respondents enjoy average support from their family in respect of family members complementing their healthy diet and making them feel guilty for not consuming healthy

diet. However, the respondents are enjoying reasonably good element of support from their family members in respect of them taking care of healthy diet and making available healthy food.

Grouping the IT employees based on Availability of Family Support for Healthy Diet

enjoyed by them from their family members in offering healthy food and the outcome is portrayed in table 6.

Cluster Analysis has been used to group the IT employees into three groups based on the support

Table 6: Grouping the IT Employees based on Availability of Family Support for Healthy Diet

Statement	C1	C2	C3	F	Sig.
Family members Compliment my actions towards a healthy diet	2.96	2.44	4.10	254.587	0.000
Family members makes me feel guilty for not eating healthy food	2.49	2.58	4.22	380.619	0.000
Family members Takes care of my healthy diet	4.10	2.61	4.12	398.301	0.000
Family members Brings healthy food for me to try	4.23	2.85	4.08	268.024	0.000
No. of Cases	184	266	219		

Table 6 highlights the formation of three distinct clusters based on the support available for the respondents from their family members in taking nutritious food. All the statements used to gauge such support play a significant role in the clusterisation process as the F values are significant at one per cent level.

The three clusters so formed are designated as “Moderately Supported Group”, “Mildly Supported Group” and “Highly Supported Group”, each encompassing 184, 266 and 219 respondents respectively.

Nature of Association between Marital Status of the IT employees and Family Support available to them

them on dieting has been explored using correspondence analysis and the outcome is displayed in Figure 1.

The nature of association between marital status of the IT employees and family support available to



Figure 1: Nature of Association between Marital Status of the IT employees and Family Support available to them

Figure 1 shows that married persons do not enjoy any support from their family members regarding

the dieting while unmarried people are moderately and highly supported

RATING OUTSIDE FOOD

The IT employees were required to rate the different aspects pertaining food available from

outside in a Likert's five-point scale and the outcome is displayed in table 7.

Table 7: RATING OUTSIDE FOOD

Aspect	Mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Quality	3.2466	-0.270	0.397
Hygiene	3.0688	-0.161	0.125
Taste	3.7309	-0.814	0.178
Price	3.0583	-0.395	0.029

Table 7 highlights that the respondents have indicated that the taste of food available outside is pretty good but they have rated the other characteristics of hygiene, price and quality as average.

Grouping IT employees based on their Rating of Outside Food

The IT employees studied have been grouped based on their rating of outside food using Cluster Analysis and the outcome is showcased in table 8.

Table 8: Grouping IT employees based on their Rating of Outside Food

Feature of Outside Food	C1	C2	C3	F	Sig.
Quality	3.86	3.06	1.91	368.258	0.000
Hygiene	3.78	2.80	1.77	436.056	0.000
Taste	4.25	3.63	2.36	301.037	0.000
Price	3.79	2.71	2.01	267.054	0.000

Table 8 showcases the formation of three distinct clusters based on the rating of respondents about outside food and all the four statements used to gauge the rating play a significant role in the clusterisation process as the F values in respect of all the statements are significant at one per cent level.

The three clusters have been designated as "Highly Appreciating Group", "Moderately Appreciating

Group" and "Critical Group", each engulfing 265, 326 and 182 respondents respectively.

Diet Consciousness among Respondents

The level of diet consciousness among the IT employees surveyed has been obtained in Likert's five-point scale and the outcome is displayed in table 9.

Table 9: Diet Consciousness among IT employees

Statement	Mean	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
I strictly follow food timings	2.96	0.027	0.094	-.410	.189
I maintain a strict diet	2.60	0.216	0.094	-.394	.189
I ensure that I am getting adequate nutrition from my food	3.06	-0.180	0.094	-.247	.189
I derive fullest satisfaction from my food	3.30	-0.172	0.094	-.388	.189
I avoid some food for health reasons	2.82	0.097	0.094	-.888	.189

Table 9 indicates that the respondents are diet conscious to an average extent as the mean in respect of all the statements used to gauge their diet consciousness revolve around the 2.6 to 3.3 in five-point scale.

