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Shayista Akhtar
M.Sc. Student Institute of Home
Science, University of Kashmir,
J & K, India

Gazala Nisar
Assistant Professor, Institute of
Home Science, University of
Kashmir, J & K, India

Awareness towards organic foods: A comparative study amongst adolescents with specific reference to Srinagar district of Kashmir

Shayista Akhtar and Gazala Nisar

Abstract

In today's society organic foods are becoming more important, as people have become more and more health conscious. Consumers are aware that what they put into their bodies, knowing from where our food comes from is the first step to becoming more healthy individuals. As Adolescents are future consumers, thus in this paper, an attempt has been made to study the awareness of organic foods amongst Adolescents of District Srinagar (Jammu & Kashmir). The sample of the study comprised of 60 Adolescents (30 boys & 30 girls) who were selected from different schools by simple Random sampling technique. A comprehensive Questionnaire-cum-interview schedule was used to collect the desired information. Results revealed that majority i.e 58.30% of Adolescents were in the age group of 16 years. Majority of Adolescents irrespective of Sex were having awareness towards Organic foods. However, Adolescent girls were more aware than Adolescent boys.

Keywords: Organic food, adolescents awareness

1. Introduction

Organic food can be defined as food that is produced from Organic agricultural practices. Organic agriculture is a production system that avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators, and livestock feed additives (1). Organic food is the product of a farming system which avoids the use of man-made fertilizers, pesticides, growth regulators and livestock feed additives. Irradiation and the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) or products produced from or by GMOs are generally prohibited by organic legislation (2). Organic foods are foods produced by methods that comply with the standards of Organic farming. Standards vary widely, however Organic farming in general, features practices that strive to foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Organizations regulating organic products may choose to restrict the use of certain pesticides and fertilizers in farming. In general, organic foods are also usually not processed using irradiation, industrial solvents or synthetic food additives (3). Stobblear *et al.* conducted a survey to know the adolescents attitude towards organic food. The survey concluded that adolescents attitude towards organic food are positive, but their knowledge of and their willingness to buy it are low. The study also found that adolescents in higher educating system are more positive about organic foods than their peers in lower educating system. Also, girls are more positive than boys and emphasize animal welfare more than boys do. Organic food is positively associated with animal welfare, environmental welfare and health. It is negatively associated with price and taste, with taste being considered the most important factor. Marangoz *et al.*, (2014) [5] conducted a study and found that health consciousness is the most important predictor of attitude towards organic produce. Consumers pay more attention to their health, worry about food safety, aware about organic food and being sensitive to the environmental protection. Susceptibility about environmental and health of consumers in 12-19 age group reflects to their shopping behavior in the future when they are mature and also will be important effecting their environment. (family, friends, their children etc.). The study found that as long as organic consciousness increases, the positive attitudes towards organic foods would increase.

Moreover a number of other recent studies have indicated that organic foods are healthier than inorganic foods. Ahmad, R. & Rahman, K. (2015) [6] found that the majority of the participants

Correspondence
Shayista Akhtar
M.Sc Student, Institute of Home
Science, University of Kashmir,
J & K, India

of the survey expresses that organic food is healthier than industrially manufactured food, they are high in nutrition, and perceives the organic production methods with a positive approach. The major problems identified through the research are lack of awareness and sufficient knowledge about organic food, lack of availability and limited range of products, high price and high regard for certification labeling. The influences of these factors are significant to alter consumer buying behavior and can sometimes also act as deciding factors for purchase decisions. Sharma *et al.*, (2013) [7] found that the consumers are very much aware that organic foods are good for health, these products are free from chemicals resulting in no side effects and do not cause harm to the consumers, who consume organic food products. The consumers living in urban areas are more aware about organic food products. This study also found that majority of the respondents preferred to purchase organic food but lack of availability is the major issue. They also believe that consumption of organic food helps to reduce stress level and maintain an energetic lifestyle. Another factor this study found that respondents are willing to pay even higher prices because of it is beneficial for health. Brown *et al.*, (2000) [8] suggested that food preferences are often a ‘fast food’ type and accordingly the food habits of

