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A STUDY ON FOOD CHOICE AND HEALTH OUTCOMES OF IT PROFESSIONALS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract

Work culture, marked by long hours, long stretches of work, sedentary habits, and high levels of stress, significantly modified the food preferences and physical conditions of IT professionals in Chennai. This study is designed to examine the most significant queries pertaining to food choice-making in relation to health dilemmas-like obesity, metabolic disorders, and their correlates among IT workers. Lifestyle and workplace factors were studied to find out whether any regularity exists in the dietary habits and the possible role played by digital food delivery mechanisms and corporate wellness programs. The findings of the study will shed light on the way forward for organizations and policymakers and would provide health practitioners with guidance to promote better eating habits and increased the well-being of IT professionals in Chennai.

Keywords: Food Preferences, IT Professionals, Health Challenges, Lifestyle, Workplace Nutrition

1. INTRODUCTION

In the tech-buzz world, where everyone's racing for speed and productivity, food is just a breeze-people can either grab a bite, order takeout or sometimes, they might forget entirely about eating as they sucked into work. With this laid-back, attitude towards food, people stuff themselves with junk food, which is almost all processed and unhealthy, finding their caffeine drinks become a constant in keeping them awake. This causes them issues like bloating, weight gain, diabetes and hypertension and stress related disorders. Many of the professionals knows the importance of a balanced diet ,workplace demands and lifestyle constraints make it difficult to main healthy eating habit. This study helps to know the preference of food, Lifestyle and health factor will promote nutrition and wellbeing in the Industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Divine, Richard L., & Lepisto, Lawrence. (2005) conducted a study on licensed drivers to explore consumer segmentation based on healthy and unhealthy lifestyles using cluster analysis. The study revealed significant differences between these segments, terms of fruit and vegetable consumption and exercise frequency. The healthier segment was characterized by older, female, and more educated individuals. The research highlighted the importance of targeting older consumers in the health and fitness market, as their lifestyle choices indicate substantial potential.

Ganster, Daniel C., & Rosen, Christopher C. (2013) examined work stress and well-being through the allostatic load model, which outlines the cumulative physiological impact of chronic stress. This model integrates perspectives from management, applied psycho and biological sciences to assess how continuous exposure to psychosocial stressors at work affects health. It highlights stress hormones and psychological responses as primary mediators, cardiovascular and metabolic markers as secondary mediators, and chronic diseases such as cardiovascular conditions and depression as tertiary outcomes.

Gubler, Timothy, Larkin, Ian, & Pierce, Lamar. (2018) identified mechanisms through which firms can enhance productivity by implementing formal programs that support employees in tracking and improving their health and wellness. The study found that the impact of such programs on productivity depends on an employee&;initial health status and subsequent improvements. Employees who advanced their health, irrespective of their preliminary condition, skilled a productiveness growth of about 10%. The studies shows that reaching long-time period productiveness profits calls for sustained guide for worker wellbeing in preference to depending entirely on short-time period interventions.

Jung, Ji-Eun, & Kim, Sung-Eun. (2020) conducted a study on IT workers in Gyeonggi, South Korea, to explore the relationship between job stress, health functional food (HFF) selection attributes, and consumption values. The study found that lower job stress was linked to a greater emphasis on the ingredients and efficacy of HFFs, while higher stress was associated with valuing HFFs for their differentiation. Functional and emotional values were identified as mediators in the relationship between job stress and HFF selection. The research suggests that reducing job stress through education could enhance these values and support better HFF choices.

Kaimal, Dr. Lekshmi S. (2020) explored the consumption patterns and lifestyle influences of IT professionals in Kerala. The study revealed that these professionals, who generally have a higher socio-economic status, engage in significant consumerism and brand preference. They choose plastic cash for comfort and think about purchasing as a entertainment activity. Shopping department shops and supermarkets are famous amongst them because of their comfort, discounts, and extra amenities. The observe highlighted that branded gadgets are used repute symbols, reflecting a broader fashion of linking non-public identification and socio-monetary repute with intake patterns.