Grouping the IT employees based on their Diet Consciousness

Cluster Analysis has been used to group the IT employees based on their diet consciousness and the outcome is displayed in table 10.

Table 10: Grouping the IT employees based on their Diet Consciousness

Statement	C1	C2	C3	F	Sig.
I strictly follow food timings	2.91	4.09	2.05	297.490	0.000
I maintain a strict diet	2.46	3.71	1.86	262.932	0.000
I ensure that I am getting adequate nutrition from my food	3.08	4.09	2.10	354.932	0.000
I derive fullest satisfaction from my food	3.38	4.17	2.39	205.716	0.000
I avoid some food for health reasons	2.88	3.94	1.74	262.597	0.000
No. of Cases	327	160	182		

Table 10 suggests that three distinct clusters have been formed on the basis of level of diet consciousness among the respondents. All statements used to gauge the level of diet consciousness among the respondents play a significant role in the clusterisation process as the F values in respect of all the statements are significant at one percent level. The three clusters so formed have been designated based on the mean values in respect of the clusters as “Insignificantly Diet Conscious Group”, “Diet Conscious Group” and “Diet Unconscious Group”, each encompassing

327, 160 and 182 respondents respectively. Hence, 182 respondents are not diet conscious which is quite a large number.

Association between Diet Consciousness and Different Aspects of Dieting

The nature of association prevalent between diet consciousness of IT employees and different aspects of their dieting such as skipping meal, nature of weekend diet, family support available for dieting and consumption of nutritious diet has been explored using Correspondence Analysis and the outcome is displayed in figures 2-8.

