

THE CHANGES IN THE FOOD TAKING HABITS OF DAILY WAGERS DURING PANDEMIC

Ashly Varghese

M.A in English and Cultural Studies

Christ (Deemed to be University)

Bangalore, India

ashlyvarghese998@gmail.com

Abstract: COVID 19 has been already acquired the position in our history as a pandemic that shook the world entirely with its various effects on humanity. This pandemic has led to the shut-down of all sectors of life and have caused the dead of millions all over the world. The shut-down of industries had a huge impact on the developing countries like India where poverty is the major challenge to accomplish. Lock down has effected the daily wagers as their only source of income was in halt, agriculture sector have also suffered loss due the economic instability. This research would combine the daily wagers and agriculture by looking into the food eating pattern of daily wagers during the lock down period. The research attempted to look into the food habits of daily wagers to identify the rate of consumption of tapioca instead of rice. This paper will be conducting a semi structure interview which will be analysed to obtain the results.

Keywords: daily wagers, agriculture, tapioca, lock down, pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The plant known as tapioca in the East is also known as cassava in Africa and manioc or yucca in South America. Originally it is native to South America and southern and western Mexico. From Mid and South America, tapioca spread to other parts of the world. It was widely grown in Africa and Southeast Asia by 1850s. There are several advantages regarding tapioca crop. It can adapt to poor soils and resist drought, making it a good famine crop. It is easily propagated by stem cuttings. It gives a relatively high yield and an excellent source of calories. Furthermore, it is relatively inexpensive to produce and (i) requires very little weeding when planted in optimal plant populations; (ii) has no critical planting date, provided there is enough moisture at planting; and (iii) its roots can be left stored in the ground and harvested when required (Hong lee fen, 2007).

Tapioca is grown in India for a number of years and - its origin is traced back to either Brazil from where it was introduced by the Portuguese during the 17th J Century or brought from South America in 1840. However, the .spread of tapioca cultivation is attribute to the famous rulers of the former Travancore State who has encouraged cultivation. Of popular varieties from Malaya and other places to overcome rice shortage in the State, especially among the low income group consisting of small farmers and labour's engaged in bard physical- labour. Since tapioca is somewhat drought resistant its spread was mainly on un-irrigated rain fed land with& the application of chemical fertilisers. (George ,2000)

Tapioca is the most important tropical root crop. Its starchy roots are a major source of dietary energy for more than 500 million people. It is known to be the highest producer of carbohydrates among staple crops. According to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), tapioca ranks fourth of food crops in developing countries after rice,

maize and wheat. The edible leaves are relatively rich in protein. Tapioca can be stored in the ground for several seasons, and thereby serve as a reserve food when other crops fail. (Krishnakumar, 2019) .

Most of the starch utilized world-wide comes from a relatively small number of crops, the most important being maize, potato, wheat and tapioca with smaller amounts from rice, sorghum, sweet potato, arrowroot, sago and mung beans. Within Europe, the main sources of starch are maize, wheat and potato (Batchelor et al., 1996). Starch is the primary source of stored energy in cereal grains, tubers and other parts of plant. Starch provides 70-80% of the calories consumed by humans worldwide.

Starch is an essential source of carbohydrate in human diet. In addition to its nutritive value, starch plays an important role to impart certain functional properties such as viscosity and texture. It has contributed a great economic importance and is isolated on an industrial scale from various sources of starch such as tapioca, corn, potato, rice, wheat and others.

In view of the importance of roots and tubers in the food economy of India and other densely populated countries: investigations were carried out at the Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore during the last few years to study the effect of partial replacement of cereals with roots and tubers on the nutritive value of the diets. These investigations may be broadly classified under the following heads: (1) growth experiments on animals (2) metabolism studies in adults and (3) growth experiments on children. It may be concluded from the results of these experiments that (1) 25 per cent of rice in the diet could be replaced by tapioca flour without affecting the growth, general health and nutritional status of children and (2) 50 per cent of cereals (wheat+jowar) in the diet could be replaced by a blend of tapioca flour and groundnut flour in the ratio of 3 :1, without affecting the growth and health of children. (Swaminathan, 1973)

Lockdown during the COVID 19 pandemic has effected most of the people as it stopped the source of income for many people especially a major group of people who earns daily wages. Due to the shutdown of factories and workplaces, local labourers, and migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, food shortages, and uncertainty about their future. There are about 139 million daily labourers in the country approximately, according to the World Economic Forum. The International Labour Organization has said that due to the pandemic and the lockdown, about 400 million workers have been poverty-stricken. (Antony 2018).

