

Cultural Predicting Food Myths in the Northern Punjab of Pakistan: The Belief and Practice of Mothers in their Region, A Qualitative exploration

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the cultural role of food myths, people's perceptions of socio-ecological food pattern and their tales. Myths and food play an important role in culture and lifestyle. How they seek satisfaction from the related socio-ecological foods. People use their cultural myths every day in life, significantly older generations in rural areas. The wider description of food myths and health are investigating the generally used traditional approach that tends to take a more reductionist approach to food myth and health. The various powwow on food myths and health are being explored related to ethical issues of personalized nutrition diet and fitness. Ethnographic methods were used to conducted interviews in Alipur village of Punjab. Survey data were collected from 40 randomly selected household heads from one village, and in-depth interviews were conducted with 26 household heads who shared cultural practices about food myths.

Key Words: Culture, Food, Myths, Perception, Socio-ecological, Punjab

Introduction

Food is necessary for life survival. Food merely forms the foundation of a person character. Just as a tree is known by the fruit, it yields and a man by the company he keeps, so a human being is known by the food he eats. A man is influenced by his surroundings in which he gathers and learn eating patterns. If a man eats an ideal form of food, he can certainly think and therefore have a pure, flawless character. A myth is a traditional or legendary story, collection, or study. It is derived from the Greek word mythos, which means "story". Mythology can refer either to the study of myths or to a body or collection of myths. A myth also can be a story to explain why something exists. A myth is a story or a narrative which have some reality behind it. It comes from the Greek word myth, meaning "fiction". Mythology may either be a myth sample, a body or a number of myths. A myth may also be a narrative about that there is something which has to be explained. Humans' cultures usually include different types of myths—creation myth, concerning the origins of the world, or how the world came to live. Nature myths describe why something in nature is the way it is. Any of the myths was placed just before start of the essential moment of a historical past. A myth may be a tale of multiple-significant symbols. A myth is a holy tale, and for the people who say it, it has religious or ethical meaning.

Myths also relate to the thinking and beliefs of a society and articulate them. The purpose of the myth is to explain how something came to be, to teach a moral lesson, to describe a historical event, to revel collective hopes and feelings. A myth may be a common concept which has no foundation of everyday usage. The word is used in folklore, folklore or folklorism in academic fields by many philosophers. Myth validated the social situation, endorsed it and preserved it. It gave a historical overview and traditions of the universe. We believe in myths like that because they seem to be real. The myths of food are common but are not real, that is. Different misconceptions about food not only exist in Pakistan, but worldwide. What to eat, when to eat and how much to eat are questions that often annoy most people. We now have scientific evidence, and we do not believe in food theories dependent on that knowledge.

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This study highlights culture is a way of life. Culture is sometimes referred to as the mixture of intelligence, a body of faithful and a body of behavior. It includes many major elements, including social identity, linguistic, thinking, communication, behavior, traditions, attitudes, principles and entities which are also ethnically, racially, religiously, geographically or socially unique. These factors have an impact on the values and beliefs of the wellbeing, recovery, wellbeing, sickness, disease and provision of preventive benefits to the healthcare practitioner or healthcare workers. (<https://www.cancernetwork.com/view/role-culture-healthcare-decision-making>, 2012)

Culture influence human lifestyle, how they cook, eat, drink, how and why which kind of utensils they used in the kitchen. People eat according to the deep impact of history, ecology, climate and their strong faith. (Falk,1994), emphasize that the eating organizations are the significant part of every community. Hence, food is one of the major elements of culture from where the journey of culture begins. Food not only changes our body structure from time to time but it also one of the causes of evolution of various rituals. (e.g., eating cake at a wedding) or informal life stage (e.g., drinking a nightcap before bedtime) to another. Food is a significant part of material culture. The most basic rule in food culture is to classify which food is edible. Humans are omnivores but use only a part of the potentially edible substances in nature (Fischler 1988). Different national and ethnic groups of different communities worldwide consume different forms of food. They differ on a religion-based basis in their food culture. The bread, the prepared meals, the beverages and the fruit take the shape of every society. These are the identity of that culture Religion informs through religious literature what haram is and what is halal? What should they eat, and what is prohibited in a relevant culture? My faith as a Muslim, that any food, fruit, or drink whose mention found in our Holy Book- The Holy Quran and describe as good. This must be beneficial for our health.

