



## Food and Nutrition Security: Rural Community Awareness

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With the goal of sustaining a pleasant, active, and healthy lifestyle, one must consume sufficient nutrition to fulfil their dietary requirements. At the family level, food security means that the family can buy or grow enough food to meet everyone's basic needs. In rural places, knowing about food and nutrition is important for making sure families have enough to eat. Everyone in the family needs to know about food, nutrients, and the right way to eat because these things affect their health. Students, pregnant women, nursing moms, and other vulnerable groups are often malnourished because they don't understand how food meets their nutritional needs.

To show and feed the people in the rural area, nutrition education should be useful and flexible enough to take into account their eating habits, social status, and the food that is available locally. An effort to raise awareness will work with government programmes to increase people-centered programming using the newest tech tools and methods to protect everyone's right to health and food security.

**Keywords:** Healthy Lifestyle; Rural Area; Food; Nutrition Education; Awareness**Introduction**

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals were compelled to prioritise the enhancement of their immune systems in order to effectively counteract the virulent viral variant, owing to the exceptional circumstances that unfolded. In light of this issue, individuals directed their attention towards dietary choices and the cultivation of good eating habits, which have been identified as a straightforward and economically viable approach to address these issues [1]. An individual residing in an urban setting, endowed with ample resources, may have acquired knowledge about prevailing food trends. Nevertheless, it was captivating to observe how rural areas addressed the issue with significantly fewer resources, limited financial aid, and various other challenges. The rural peoples' level of awareness regarding food and nutrition is crucial for upholding the food and nutrition security of their families. It is imperative for all individuals within a household to possess knowledge regarding food, nutrition, and the cultivation of appropriate dietary practices, as these factors significantly impact their overall nutritional well-being [2]. In contrast to the urban population, rural areas are characterised by a heightened susceptibility to preventable mortality, morbidity, and impairment, mostly attributable to unfavourable social determinants such as impoverished conditions, inadequate nutritional resources, limited educational opportunities, and restricted availability of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities [3]. The main intent of the study was to find out the level of knowledge about food and nutrition in rural

communities and examine the nutritional condition of the rural populace.

**National food security act, (NFSA) 2013**

The main idea behind global food security is to make sure that everyone can always get the food they need to live a healthy, busy life. It's defined by how easy it is to get food, how it's used, and how stable it is. The Indian Constitution doesn't say anything directly about the right to food, but Article 21 of the Constitution says that everyone has the fundamental right to life. This right to live with human dignity may include the right to food and other basic needs [4].

Through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and the Targeted Public Distribution System, the government has long addressed concerns about "food security" in households. However, the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013 changed the way food security is dealt with from focusing on welfare to rights. Up to 75 percent of people who live in rural areas and 50 percent of people who live in cities are officially entitled to get food grains for free through the Targeted Public Distribution System. As a result, the Act allows about two-thirds of people to get food grains at a very low cost. As a way to give women more power, the Act says that the oldest woman in the household, who must be at least 18 years old, must be the head of the household for the purposes of giving out ration cards [5].

One of the main ideas behind the Act is the “life-cycle approach.” This means that pregnant women, mothers who are breastfeeding, and kids between the ages of 6 months and 14 years old can get free, healthy meals through a large network of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres, which are called Anganwadi Centres under the ICDS scheme, and schools under the Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme. Children up to 6 years old who are malnourished have to follow stricter food guidelines. Additionally, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are eligible for a maternity benefit of at least Rs. 6,000 in cash to help make up for lost wages and improve their nutrition during pregnancy. If the right amount of food grains or meals aren’t given to the right people under the NFSA, those people will be able to get a food security allowance from the state government. Each person will receive this within the time frame and in the manner that the central government has specified. The Food Security Allowance Rules, 2015, set the rules for these parts [4].