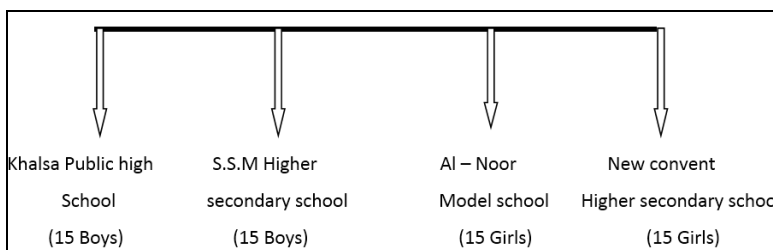
many young consumers may increase the consumption of poorly nutritionally balanced meals. While young consumers were aware of healthy eating, their food preference behavior did not always appear to reflect such knowledge, particularly within the school and social environments. Authors reported that the need for effective nutritional education for young consumers has become increasingly clear, given their general food habits and behavior, particularly during teenage years and analyzed that the dealings between young consumer’s food preferences and their nutritional awareness behavior, within three environments (home, school and social).

2. Methodology

The information was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected by visiting different schools of District Srinagar. 60 Adolescents were selected by random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire-cum-interview schedule was used to collect the desired information.

2.1 Selection of Sample

2.1.1 Schools



The study was based on primary survey of 60 Adolescents (30 boys and 30 girls) selected from four schools of District Srinagar chosen randomly. Two Higher secondary schools and two High schools were taken for the survey. 15 Adolescents were taken from each school.

30 Adolescents (15 boys and 15 girls) were taken from class 10th and 30 Adolescents (15 boys and 15 girls) were taken from class 11th.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 3.1.1: Demographic characteristics

Age (Years)	Boys		Girls		Overall				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
15	3	10	10	33.3	13	21.7			
16	17	56.7	18	60	35	58.3			
17	6	20	2	6.7	8	13.3			
18	4	13.3	-	-	4	6.7			
Type of Family	Boys		Girls		Overall				
	N	%	N	%	N	%			
Nuclear	18	60	22	73.7	40	66.7			
Joint	10	33.3	8	26.7	18	30			
Extended	2	6.7	-	-	2	3.3			
Monthly Income	Boys			Girls			Overall		
	N	%	Mean	N	%	Mean	N	%	Mean
10000-20000	11	36.7	10545.5	13	43.4	10307.7	24	40	10416.7
20000-30000	5	16.7	24000	3	10	23300.3	8	13.3	23750
30000-40000	5	16.7	31000	4	13.3	31250	9	15	31111.1
40000-50000	4	13.3	41750	7	23.3	40000	11	18.4	40636
50000-60000	3	10	50000	2	6.7	50000	5	8.3	50000
≤60000	2	6.6	73500	1	3.3	60000	3	5	69000

Table 3.1.1 reveals that majority i.e 56.7% of boys and 60% of girls were in the age group of 16 years and only 13.3% of boys were in the age group of 18 years. Overall majority i.e 58.30% of the Adolescents were in the age group of 16 years, followed by 21.70% in the age group of 15 years and only 6.70% of the Adolescents were in the age group of 18 years. The table

reveals that majority i.e 60% and 73.7% of Adolescents (boys and girls respectively) belonged to Nuclear family and only 6.7% of boys belonged to Extended family. None of the Adolescent girl were from Extended family. Overall majority i.e 66.70% of the Adolescents belonged to Nuclear family and only 3.30% were from Extended family. The table reveals that

majority i.e 36.7% and 43.4% of Adolescent’s (boys and girls respectively) monthly income of the family was between 10000-20000 whereas, only 6.6% and 3.3% of Adolescents’ (boys and girls respectively) monthly income of the family was ≤ 60000.

The table further shows that majority i.e 40% of Adolescent’s monthly income of the family was 10000-20000, followed by 18.4% of Adolescents whose monthly income was between 40000-50000 and only 5% of Adolescent’s monthly income of the family was ≤ 60000.