COVID-19 could also change people's eating and dietary patterns, leading to a deterioration of nutritional and health status at both individual and country levels (e.g., all forms of malnutrition: under nutrition and over-nutrition are likely to increase); for instance, confinements and panic buying during the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone (2014–2016) led to a spike in hunger and malnutrition. The crisis is also affecting the quality of diets. Consumers are shifting towards greater consumption of processed food, such as convenience foods, junk foods, snacks, and ready-to-eat cereals (as a result of panic buying for foods with longer shelf-life, and supply chain disruptions). There is also a possibility of a decrease in meat consumption (as a result of fears—not science-based—that animals might be hosts of the virus) and other higher-value products like fruits and vegetables (which are likely to cause price decreases). Besides, the fact that consumers are stocking up on non-perishable items means that they are likely substituting across food categories. (Haseen, 2020). This kind of shift in the consumption of food is irresistible especially during a pandemic when scarcity is all around them, scarcity of food, money, immunity power etc. Through this research, it examines how tapioca made a change in the food habits of the people and the reason for the replacement.

Theoretical framework

According to Marx, every society is divided among a number of social classes, whose members have more in common with one another than with members of other social classes. Marx thought that the capitalist system inherently contained the seeds of its own destruction. The alienation and exploitation of the proletariat that are fundamental to capitalist relations would inevitably drive the working class to rebel against the bourgeoisie and seize control of the means of production. Capitalist society is made up of two classes—the bourgeoisie, or business owners, who control the means of production, and the proletariat, or workers, whose labour transforms raw commodities into valuable economic goods. Ordinary labourers, who do not own the means of production, such as factories, buildings, and materials, have little power in the capitalist economic system. Workers are also readily replaceable in periods of high unemployment, further devaluing their perceived worth. Here the daily wagers either slowly started cultivating crops like tapioca or started to get such crops from the nearby shops.

Research questions

How is the rate of consumption and pandemic dependent?

Which social class is largely consuming tapioca and why?

What component is attracting people to have more tapioca during pandemic?

Research objectives

It aims to how pandemic and food consumption is related

To understand the social and economic structure for the food preference during pandemic.

To understand the perspective of food preferences of daily wagers while pandemic.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The food and agriculture organization states that COVID -2019 is affecting agriculture in two significant aspects: the supply and demand for food. There can be two vulnerable groups amidst the pandemic. People who suffer from chronic hunger and do not eat enough caloric energy to sustain a normal life, who currently number about 820 million people, are the first disadvantaged population. This community of people cannot afford any disruption of their livelihoods or access to food that a situation with COVID-19 could offer. The results could be severe if the virus spreads in areas where such people live and where health services are underdeveloped. Small farmers are a second disadvantaged group, as they may be unable to operate on their land or enter markets to sell their crops or purchase seeds and other important inputs (Siche,2020). Some of the food industries that was effected by COVID 19 are hesperidin rich products like fruits, sugar industry, food supply chain etc.

A Review of Evidence Available on Hesperidin-Rich Products as Potential Tools against COVID-19 and Hydrodynamic Cavitation-Based Extraction as a Method of Increasing Their Production talks about Hesperidin is a bioactive flavonoid abundant in citrus peel. It has a high binding affinity to the main cellular receptors of SARS-CoV-2. It is very promising for prophylaxis and treatment of COVID-19, along with other coexistent flavonoids such as naringin. It could help restraining the pro-inflammatory overreaction of the immune system. The study proposes a feasible and affordable process based on hydrodynamic cavitation for the integral aqueous extraction of citrus peel waste to extract hesperidin-rich products. Hesperidin, a flavonoid abundant in citrus peels, was identified as a potentially very interesting molecule in the fight against COVID-19. Its antiviral activity was proven for other viruses, in particular SARS-CoV-2. It has the advantage of strong binding affinity to all the main viral and cellular targets.