Study significance

Sufficient nourishment is a fundamental human necessity that meets dietary needs consistently and is among the most crucial prerequisites for a fulfilling, active, and healthy life. Food security at the home level is the capacity of the household to obtain enough food to meet the nutritional needs of every member of the household, either through purchases or its own production. FAO acknowledges that effective social and economic development produces healthy, well-nourished people, who also play a crucial role in the development process [6]. The primary cause of the widespread malnutrition among students, expectant mothers, nursing mothers, and other vulnerable groups in society is a lack of knowledge about the nutritional needs and requirements of various diets. In order to demonstrate and feed the audience that is available locally, nutrition education should be useful and easily adjustable to the socio-economic status, eating habits, and available local food resources. With this background, the following objectives led to the effort of this current study:

- To determine the different information sources for rural families’ security of nutrition and food.
- To evaluate their effects on the families’ food and nutrition security.
- To find out how rural families view the services and information offered in relation to food and nutrition security.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in rural areas of Belagavi Taluk in Karnataka State, India. The “simple random sampling” approach was used to choose 90 (ninety) families for the study. The study compiled information from a variety of sources, both primary and secondary. Interviews were used to gather primary data. The secondary data were obtained through a relevant review of the literature. Percentage analysis was used to statistically evaluate and interpret the gathered data.

Results and Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an exceptional emergency that resulted in numerous changes to daily routines, including eating patterns. A healthy, well-balanced diet is essential for both disease prevention and faster recovery. It takes awareness and understanding to follow a healthy diet.

It was found that, when it came to nutritional awareness, 92% and 82% of those questioned had never ever heard of the phrases “balanced diet” and “malnutrition,” respectively. It was noted that the participants used to engage in physical exercise for about eight hours every day on average. It was observed that rural people continue to adhere to the ancestors’ traditional wisdom of eating a balanced diet. Because of their lack of resources and poverty, individuals often adhere to what is readily available and reasonably priced in their area.

A complicated problem for sustainable development, food security is connected to trade, the environment, and sustainable economic growth, in addition to health issues brought on by malnutrition. Malnutrition is mostly caused by poverty, along with additional factors including the price of food, the absence of fortified foods or vitamin supplements, and a lack of knowledge about enough or optimal nutrition. Maintaining the family’s food and nutrition security depends heavily on raising awareness of food and nutrition issues. Food and nutrition security should be known to every member of every family. Men and women have varying levels of knowledge about diet and nutrition, and they get their information from different sources. The primary goal of the study was to determine the sources and degrees of knowledge on food and nutrition security in rural Belagavi Taluk villages.

Due to their ubiquitous presence in the average diet, the vast majority of respondents had a working knowledge of the five main categories of foods. Women had a better understanding of food and nutrition because they were more likely to be active in cooking and other associated home tasks. Most respondents relied on television, books (80%), newspapers (85%), and social media (90%), for news and information. Most of the respondents were not taking fortified foods into their diets because they were either unfamiliar with the concept or misinformed about its benefits. This data demonstrates that respondents’ access to fortified meals was quite limited.

Every single one of the people who filled out the survey and lived in the research region used iodized salt when they cooked. It demonstrates that respondents learned about the advantages of consuming iodized salt from television advertisements. The majority of male responders didn’t have breakfast on time because they were too preoccupied with morning job duties to eat. However, most of the women who answered the survey reported not eating owing to religious beliefs. They fasted for religious reasons

(‘vratham’) because they believed it would be best for the family’s health. Because they were giving their food to other members of the family, they often went without eating.

Most of the respondents were aware of the drawbacks of excessive oil consumption. Due to women’s participation in Anganwadis’ nutrition-related meetings, female respondents were more knowledgeable than male respondents about the dangers of using too much oil. Female respondents had greater awareness than male respondents had regarding food safety. It was observed that the majority of respondents’ knowledge on food and nutrition came from television shows. In this respect, conversations with friends, family, Anganwadi workers, etc., as well as one’s own personal experiences with food preparation, food storage, etc., were extremely helpful.

