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Constraints experienced by youngsters in millet consumption in Parbhani district

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Abstract

This study was conducted in the Parbhani district of Maharashtra to investigate the attitudes of youngsters aged 15-29 years towards millet consumption. Three tehsils, Parbhani, Manwat, and Gangakhed, were selected randomly. A total of twelve villages were chosen, and ten participants were purposively selected from each village, resulting in a sample size of 120 individuals. An ex post facto research design was employed for the study. For data analysis, various statistical tools, including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation, were utilized.

Most of the participants (57.50%) belonged to the young teenage group (21-25 years), followed by 25% in the young adult group (26 and above), and (17.50%) were aged upto 20 years. Most of the participants (59.16%) were graduates, followed by 33.33% with high school education and (7.5%) with middle-level education. A larger proportion of participants were male (70.83%), while 29.16% were female. 55.83% of participants belonged to nuclear families, while (21.66%) with large families. Most of the participants (59.16%) had medium annual income (Rs1,53,043-4,82,957), followed by (22.50%) in the high-income category and (18.33%) in the low-income group. In terms of media exposure, (58.33%) had medium exposure, (40.83%) had high exposure, and only (1.2%) had low exposure. 28.33% of participants' parents were engaged in farming, followed by farming + business (21.66%) and private jobs (18.33%). About social participation, 25% were members of single organisation, 30% were members of more than one organisation, and 45% were office holders.

As for their attitude towards millet consumption, the majority (57.50%) of the participants showed a moderately favourable attitude, (25.83%) had a less favourable attitude, and (16.66%) had a highly favourable attitude. A positive and significant relationship was found between age, mass media exposure, and social participation with the attitude of youngsters. Other variables such as education, gender, family type, family size, parental occupation, and annual income exhibited a positive but non-significant relationship.

The major constraints reported in millet consumption were the high cost of millets compared to cereals (100%), cultural preferences (95.83%), unappealing taste and texture (81.66%), limited recipes and cooking methods (80.83%), lack of marketing (30.83%), and poor availability in local markets (13.33%).

Objectives

- 1) To identify constraints experienced by youngsters in millet consumption.

Keywords: Attitude, youngsters, millet, consumption

Introduction

In the context of the pandemic and the increasing prevalence of junk food, embracing healthy eating habits has become crucial. Millets are gaining popularity as a nutritious option. Traditionally, the populations of central and southern India relied heavily on millets as a staple food until the Green Revolution shifted preference towards rice and wheat. These grains have been cultivated and consumed in the Indian subcontinent for approximately 5,000 years. Often labeled as "poor man's food grain" due to their affordability, millets have recently caught the attention of health-conscious individuals who are discovering their wellness benefits.

Significant varieties of millets grown and consumed in India include sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet (ragi), foxtail millet (kangni), kodo millet (kodo), proso millet (cheena), barnyard millet (sawan), and little millet (kutki). Millets are recognized as an ideal food due to their high nutritional value.

They are rich in proteins, minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants, and are considered non-glutinous and non-acidic in comparison to other cereals, leading to their classification as 'nutritious millets' or 'nutri-cereals.' For instance, pearl millet and finger millet provide protein amounts of 11.8g and 7.4g per 100g of grain, respectively, and contain about 1.3g of fat per 100g.

These grains are also abundant in essential amino acids, niacin, beta-carotene, and offer several health advantages, including anti-diabetic and anti-tumor properties, as well as benefits concerning atherosclerosis. Known for their resilience, millets require minimal water for cultivation, making them well-suited for dry conditions. Rich in dietary fiber (both soluble and insoluble), millets contribute to maintaining digestive health. A 100-gram (3 ½ ounce) serving of raw millet delivers around 1,580 KJ of energy and serves as an excellent source of protein,

fiber, B vitamins, and dietary minerals, particularly manganese, at 76%. The composition of raw millet includes approximately 9% water, 73% carbohydrates, 4% fat, and 11% protein. In South India, common millets include Ragi, Bajra, Green millet, Foxtail millet, Sorghum, Kodo millet, and barnyard millet. The decline in millet consumption can be attributed to an over-reliance on rice and wheat, which contribute to more than 50% of the average caloric intake in Indian households. Recently, significant shifts in dietary preferences towards high-value food items such as livestock products, fruits, vegetables, and beverages have been noted. Millets are particularly vital in rainfed regions, which account for 60% of the total agricultural area, as they are drought-resistant and nutritionally rich, especially the minor millet varieties.