Likewise, any food, fruit, or drink which is described as baleful and prohibited, we Muslims should not eat or drink them at all because we will be sinning by doing so. Christians eat the meat of pigs, but Muslims think it is haram or prohibited because their religion guides them. Westerners' rejection of eating raw fish until recent years is one example. Another is Scandinavian farmers' traditional rejection of mushrooms as food, even though they were formerly served at banquets for the nobility. We use it to enhance the safety, digestibility, and edibility of food products. In this study, the writer discovers the misconceptions of food behavior and the consequences of everyday life. The researchers are also investigating the health implications because of the mythology and practice of food in the region. This study has been significant; we know how well the local people follow food myths. This study is crucial. Otherwise, modernization, structural reform of food items, globalization and urbanization have modified our dietary patterns today.

Methodology

This study executed a mixed-methods involving the ethnography, qualitative methods. Personal observation and first-hand experiences of researchers also contribute to the findings of this study. Mixed methods are defined as research methods, which inquirer or investigator collects, and data analyze different forms, such as integrates, findings and draws inferences using qualitative method approaches in a single study or program of study. The purpose of applying the qualitative method is to simultaneously collect qualitative data put together and find results to understand a research problem (Philipsen G, 1992). It is helpful to layout in which methods of ethnography support each other and allow the phenomena of analysis to be correctly and thoroughly understood. Interviews of participants have been performed for studies into triangulation. The triangulation approach has been used to draw on the complementarity of the design where questionnaire surveys may accommodate for one another's weaknesses. Content analysis has now been used efficiently in a wide range of scientific areas in database and library science as one of the widely used methodological methods. (Heider K, 2001). Similar to other field's content analysis has been primarily used in information and library sciences as a qualitative research method until recent decades. Several current research studies used ethnographic methods that discourse some of the weaknesses of qualitative approaches. During the participating infield, the researcher observes the different attitudes, behaviors, actions, habits, norms, values of the community. During anthropological fieldwork, the researcher travel to the community to study and spend a long period there, not only observing but joining with their culture as much as humanly possible. I just went and lived with community people and studied their food culture, the custom ritual by folk literature.

The data collection was done by analyses and interview guides by the participants. Standard data collection techniques were also implemented. In order to research various stories in Pakistan's cultural traditions, we used this ethnographic approach. Analysis using this mixed approach. (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009), The types of interview data through a questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide, both written and used in Punjabi. All data were collected by the lead author, Ms. Laraib has been conducted between since June 2020 to September 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic in Alipur village, the pothohar/ federal region of Pakistan. In Islamabad, multi-culture exists Sindhi, Balochi, Kashmiri, Pashtun, and Punjabi, and different ethnicities of existing, mostly people were pothohari, and my research mainly focuses on Punjabi culture in Islamabad, which represent the whole Punjabi culture of Pakistan. Punjab is the largest and populous city of Pakistan, having approximately 110 million population. That reason, we have selected Alipur village for the research area to get multiple prospective realities and numerous cultures and people migrants from rural Punjab.

We concentrated semi-structured, in-depth interviewing, and social-surveys in with household heads and the majority of females as a primary field site, so tap their views of core perceptions of this study. The ethnographic fieldwork and interviews provided valuable contextual related information culture and food myths related to health background for this study. Nevertheless, my data material from ethnographic fieldwork and conducted interviews are analyzed explicitly somewhere in this thesis. The importance of interpretive research performed in a number of disciplines in the analysis of social, moral, and nutritional misconceptions is that just like cultural scientists it may inspire others to be able to identify opportunities and explore alternative ways of understanding about what seems too common to be beneficial. That is another example why I appreciate daily ethnographic research. Meaningful insights into the sense of changes in lifestyles are most strongly and interestingly articulated in forgotten aspects of everyday lives. The method of sampling aims to gather data from a larger group of individuals. The method of sampling is straightforward and reflects the whole population. An discussion from all local citizens or with only certain people of the same socio-cultural background is practically complicated. This study will require unlikely, targeted sampling along with the method of snowball. The researcher uses various techniques and approaches to obtain correct knowledge in a qualitative analysis approach. This approach selects main informants and respondents by subject and gives meaningful details relating to our study.