Food processing involves the use of physical or chemical processes to alter the structure or composition of foods that have already been cooked. The most common ways that food was processed were pickling, pasteurisation, canning, and freezing. All of the responders knew about the preparation of food, especially the pickling procedure. The practise of pickling food was widespread in domestic settings.

Because processed foods are not widely consumed in rural areas of the Belagavi taluka, the vast majority of respondents were unfamiliar with them. While the majority of female respondents chose home-cooked meals. Majority of male respondents favoured fast food at least once a week, raising concerns about the prevalence of unhealthy eating habits. Most respondents were aware of the health risks associated with eating fast food. Most responders were aware of the risks associated with fasting. In most households, women have a larger role in meal preparation and even shopping for groceries. In contrast to men, women tend to be the ones who advocate within the household for better eating habits and food safety.

Everyone who participated in the survey had heard of the benefit of clean water and the need of maintaining good sanitation practises. Health officials went door to door to educate people on the need of sanitation and clean water because the respondents already knew a lot about the topic thanks to social media. Most responders had some understanding of cardiovascular disease, obesity, anaemia, and hypertension. Due to the prevalence of these illnesses, kids learned a great deal from numerous sources including family, friends, the media, and medical professionals.

Since the ICDS was so helpful to them, the majority of the female respondents knew more about it and about the midday meal programmes that ensured nutritional stability. Women are concerned about their children’s health and well-being, and these programmes provide them with midday meals. The government of

India has launched a programme called the National Health Mission (NHM) to meet the medical requirements of the country’s unserved rural areas. Because this programme provided a greater number of services to women, more women than men were aware of it. Maternal health care was a key area of focus for NHM. Most of the respondents have at least some knowledge with the concept of agriculture education in the classroom. School-aged children were the primary source of information about this instruction, with their parents hearing about it primarily through their accounts of their own children’s kitchen garden activities. The main services obtained by respondents were nutrition and health education, a mid-day meal programme, and extra nutrition [6].

Results showed that women were more likely to benefit from information and services because they made better use of them. They would have to change their minds, habits, attitudes, and techniques in the kitchen as a result of what they learned about food and nutrition.

To Sum Up

Adequate nutrition is an essential human necessity that meets one’s nutritional requirements consistently and is among the most essential prerequisites for an active, healthy, and decent life. Despite the fact that the study revealed that people in rural areas work out hard for an average of 4 to 6 hours a day, they don’t know how important it is to eat well. Few people are conscious of the detrimental effects of inadequate nutrition, but they are also neglecting their daily nutritional needs because there are not enough resources available to them. Access to affordable, traditional, and locally sourced food options is vital for people. Despite government initiatives such as food subsidies, supplement distribution, and school meal provision, there is still a widespread lack of knowledge and availability regarding a well-balanced diet, optimal nutrition, and the use of seasonal fruits and vegetables [6]. The implementation of the subsequent recommendations would contribute to improving the effectiveness of government initiatives:

- On-time delivery of services is required for the Integrated Child Development Service Scheme (ICDS) and other schemes.
- Children, women, and the elderly are examples of vulnerable members of the community and should be included in the services provided by various schemes.
- It is important to incorporate male members into services like health education and nutrition.
- Every family should include both male and female members in awareness campaigns on creating and maintaining kitchen gardens.
- All rural residents need to be included in education campaigns regarding the negative impacts of fast food.

The government’s intentions and efforts for food security will be more successful if increasing public awareness about the rel-

evance of nutrition and food is the first step in this respect, especially in light of the significant ignorance regarding nutrition and a balanced diet, as witnessed [6]. In order to realise the objectives of food security and everyone's right to health, an awareness campaign will collaborate with government initiatives to achieve multi-fold penetration of people-centric programmes with the help of the newest technical tools and methodologies. Increasing awareness in rural areas through the use of all available tools and strategies is crucial if the right to sustenance and the right to health are to be implemented.

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