Table 3.1.2: Concept of organic food.

Response	Boys		Girls		Overall N = 60	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	29	96.7	26	91.7	55	91.7
Statements						
Foods grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides	2	6.8	-	-	2	3.6
Foods grown without the use of chemicals and toxic substances	1	3.5	-	-	1	1.9
Foods grown without the use of artificial additives and colors	1	3.5	-	-	1	1.9
Foods grown using only natural material	21	72.4	5	19.2	26	47.2
All of the above	4	13.8	21	80.8	25	45.4
NO	1	3.3	4	8.3	5	8.3

Table 3.1.2 shows that majority i.e 72.4% in case of Adolescents boys were of the opinion that organic foods are grown by using only Natural material whereas, 80.8% of Adolescent girls were fully aware about organic foods as they stated that organic foods are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, chemicals and toxic substances, artificial additives and colors and are grown by

using natural materials.

The table further reveals that majority i.e 47.2% of Adolescents irrespective of Sex were of the opinion that organic foods are grown by using only natural material and 1.9% of Adolescents perceived that organic foods are grown without the use of chemicals, toxic substances, artificial additives and colors.

Table 3.1.3: Awareness towards Organic food.

Statements	Response	Boys		Girls		Overall N = 60	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Organic food tastes better than non-organic food	Yes	24	80	25	83.3	49	81.7
	No	6	20	5	16.7	1	18.3
Organic food is healthier than non-organic food	Yes	22	73.3	29	96.7	51	85
	No	8	26.7	1	3.3	9	15
Organic food contain preservatives	Yes	7	23.3	8	26.7	15	25
	No	23	76.7	22	73.3	45	75
Organic food is better in quality than non-organic	Yes	28	93.3	29	96.7	57	95
	No	2	6.7	1	3.3	3	5
Organic food is less consumed and brought because of lack of awareness	Yes	22	73.3	30	100	52	86.7
	No	8	26.7	-	-	8	13.3
Organic food is comparatively expensive than non-organic	Yes	6	20	16	53.3	22	36.7
	No	24	80	14	46.7	38	63.3
Pesticide residue is found in organic food	Yes	19	63.3	7	23.3	26	43.3
	No	11	36.7	23	76.7	34	56.7

Table 3.1.3 reveals that majority i.e 80% and 83.35 of Adolescents (boys and girls respectively) were of the opinion that organic food tastes better than non-organic food and only 20% of boys and 16.7% of girls disagreed with the statement. The table further shows that majority i.e 81.75 of Adolescents irrespective of Sex perceived that organic food tastes better than non-organic food and only 18.3% of Adolescents disagreed with this statement.

The table also shows that majority i.e 73.3% and 96.7% of Adolescents (boys and girls respectively) were of the opinion that organic food is healthier than non-organic food and only 26.7% of boys and 3.3% of girls disagreed with the statement. The table further shows that majority i.e 85% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that organic food is healthier than non-organic food and only 15% disagreed with this statement.

Majority i.e 76.7% and 73.3% of adolescents (boys and girls respectively) were of the opinion that organic food does not contain preservatives and only 23.3% of boys and 26.7% of girls were of the opinion that organic food contains preservatives. The table further shows that majority i.e 75% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that organic food does not contain preservatives and only 25% disagreed with

this statement.

The table shows that majority i.e 93.3% and 96.7% of Adolescents (boys and girls respectively) were of the opinion that quality of organic food is better than non-organic food and only 6.7% of boys and 3.3% of girls disagreed with the statement. The table further shows that majority i.e 95% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that quality of organic food is better than non-organic food and only 5% of Adolescents disagreed with the statement.

The table reveals that majority i.e 73.3% of Adolescent boys and 100% of Adolescent girls were of the opinion that lack of awareness contributes to low consumption and buying of organic foods and only 26.7% of boys disagreed with the statement. The table further shows that majority i.e 86.7% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that lack of awareness contributes to low consumption and buying of organic foods and only 13.3% of Adolescents disagreed with the statement.