Maderazo, Lannder A., Rivero, Clarence C., & Zara, Bryan Chester B. (2024) conducted a study on consumers in Rosario, Batangas, who watch food vlogs featuring local restaurants and food establishments. They found that the attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise vloggers play a significant role in establishing credibility and influencing consumers restaurant choices and food selections. The study highlighted the importance of high-quality content and genuine passion for food in shaping consumer decisions.

Sabiha Samad et al. (2022) identified several issues with food consumption tracking apps,including inadequate automatic food recognition, limited food databases, and a lack of evidence-based features. The study emphasized the need for improved automation, richer databases, and greater involvement from dietitians and health experts to enhance app accuracy

and reliability. While & quot; Foodvisor & quot; was noted for its advanced recognition capabilities, it still requires further development.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Chennai has emerged as IT professional hub in recent years with most of employees are working with long hours in high-pressure settings. As a result balanced diets are frequently replaced by convenience fast food is used as a temporary solution and meals are skipped making healthy eating a secondary concern. The cost of this way of life is high. IT workers in the city are increasingly reporting weight gain, digestive issues exhaustion and health problems related to stress. Its obvious that stress at work and inactivity contribute to this but its unclear how exactly daily food choices affect their health. There is not much research on how IT workers eating habits will influence their health despite the growing concern. Without this knowledge businesses healthcare professionals and people themselves find it challenging to make meaningful changes in their lifestyles. Thus this study is needed to know IT workers dietary preferences and health outcomes.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the food habits and eating patterns of IT professionals in Chennai.
2. To know the most important factors influence food decisions
3. To find out the health issues faced by IT professionals

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research method has adopted for the study. Primary as well as secondary data sources have been employed. Stratified random sampling technique was employed. A sample of 320 respondents has been selected to make the data reliable as well as representative.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1: Demographic profile

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender			
Male	199	62	62
Female	121	38	100
Total	320	100	
Designation			
Entry	42	13	13
Midlevel	155	48	61
Senior	123	39	100
Total	320	100	
Income			
Below 30000	85	27	27
30000-80000	142	29	71
Above 80000	93	44	100
Total	320	100	

Source: Primary data

It is found that majority of the respondents are 62% are male and rest of them are female.48% the respondents are belong to mid level position followed by senior level and entry level respectively.44% respondents are belong to the category of above income group of 80000 and rest are 29% and 27% respectively.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Food Choices and Lifestyle of IT Employees

Factors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Healthy Food Options	320	2.5667	0.9951
Online Food Ordering	320	1.9102	0.9671
Work Pressure Impact on Food Choice	320	2.9867	1.1824
Impact of Work Timings on Diet Routine	320	1.9300	1.1211
Stress-Induced Unhealthy Eating	320	2.7733	1.1721

Health Issues	320	1.9000	1.3420
Lack of Physical Activity	320	2.7867	1.1681

Source: Primary data

It is inferred that Work pressure impact on Food choice, stress induced unhealthy eating and Lack of physical Activity has higher mean values i.e.(2.9867,2.7733,2.7867) and standard deviation are 1.1824,,1.17214,1.1681 that it cause unhealthy food choice and lifestyle of IT employees.

Table 3: Reliability statistics

	Cronbach's alpha (standardized)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Convenience	0.945	0.948	0.859
Price	0.957	0.960	0.888
Quality	0.951	0.955	0.875
Taste	0.944	0.947	0.857
Work schedule	0.952	0.954	0.875

Source: Primary data

It is inferred that all values are above 0.7 which meas it has high internal Consistency, strong construct reliability and average variance extract are 0.5 indicates good convergent validity

Table 3.1: Standardized factor loading

	Convenience	Price	Quality	Taste	Work Schedule
C1-Quick platforms food	0.907				
C2-Quickly prepared food	0.972				
C3-Ready to ead food	0.900				
P1-Budget food		0.924			
P2-Value for money		0.978			
P3-High price high quality		0.924			
Q1-Fresh and quality			0.893		
Q2-Check reviews			0.982		
Q3-High quality			0.929		
T1-Consider taste				0.907	
T2-Priority to taste				0.969	
T3-Try new food				0.900	