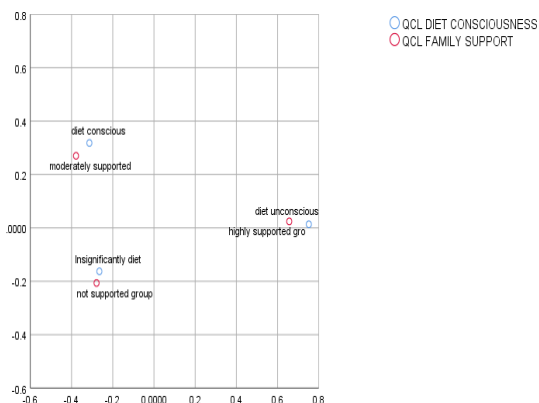


Fig 2: Diet Consciousness and Availability

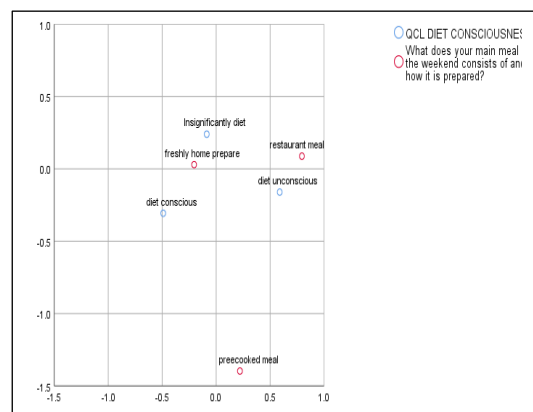


Fig 3: Diet Consciousness and Weekend

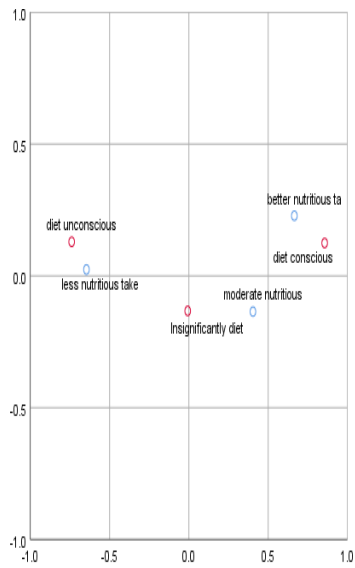


Fig 4: Diet Consciousness and Consumption of Nutritious Food

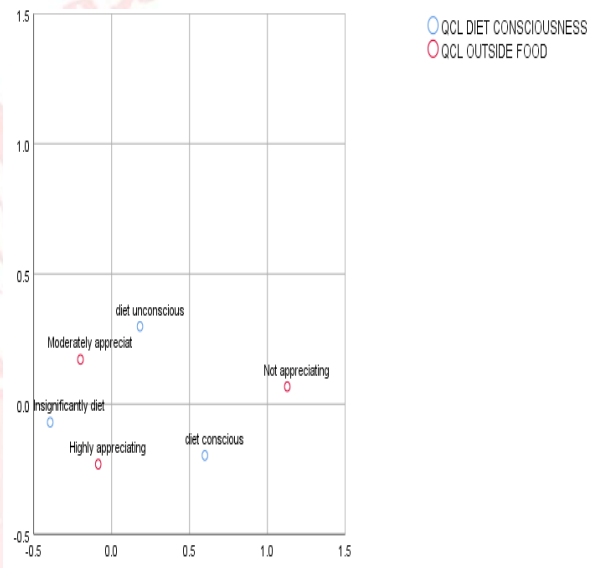


Fig 5: Diet Consciousness and Rating of Outside Food

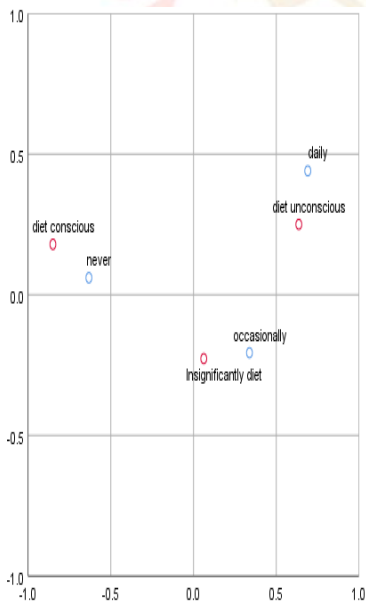


Fig 6: Diet Consciousness and Skipping Breakfast



Fig 7: Diet Consciousness and Skipping Lunch

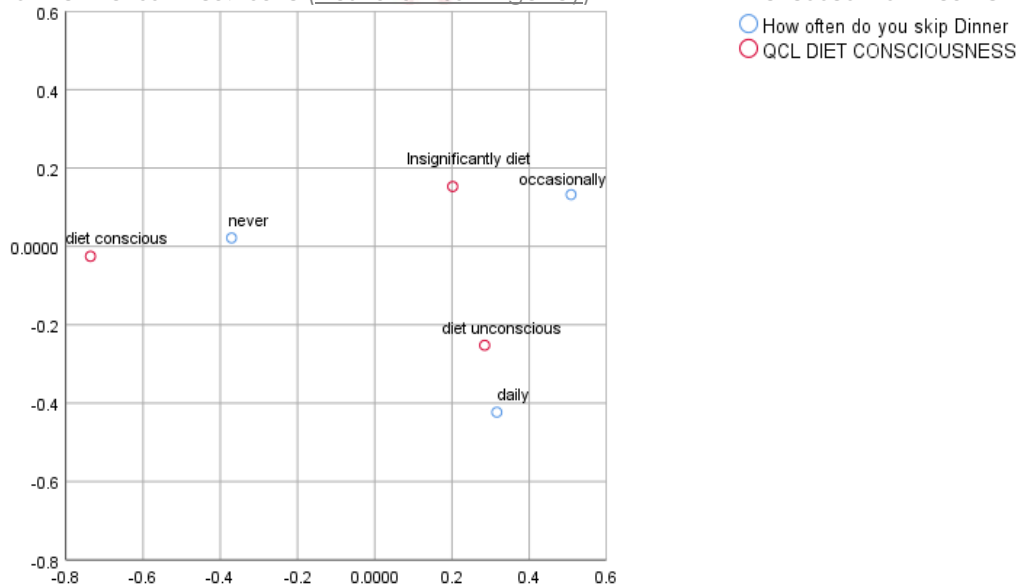


Fig 8: Diet Consciousness and Skipping Dinner

Figures 2-8 showcase that People who are diet conscious never skip breakfast, lunch or dinner while those who are insignificantly diet conscious occasionally skip breakfast, lunch and dinner and those who are diet unconscious skip breakfast, lunch or dinner daily.