Impact of COVID-19 on Indian Sugar Industry S. Solomon et al in 2020 talks about the Indian sugar industry, a significant player in the national economy, has faced many challenges in the course of its journey. The threat posed by the growing pandemic novel corona virus (COVID-19), has been the most recent one not only in India but all over the world. The industry is at cross roads due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Many of these impacts may be temporary and the industry might soon find itself bouncing back. But strategies like increased mechanization in the grower's fields, diversification and ethanol blending, value addition, etc., are here to stay and strengthen. Here sugar industry is suffering a crisis due to the COVID 19 but in case of this research when other crops started to fail the consumers tried to take a shift from other carbohydrate sources to starch rich tapioca.

Impact of COVID-19 on the food supply chain by Serpil Aday et al in 2020 says Food supply chain is one of the most important sectors of the economy, it has been seen that COVID-19 has an impact on the whole process from the field to the consumer. Each country must realize the severity of the situation and sometimes should tighten or loosen the measures according to the spread of the pandemic. The supply chain also should be flexible enough to respond to the challenges in the food supply chain, the report says. The report concludes that small farmers or vulnerable people should be supported financially. Food protectionist policies should be avoided to prevent an increase in food prices, it says. This article mentions that during a pandemic, continuing the flow of the supply in agriculture and food sector is vital. Each country has to realize the severity of the situation and sometimes should tighten or loosen the measures according to the spread of the pandemic. The supply chain also should be flexible enough to respond to the challenges in the food supply chain.

These researches shows the impact of the consequences of COVID 19 in various agricultural fields and how these industries is trying to make themselves flexible enough for the change to keep up with the economic conditions. As Raul

Siche said in his article on the COVID 19 impact on agriculture, these consequences have negative effects on the economically poor people and small scale farmers, so this research is on how these are effecting tapioca cultivation, its consumers and the farmers of Kerala.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pandemic has brought in many changes among the citizens of India, one of the most important changes is in the food consumption as there are many concerns regarding the safety, economic instability, health etc. being a developing country, India, have a more fragile economic and social fabric, and the current situation will exacerbate poverty in the unorganised sector and among migrant workers. "Government of India must provide lifelines to businesses - extend loans and tax waivers to small businesses and the self-employed to retain staff -- give direct support to severely affected industries and provide more funds to states, tax waivers to households etc." , former RBI governor C Rangarajan . Migrant workers and daily wagers were at the risk as they had an unstable source of income as the industries where shutting down during the lock down. This research tries to find the food consumption pattern of the daily wagers in Kerala especially the amount of intake of tapioca as it is known as the poor man's food.

The research will conducted with an interpreted approach from the answers of 10 selected daily wagers and farmers. In this research, the results will be discussed on the basis of the semi structured interview that would be taken from the consumers. The interview would be conducted in Kerala through an online mode due to the pandemic situation.

Research design

The study was conducted through online mode where the participants are selected from the shop who are a regular customer who shops tapioca. For this research, ten participants are taken who were interviewed on the basis of a semi structured interview. The study focuses on the daily wagers and farmers who cultivates tapioca. The participants were selected based on certain criteria

- Based on the place that they are living which is from Kollam in Kerala.
- Participants are either daily wagers or farmers who cultivates tapioca.
- Daily wagers who buys tapioca and if they are farmers then those who sells them to the shop.

These requirements were taken into account while selecting participants. They were asked questions through video calling, messaging etc. Some of the messages and questions were ignored by the customers. Most of them had a misunderstanding, as the election campaign was going on, they thought that the question were part of the election or are party based which made them refused to answer certain question. Later on I had to clarify them that the questions were not related to election and is solely for the research purpose although most of them still didn't answer the questions. These misunderstandings which led to lack of response and the online mode of interview was very time consuming. To balance the time I approached several other sources to smoothen the interview process. I asked questions through a middle party who are close to the customers to make them understand that the interview answers will only be taken for the research purpose.