Ws1-Skip food					0.928
Ws2-Eat snacks					0.970
Ws3-Affect balanced diet					0.907

Source: Primary data

All the variables are >0.89 on their respective factors, which indicate good construct validity. Consumers have a strong importance to convenience. Consumers are value-conscious and high price relates to best quality, and they associate food quality with freshness and quality assurance before making a choice. Taste is an important factor while selecting food. Hectic work schedule negatively impacts eating habits results in skipping meals and depending on eating snacks.
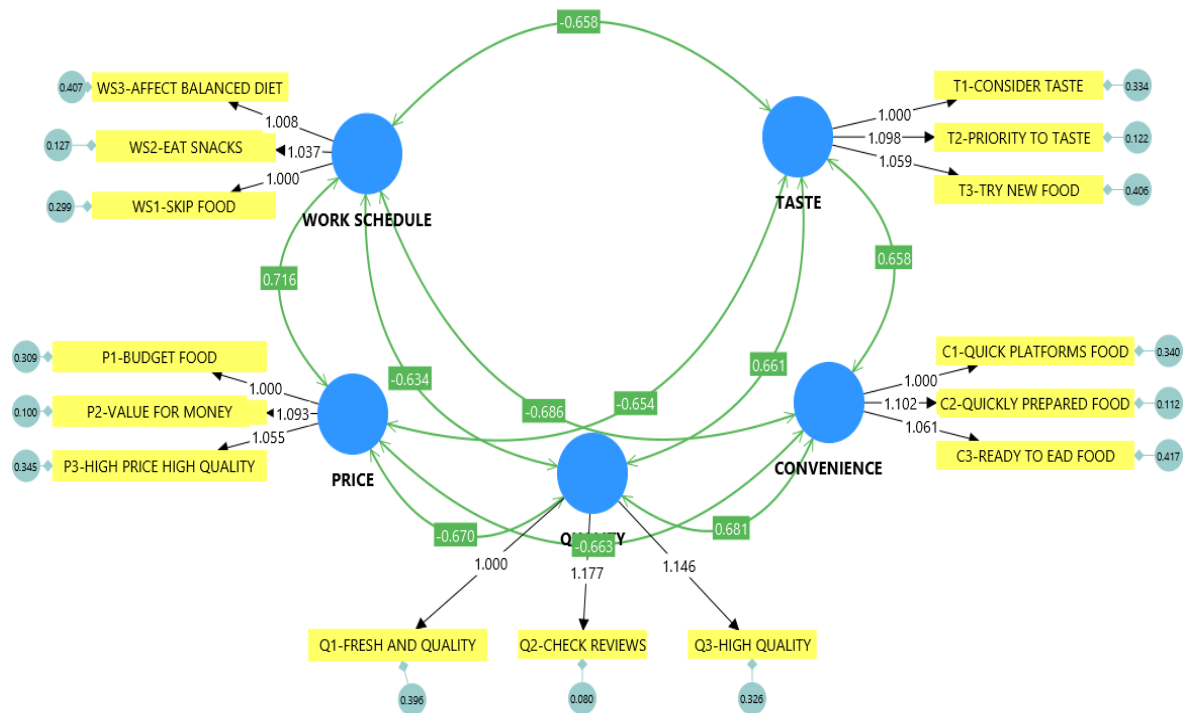
All loadings above 0. 89 indicate high construct validity for the model. Work schedules decrease taste consideration (−0. 658) but increase price sensitivity (0. 716) and preference for convenience (0. 658). Consumers on a budget have concerns about the convenience (−0. 634) and quality of inexpensive food (−0. 670). Taste influences convenience (0. 661) but has a negative correlation with perceived quality (−0. 670), indicating that delicious food is not always associated with superior quality.
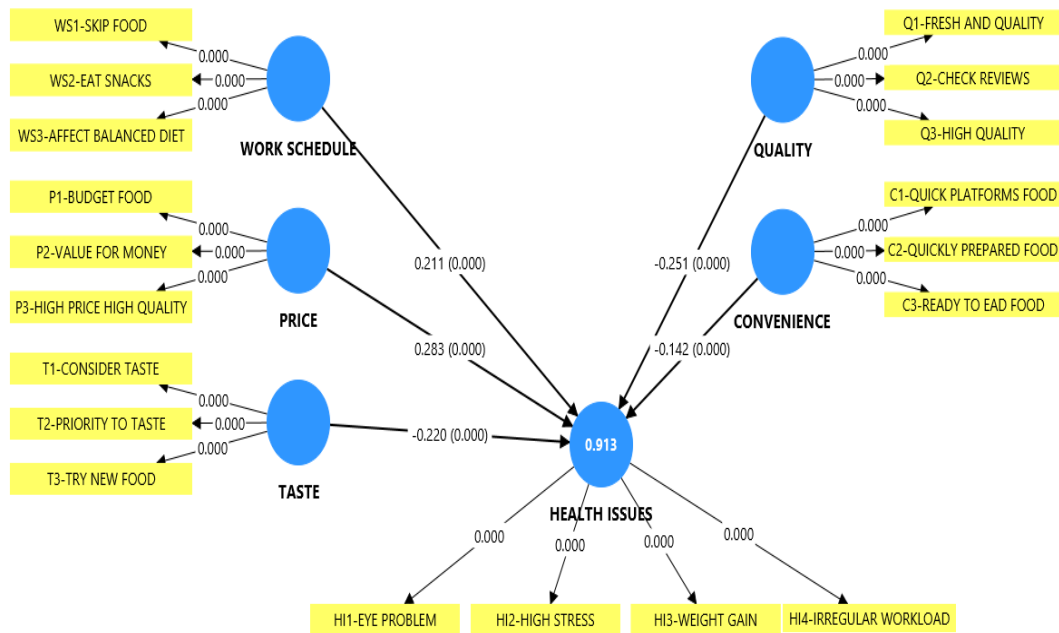
Quality, taste and convenience decrease health issues while price and work schedule have a positive impact according to the model (R2 = 0. 913). This shows that while overwork and cost-consciousness increase health risks, eating wholesome, delicious and convenient food helps reduce them.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