Table 1: Millet Nutrition Table: Protein, Fibre, and Minerals. (per 100 g)

Millet	Protein (g)	Fibre (g)	Calcium (g)	Iron (g)	Phosphorous (mg)	Magnesium (mg)	Zinc (mg)	Potassium (mg)
Finger Millet (Ragi)	7.3	18.3	344	3.9	283	137	2.3	408
Pearl millet (Bajra)	10.6	11.5	42	8.0	296	137	3.1	307
Sorghum (jowar)	10.4	9.7	25	4.1	222	133	1.6	363
Foxtail millet	12.3	8.0	31	2.8	290	81	2.4	250
Little millet	9.7	7.6	17	9.3	220	114	1.7	210
Kodo millet	8.3	9.0	27	0.5	188	114	1.5	188
Barnyard millet	11.2	10.1	11	5.0	280	80	1.5	168
Proso millet	12.5	2.2	14	0.8	206	110	1.1	195

1.2 Promotion of millets by the Government

The Government of India is actively promoting millets (Shree Anna) through a multi-stakeholder approach under the International Year of Millets 2023. Key initiatives include the Sub-Mission on Nutri-Cereals under NFSM across 28 States and 2 UTs, with support for production technologies, certified seeds, demonstrations, and farmer trainings. States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Odisha have launched Millet Missions. Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), seed hubs, and Centres of Excellence like IIMR Hyderabad are being developed. Millets are integrated into schemes like Poshan Abhiyan, ICDS, Mid-Day Meal, and TPDS. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing PLISMBP and PMFME to support millet-based startups. Millets are promoted through events like the Global Millets Conference and India's G20 presidency. Vending machines for millet products are installed via NAFED in government offices, and all departments are advised to serve millet-based foods. Millets have been identified as One District One Product (ODOP) in 19 districts, and an Export Promotion Forum is established to boost global trade.

1.3 Youngsters of India

The youth demographic represents one of the most essential segments of the population. During this stage of life, individuals realise their maximum potential, which is crucial for the overall development of a nation. Young people embody the present dynamic of a country, playing a pivotal role in enhancing and solidifying socio-economic progress. The key challenge lies in harnessing their inherent abilities to escape the cycle of poverty and to generate meaningful development and livelihood opportunities that empower them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives. There remains significant potential to amplify the contributions of this segment of society by boosting their labour force engagement and productivity levels. For the purposes of this study, youth is defined as individuals aged 15 to 29 years, consistent with the "National Youth Policy, 2014" set forth by the Government of India. This age group represents

approximately 27.5% of the total population and accounts for about 34% of the nation's Gross National Income (GNI).

1.4 Millet consumption in India

The assessment of millet consumption by ICAR-IIMR clearly shows that approximately 75% of sorghum production is devoted to self-consumption, significantly fulfilling human dietary needs. Additionally, around 12% of sorghum is effectively utilised as animal feed, while another 8% is skillfully processed into value-added products for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs). Furthermore, about 5% of sorghum is utilised in alcohol production, with the remainder confidently exported as both grains and value-added products. When examining bajra (pearl millet), it is evident that around 70% is specifically allocated for direct human consumption, while 15% serves as animal feed, and 10% is used in breweries to produce alcohol. Approximately 5% of bajra is dedicated to value-added processing, and about 1% is reserved for seed production and multiplication. Ragi showcases a similar consumption pattern to sorghum, with about 75% of its production being directly consumed by humans. Nearly 13% of ragi is allocated for animal feed, while its export share remains modest at about 1%. This data highlights the significant role these millets play in both human nutrition and agricultural practices.

2. Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in the Parbhani district of Maharashtra, selecting three talukas: Parbhani, Manwat, and Gangakhed at random. From each taluka, four villages were also randomly selected, resulting in a total of twelve villages. Within each village, ten participants were purposefully chosen, leading to a total sample size of 120 individuals. An ex-post facto research design was employed to examine the attitudes of youngsters towards millet consumption. A structured interview schedule, aligned with the study's objectives, was developed and utilized for data collection via personal interviews. The independent variables analyzed included age, education, gender,

family type, family size, annual income, parental occupation, mass media exposure, and social participation. The dependent variable was the attitude of youngsters towards millet consumption. The data collected were processed and analyzed

using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 2: Constraints faced by youngsters in millet Consumption.

Sr. No.	Statements	Frequency	Percentage	Ranking
1	High cost compared to cereals and grains	120	100	I
2	Cultural preferences for cereals and grains	115	95.83	II
3	Unappealing texture and taste	98	81.66	III
4	Limited recipes and cooking methods	97	80.83	IV
5	Lack of marketing	37	30.83	V
6	Lack of easy access to the local market	16	13.33	VI

The constraints in the present study has been defined as difficulties encountered by the youngsters in millet consumption, which are presented in Table 2. The constraints encountered by youngsters in millet consumption were assessed and ranked based on frequency and percentage. The most prominent constraint reported was the high cost of millets compared to cereals and other grains, cited by 100% of the participants. This was followed by cultural preferences for cereals, which influenced the dietary choices of 95.83% of the participants.

Further, unappealing texture and taste (81.66%) and limited availability of recipes and cooking methods (80.83%) were also identified as significant sensory and culinary barriers. Marketing-related constraints were evident, with 30.83% of the participants indicating a lack of promotional efforts as a limitation. Lastly, limited access to millets in local markets was reported by 13.33%, ranking lowest among the listed constraints.

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