Majority i.e 80% of boys were of the opinion that organic food is not expensive than non-organic food whereas, majority i.e 53.3% of girls perceived that organic food is expensive than non-organic food. The table further shows that majority i.e

63.3% of Adolescents irrespective of sex were of the opinion that organic food is nit expensive than non-organic food whereas, 36.7% of Adolescents perceived that organic food is expensive.

The table further shows that majority i.e 63.3% of Adolescent boys were of the opinion that pesticide residue is found in organic foods whereas majority i.e 76.7% of Adolescent girls perceived that pesticide residue is not found in organic foods. The table further shows that majority i.e 56.7% of Adolescents irrespective of sex stated that organic food does not contain pesticide residues whereas, 43.3% of Adolescents perceived that organic food contains pesticide residues.

4. Discussion

The results of the present study shows that 80.8% of Adolescent girls were fully aware about Organic foods as they stated that Organic foods are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, chemicals and toxic substances, artificial additives and colors and are grown by using only natural materials while only 13.8% of Adolescent boys were aware about organic foods. It also shows that nearly half i.e 45.4% of Adolescents irrespective of Sex were fully aware about organic foods. The results are somewhat similar to the study done by Sharma *et al.*, (2013) [7] who reported that the consumers are very much aware that organic foods are good for health, these products are free from chemicals resulting in no side effects and do not cause harm to the consumers, who consume organic food products. The consumers living in urban areas are more aware about organic food products. This study also found that majority of the respondents preferred to purchase organic food but lack of availability is the major issue.

The study revealed that majority i.e. 81.75 of Adolescents irrespective of Sex perceived that Organic food tastes better than Non-Organic food and only 18.3% of Adolescents disagreed with this statement. The results are somewhat similar to the study done by Sharma *et al.*, who reported that 56% of respondents agreed that organic food is tastier than conventional food.

Majority i.e 85% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that Organic food is healthier that Non-Organic food and only 15% disagreed with this statement. The results are somewhat similar to the studies done by Tomsik & Kutnohorska (2013) and Schifferstein & Ophun (1998). The results of the study done by Tomsik & Kutnohorska (2013) revealed that that the organic food market consumer actually shows different attitudes, belief and behaviors in relation to health care. Most of the consumers perceive their health as an important part of their life and they regard organic food as rather healthier than the conventional food and the results of the study done by Schifferstein & ophun (1998) revealed that organic produce is perceived by consumers to be less damaging to the environment and healthier than conventionally grown food.

The study also revealed that majority i.e 75% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that Organic food does not contain preservatives and only 25% disagreed with this statement. It was found that majority i.e 95% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that quality of Organic food is better than Non-Organic food and only 5% of Adolescents disagreed with the statement. The study further shows that majority i.e 86.7% of Adolescents irrespective of sex perceived that lack of awareness contributes to low consumption and buying of Organic foods and only 13.3% of Adolescents disagreed with the statement. The results are somewhat similar to the study done by Sharma *et al.*, who

reported that 72% of consumers agreed that Organic food contains less preservatives. The same study revealed that majority i.e 88% of consumers were agreed that the Organic food is better in quality than conventional food. It was also found that majority of people agreed that the availability and lack of awareness is the major reason for less consumption of Organic food.

5. Conclusion

The present study was conducted to study the awareness towards organic food amongst Adolescents. It was concluded that majority i.e 58.30% of the Adolescents were in the age group of 16 years, followed by 21.70% in the age group of 15 years and only 6.70% of the Adolescents were in the age group of 18 years. Majority i.e 40% of the Adolescent's monthly income of the family was between 10000-20000. Majority of the Adolescents were having awareness towards organic foods. However, Adolescent girls were more aware towards Organic foods than Adolescent boys.

On the basis of data available, it can be recommended that:

1. Serving organic food in canteens is a chance to get youngsters acquainted with it, when they realize that organic food is tasty and not weird, they might become more positive towards it.
2. Campaigns addressing groups who are indifferent to organic food should focus on enhancing knowledge and supporting positive attitude.
3. Increasing the availability and range of organic food products, may be the most effective way of increasing their consumption.

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