The interview lasted for 10 to 15 minutes where I tried to gain information on their rate of tapioca consumption during the lockdown period from the daily wagers. As for farmers, the question were related to the sale of tapioca during pandemic and why they chose to grow tapioca instead of other crops. Apart from interview I have also taken newspaper article to gain more information regarding the government policies towards farming and cultivation during lockdown.

4. RESULTS

The results shows that there is an increase in the number of products based on tapioca in the market which is basically in the form of fired. This different variety of accessible food form is made in the form of snacks which attracts kids. This increased number have attracted many customers which increased the sales. As one of the customer said that " I usually don't eat tapioca but since lockdown I started eating it as it used to remind me about how I used eat this with my parents during childhood. It's now available as fries and snacks which my child like so we buy them." There also many raw tapioca which is available in the market which can be used to make several dishes like boiled tapioca, steamed, chips etc. The results shows that there are many customers who buy tapioca to bring the nostalgia in alive from their childhood memories. This also shows the daily wagers who buy tapioca on a daily bases as they are cheap compared to other dishes.

Tapioca doesn't need any side dishes, mostly a chilly would be enough. This is also can be one of the reason to have this dish. This could easily satisfy their stomach with cheaper amount and also a nutritious food. As another customer mentioned "As we could this was the main reason for most of them to buy tapioca instead of other food items. It have really good amount of carbohydrates, we used have this in our diet during childhood and now tapioca is more available and cheaper to access." In the case of farmers it was a difficult situation as the price have decreased, although there is sale. "It is pretty high than it was usually but since the price of tapioca have decreased we are in trouble but we are drying it so it can kept for long time and can be sold in the future."

Most of the farmers had to dry them for future sales as it might lead them to loss.

5. DISCUSSION

In the context of the global economy, food is key to consumer confidence, global peace, and personal sustenance. Maintaining the movement of food through the global supply chain is essential for sustaining life. There is an overwhelming global response to the COVID-19 virus with Food and Beverage Sector sustainability a key challenge. (Telukdarie,2020).

The food supply chain disruption caused by COVID-19 has refocused attention on tubers in Kerala. In addition to the State Government, charitable organisations, local self-government agencies, and farmers' groups have stepped in to encourage root and tuber cultivation as well as vegetable farming in the state. With the assistance of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK), and the State Agriculture Department, the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (ICAR-CTCRI) in the State capital has devised a tuber drive. Cassava (tapioca), yams of various types, sweet potato, taro, and Chinese potato are among the crops promoted by the initiative.

The Chief Minister said that the state now has sufficient food supplies and is in a secure position. However, if the present situation due to the pandemic epidemic persists, the government will have to begin planning for the future which will include significant agricultural interventions.

We should be able to increase production for our own needs while reducing our reliance on other states. The Chief Minister said that we should be prepared to face any food shortages or scarcity. He said that the state would follow new farming techniques and procedures in order to get the most produce from the smallest amount of land by using them for regional needs. "We need to increase rice cultivation to over 25,000 hectares in the next two years. Cultivation of cereals, tuber crops, tapioca and plantain/banana should be increased to a larger area," Vijayan said.

Government policies and the pandemic situation had increased the hopes of framers for the large production of tuber crops especially tapioca as they are draught resistant. Since tapioca is less costly daily wagers used to consume this, as the results shows they consume this more compared to other social classes. The results shows that most of the consumers were attracted to tapioca because of the availability, cheaper rate and also because of the nutritional values. The result also shows how food consumption and social class is directly related. Daily wagers were unable to buy their usual food in their diet because of the unstable income during lockdown. We could also see that as Marx's said ordinary people have little power in the capitalist economic system , labourers has very less capital which led them choose tapioca instead of rice, vegetables and meat. In case of farmers, we could see that they had good amount of sale but the economic structure of the country hit them as there are very less amount of profit which led them to struggle. Since it is tapioca, they could transform it and store it for the future sales. We could also see many people having tapioca as they were rushed with memories of their childhood which led them have more tapioca based items.

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