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Attitude of youngsters towards millet consumption in Parbhani district

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Parbhani district of Maharashtra with the aim to study the attitude of youngsters (15-29 years) towards millet consumption. Three tehsils, Parbhani, Manwat, and Gangakhed, were chosen randomly. A total of twelve villages were chosen, and from each village, ten participants were purposively chosen, constituting a sample size of 120 participants. The research design adopted was ex post facto. Statistical tools like frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation were used for data analysis.

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%).

Keywords: Attitude, youngsters, millet, consumption

Introduction

In the context of the pandemic and the rising prevalence of junk food, maintaining a healthy diet has become increasingly important. Millets are gaining popularity as dietary options. In central and southern India, millet was once a staple food that was regularly consumed until the Green Revolution shifted preferences towards more accessible grains like rice and wheat. For over 5,000 years, millets have been significant crops in the Indian subcontinent. Historically dubbed as the poor man's food grain due to their affordability, millets are now being recognized by health-conscious youth who are discovering their nutritional benefits. Key varieties of millets cultivated and consumed in India include sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet, foxtail millet, kodo millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, and little millet. Millets are esteemed for their high nutritional value. They are rich in proteins, minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants, and are known for being non-glutinous and less acid-forming compared to other grains, earning them the classification of nutritious millets or nutri-cereals. Specifically, pearl millet and finger millet provide substantial protein content, approximately 11.8 grams and 7.4 grams per 100 grams of grain, respectively, with a low fat content of around 1.3 grams.

These grains boast a wealth of essential amino acids, niacin, and beta-carotene, along with various health benefits including anti-diabetic, anti-tumorigenic, and cardiovascular protection properties. Millets are categorized as dry crops,

requiring minimal water for cultivation. They are low in simple carbohydrates while being high in complex carbohydrates, making them low-glycemic index foods. Rich in dietary fiber, both soluble and insoluble, millets serve as effective prebiotics. A typical serving of raw millet, 100 grams, provides approximately 1,580 kilojoules of energy and is a rich source of protein, fiber, B vitamins, and essential dietary minerals, particularly manganese, which constitutes 76% of their composition. Raw millet consists of around 9% water, 73% carbohydrates, 4% fat, and 11% protein. In South India, commonly consumed millets include ragi, bajra, green millet, foxtail millet, sorghum, kodo millet, and barnyard millet. The decline in millet consumption can be attributed to an increased dependency on rice and wheat, which can account for over 50% of the average caloric intake for Indian households.

Recently, notable shifts have been observed in dietary patterns, with households moving away from traditional cereals to higher-value food products such as livestock products, fruits, vegetables, and beverages. Millets play a crucial role in the rainfed regions of the country, which cover 60% of the total agricultural area. In particular, minor millets are extremely nutrient-dense and exhibit resilience to drought and stress in rainfed farming systems.

Objectives

1. To study the attitude of youngsters towards millet consumption in Parbhani district.

Table 1.1: 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. 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.

2. Youngsters of India

Youth represents the most invaluable segment of the population, as the human resource potential of individuals reaches its zenith during this critical period. They are not merely the future; they are the present of our nation, integral to driving and advancing socio- economic development. The pressing challenge lies in unleashing their inherent capabilities to break free from poverty and create sustainable development and livelihood opportunities that empower them to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. There is vast potential to significantly elevate the contributions of this demographic by boosting their labor force participation and enhancing productivity. In this study, youth is defined, following the "National Youth Policy, 2014" of the Government of India, as individuals aged 15 to 29 years. This age cohort constitutes approximately 27.5% of the population and accounts for an impressive 34% of India's Gross National Income (GNI). These statistics not only highlight the critical importance of investing in our youth but also underscore the necessity of leveraging their talents and energy to propel our nation towards a prosperous future. The journey ahead is one of tremendous opportunity, and it is imperative that we recognize the vital role our youth play in shaping the trajectory of our society.

3. Millet consumption in India

The analysis conducted by ICAR-IIMR demonstrates that approximately 75% of sorghum output is directly consumed by humans, highlighting its significance in human diets. Furthermore, 12% of sorghum serves as animal feed, while 8% is transformed into value- added products. Notably, 5% is utilized for alcohol production, with the remaining portion exported in various forms. Similarly, in the case of bajra (pearl millet), around 70% is designated for direct human consumption, affirming its vital role in nutrition. Additionally, 15% is allocated for animal feed, and 10% is used in breweries, with 5% processed for value addition and 1% for seed production. Ragi mirrors this trend, with about 75% of its production consumed directly by humans, 13% used as animal feed, and a modest 1% allocated for exports. These findings underscore the crucial role of these millets in both human consumption and economic utilisation.

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.

Results and Discussion

Table 3.1: Statement-wise distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards millet consumption.