Further, it is the diet unconscious people who are consuming less nutritious food and prefer restaurant food during weekends despite enjoying good support from their family members regarding diet and having an average level of appreciation about outside food. Further, the diet conscious people prefer homemade food even during weekends despite enjoying moderate support from their family members regarding dieting. Insignificantly Diet Conscious People consume moderately nutritious food and prefer Home Prepared Food during weekends and do not enjoy support from their family members regarding their diet which might have contributed to their appreciation of outside food.

Large number of IT employees are not skipping the three meals which is a good healthy sign. However, there are quite a large number of respondents skipping breakfast which is highly injurious for health. Medical practitioners advocate the intake of heavy breakfast compared with the other two forms of meals as this will keep the body fresh and ready for the daily routine work.

More than three-fourth of the IT employees prefer taking home food during weekends while almost one-fifth of them prefer to take outside food. Weekends are usually spent by IT employees going outside with their families and they could not take home food while going on an outing. Hence, preferring outside food during weekends is quite understandable. However, considering the health hazards associated with outside food, people should be discouraged from taking outside food unless it is absolutely inevitable.

The IT employees surveyed are consuming vegetables and green to a larger extent than eggs, fish or meat. Consuming vegetables and green are absolutely nutritious and harmless. However, IT

Summary of Findings and Suggestions

employees should be educated about the importance of taking eggs, fish, meat and milk in their regular food. The fear of adulteration and unfair practices by the traders to enable chicken to gain more weight through steroids and similar practices of injecting in cows to increase their milk yield may have injected an element of fear in the minds of IT employees about consuming meat, eggs and milk. Government must enact tough and strict legislations to prevent such adulteration and unfair trade practices. It is hereby advocated that all those indulging in such harmful practices should be booked under the Indian Penal Code under the "Attempt to Murder" charge and punished heavily for the offence.

The fact that there are 288 IT employees with lesser quantum of nutrition intake is not all that good trend. Lesser intake of milk, eggs and fish contributes to such low intake of nutritious food. The fear about these food items as hinted in the prior discussion is the major reason for this undesirable scenario and it is the responsibility of the law makers to ensure that unfair trade practices are totally eradicated in the food industry.

Support available from family members to the IT employees in respect of enjoying nutritious food is only average level on grounds of them complementing their healthy diet and making them feeling guilty for not consuming healthy diet. However, family members are making all possible efforts to ensure that healthy food is available at home. With both the spouses working, finding time for complementing the dieting pattern for them is quite difficult. Results justifies this point as married persons lack family support regarding dieting. However, it is inevitable for the family members to allocate some time and complement each other to ensure that healthy food is consumed by all the family members.

The fact that IT employees have rated taste of outside food is good clearly suggests that food prepared in hotels are tasty but not hygienic and qualitative. Hotel food is obviously costly as the hotels have to include the cost of infrastructure, GST and huge profit margin in the price of food offered. However, IT employees should think whether they should spend huge money just for pleasure and then repent heavily due to the dire consequences associated with the unhygienic hotel food.

Diet consciousness among the IT employees surveyed is only to an average extent which is a cause of concern. 160 of the IT employees surveyed have good degree of diet consciousness while 182 are diet unconscious which is a worrying finding. This signifies the importance of media and educational institutions to inculcate awareness among the people and students about nutritious and healthy food. Without health, future India will struggle without healthy manpower to carry forward the process of development.

Diet unconscious IT employees skip either of the three meals which is a dangerous signal about the future of healthy India.

Insignificantly Diet Conscious IT employees constitute larger proportion of the respondents surveyed. They consume moderately nutritious food and prefer Home Prepared Food during weekends despite rating outside food as better. They do not enjoy support from their family members regarding their diet which might have contributed to their appreciation of outside food.

Conclusion

Many interesting and important observations have emerged from this study. The most important point is that fear of IT employees to consume eggs, meat and milk due to adulteration and other unfair trade practices have to be given due consideration.

Traders should have good element of social responsibility and ensure that they are not harming the health of their own fellow humans for the sake of earning huge profits. If they do not realize their responsibility, then it is the responsibility of the government to enforce sense of responsibility among the traders to ensure that a healthy and happy India emerge.

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