- A majority of the respondents were male and rest are 38% female. Most participants were at the mid-level position and remaining are 13% are entry level
- 44% of the IT professionals are earned above ₹80,000 and rest are below ₹30,000.
- The primary causes of unhealthy eating among IT workers are high work pressure, lack of exercise and stress.
- The reliability analysis shows high internal consistency across all constructs-convenience price quality taste and work schedule-with Cronbach's Alpha values over 0.94 and AVE values over 0.003
- IT professionals prioritize taste when choosing meals place a high value on convenience and believe that higher prices correspond to higher quality.
- The work schedule has a major impact on healthy eating habits, causing people to skip meals, snack, and have unbalanced diets.

- Budget oriented consumers concern about quality, convenience and inexpensive food option.
- Convenience is positively correlated with taste (0.661), but perceived food quality is negatively correlated (0.670), indicating that tasty food is not always considered high quality.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➢ Cafeteria should offer healthy options for meals that include salads, whole grains, and protein.
- ➢ Flexible lunch breaks should be imposed so that employees have time to take their balanced meal.
- ➢ Food delivery platforms should highlight healthy meal options and provide nutritional information for making better decisions
- ➢ Stress management strategies such as meditation, yoga, and breaks should be promoted to prevent emotional eating.
- ➢ Corporate has to encourage work-life balance policies, including flexible work hours and regular breaks to reduce stress-induced unhealthy eating.

9. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study provides valuable insights into the impact of work pressure, stress, and lifestyle on the food choices and health of IT professionals in Chennai, however there remains significant scope for further exploration. The researcher could expand geographically by involving IT professionals from other cities or regions to determine regional variations in dietary behavior and work-life challenges.

10. CONCLUSION

The study focuses on the critical effects of work pressure, stress-induced unhealthy eating habits, and physical inactivity on the food choices and well-being of the IT professionals. Replies pointed out that overwork, job stress, and workplace constraints pave the way for unhealthy eating habits and a sedentary lifestyle. It focuses that workplace wellness programs, promoting healthy eating in cafeterias, mandating that employees engage in some physical activity, and sponsoring a work-life balance.

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