Sr.no	Statements	Yes	No
1	Do you know about millets?	120 (100)	0
2	Do you consume millets daily?	4 (3.33)	116 (96.66)
3	Are millets a good option for daily consumption	120 (100)	0
4	At least weekly millet consumption is there	120 (100)	0
5	I used millet-oriented products	120 (100)	0
6	Millets are tastier than grains and cereals	120 (100)	0
7	Millets are important in filling nutritional deficiencies	120 (100)	0
8	Do you prioritise millets as a dietary supplement?	120 (100)	0
9	Do you mainly include millet products in your diet for fasting?	120 (100)	0
10	Millet products are beneficial for health in the months of winter.	120 (100)	0
11	All types of millets are nutritious	120 (100)	0
12	Products and dishes of millets are tasty	110 (91.66)	10 (8.33)
13	Millets are easy to digest	120 (100)	0
14	Millet value additional diet, increasing the nutritional value of the product	120 (100)	0
15	Millets are free from gluten	120 (100)	0
16	Millets are rich in folic acid and tannins.	120 (100)	0
17	Millets are rich in proteins and fibres	120 (100)	0
18	Millets are useful in controlling cholesterol	120 (100)	0
19	Millets are useful in increasing haemoglobin	120 (100)	0
20	Probiotics in millets help control blood pressure and cancer	120 (100)	0
21	Millets are beneficial in the sturdiness of bones	107 (89.16)	13 (10.83)
22	Are you including millets in your diet to control weight?	120 (100)	0
23	Are you prioritising millets to control diabetes?	120 (100)	0
24	Are you noticing nutritional benefits after including millets in your diet?	120 (100)	0
25	Millets increase immunity	120 (100)	0
26	Jowar and bajra are the major portion of millets in your diet	120 (100)	0
27	Millets are costlier than cereals and grains	117 (97.5)	3 (2.5)
28	Are you consuming millets after following celebrity chefs' recipes?	92 (76.66)	28 (23.33)
29	To promote millet consumption, the government run various programs	99 (82.5)	21 (1.66)
30	There is easy availability of millets in the local market	120 (100)	0
31	I noticed a post on social media promoting millet consumption	89 (74.16)	31 (25.83)
32	Do u include millets in your diet after following the nutritional benefits told by your favourite influencer?	101 (84.16)	19 (15.83)
33	Cooked/processed millets are more nutritious	114 (95)	6 (5)
34	Millets mixed with any food without giving an intense taste	63 (52.5)	57 (47.5)
35	Millets work as probiotics. It enhances the taste, texture of the product	118 (98.33)	2 (1.66)
36	Millets improve overall health	120 (100)	0

The respondents reflected an overall positive attitude towards millet consumption. A unanimous proportion (100%) agreed that millets are suitable for daily and weekly consumption, beneficial for health, and effective in addressing nutritional deficiencies, weight control, and disease management. High agreement was recorded on statements regarding taste (91.66%) and bone health benefits (89.16%). While only 3.33% reported daily consumption, all endorsed millets as a dietary supplement.

Influence from digital media was notable, with 76.66% influenced by celebrity chefs, 84.16% by social media influencers, and 74.16% acknowledging promotional posts. A majority (97.5%) perceived millets as costlier than cereals, as presented in Table 4.10. Above. Although attitudes were moderately favourable, lower daily intake indicates a gap between perception and regular dietary practice.

Overall attitude of respondents towards millet consumption

The overall distribution of the respondents according to their attitude towards Millet consumption is given in the table below.

Table 3.2: Overall distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards Millet consumption

Sr.no	Category	Frequency	percentage
1	Less favourable (0 to 32)	31	25.83
2	Moderately favourable (33 to 34)	69	57.5
3	Highly favourable (35 and above)	20	16.66
	Total	120	100

Table 3.2. depicted the overall distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards millet consumption. It was observed that a majority of the youngsters (57.5%) possessed a moderately favourable attitude, with attitude scores ranging from 33 to 34. About 25.83 per cent of the respondents fell under the category of less favourable attitude (score range: 0 to 32). A comparatively smaller proportion (16.66%) exhibited a highly favourable attitude, scoring 35 and above. These findings indicate that while more than half of the youth hold a moderately favourable attitude towards millet consumption, only a limited segment reflects a highly favourable inclination.

As presented in Table 3.2. a majority of respondents (57.50%) exhibited a moderately favourable attitude towards millet consumption. This trend may be attributed to the respondents' access to general information and dietary influences prevalent in their environment. While there appears to be a basic level of positive attitude towards millets, the limited availability of focused and persuasive content related to their nutritional and cultural value may have restricted the development of a highly favourable attitude.

The observed distribution suggests that although respondents are partially informed and show interest in healthy food choices, the intensity and consistency of attitudinal reinforcement remain insufficient.

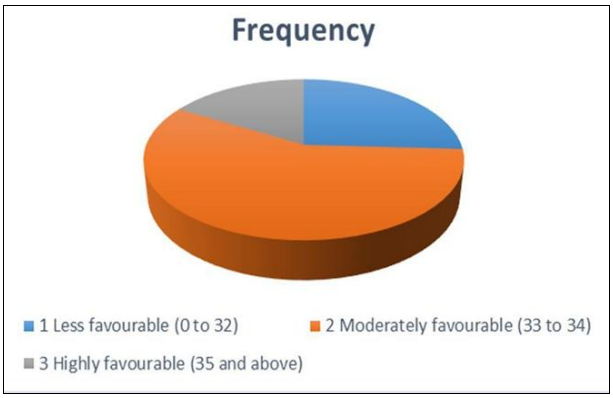

Fig 3.2: Overall distribution of respondents according to their attitude towards millet consumption.

Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated that a majority of the respondents belonged to the young teenage age group. The sample was predominantly well-educated, with a considerable proportion comprising graduates. The proportion of male participants was higher than that of female participants. A slightly higher number of respondents belonged to joint families, while medium-sized families were most commonly observed. Most respondents reported a moderate level of annual family income. With respect to media connectivity, a large portion demonstrated moderate to high levels of mass media exposure. The occupations of parents were primarily farming, followed by a combination of farming and business. A notable proportion of respondents were actively involved in social and community organizations and a majority of youngsters possess a moderately favourable attitude towards millet consumption, while relatively fewer respondents demonstrated highly favourable or less favourable attitudes. This distribution reflects partial awareness and limited persuasion regarding millet benefits. Hence, targeted extension and promotional strategies are essential to transform moderate attitudes into strongly favourable ones.

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