The sample selected from the overall population: (Source: Field Survey, 2020)

Statistic description from villagers and socio-demographic surveyed (n = 40)

Sociodemographic characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Place of residence		
Rural	27	67.5
Urban	13	32.5
Household heads		
Female	32	80.0
Male	08	20.0
Current Age of women		
20-29	08	20.0
30-39	12	30.0
40-49	15	37.5
50>	05	12.5
Level of education		
No education	02	05.0
Primary education	08	20.0
Secondary education	12	30.0
Higher education	18	45.0
Employment status		
Employed	12	30.0
Unemployed	10	25.0

Unskilled work	05	12.5
Skilled work	13	32.5
Ethnicity		
Punjabi	32	80.0
Sindhi	02	05.0
Pashtun	04	10.0
Bauchi	02	05.0
Religious affiliation		
Muslim	37	92.5
Christian	02	05.0
Others	01	02.5
Household wealth index		
Richest	05	12.5
Richer	07	17.5
Middle	22	55.0
Poorer	04	10.0
Poorest	02	05.0

This research uses both methods primary and secondary data were collected. The method of secondary data for the federal area of Pakistan and the study of Punjabi culture and food myths practices every day in life has been collected from different sources of internet articles, ResearchGate, sciences hub, social media, and documentation from Pakistani cultural and religious history. This secondary method data was used to get a variety of knowledge and understanding the theme of research and research problem cultural perceptions of food myths practices. According to Davidson & Patel, qualitative verbal analysis is often used to gain a better understanding of the research problem. Hence, we applied primary method data collection for research through the household heads, community members, males, and females who have strong beliefs food myths and who often traditional perception their food practices for health. All information gathered from primary and secondary methods data was used to give an answer to research problems.

Research methods applied for this thesis and evaluate data collection and analysis techniques used in this research. The research methodology will be to highlight philosophical assumptions, which is measured as an integral part of the research. Attempted is also made to constitute of validity research and research techniques. After careful reviews of theoretical assumptions, content analysis, semi-structured, hermeneutic, interviews, critical analysis discourse, interpretive, stance, research design, data collection, data preparation, limitation, reliability, validity, and a brief summary of expectation associated to the theoretical framework were discussed to underpin this research. This study goal to examine the content, cultural practices of food myth, and religious health concerns. We have reviewed 50 to 90 research articles and research reports, which were conducted on textbooks, literature, novels, from cultural practices, food myths perditions their every day in the life. This information gained in these interviews/sessions will not be presented and quoted verbatim but used as background and content information useful for understanding the cultural perception of food myths and beliefs of their myths.

Perception and beliefs regarding food myths practice in community

Beliefs are the feeling of certainty, feeling of assurance, and feeling of rigidity, feeling of confidence. It is formed through our life experiences that exist in our surroundings. For example, if the individual eats pasta for the 1st time, and after eating his stomach, it is painful. It is the worse experience. Then he made false interpretations about food, which become the negative belief/ reality. It is the logical understanding which is based on different emotions, opinions, and convictions in the result, which become a massive belief. So, people make different stories which pass to the next generation. Food beliefs are the individual experiences, but when it passes to the next generation in the form of stories, it is called food myths.

Liquid Dite Food Myths

Liquid food is the integral part and the most important part of our nutrition intake requirement for most effective and optimal functioning of our body systems. In our culture there are six major types of drinks, they are:

1. Water, the magic drink
2. Milk, drink for life
3. TEA, the mind refreshing drink
4. Fruit Juices, healthy drinks;
5. Alcohol; the Killer drink;
6. Carbonated drinks (Beverages) unhealthy drinks.

Water -The Magic Drink

Water is a prime requisite for life, second only to Oxygen. It is a vital means of good health, a source of strength vigor and energy. Life originated in water and to it owed all freshness of physical energy. Most of human organisms comprise water and life's chores and functions cannot continue without water. Bulk of human food is also water. Water is, beyond doubt, an essential nutrient but is often ignored in adequate nutrition planning. Water is essentially needed for almost every function of our body. It is essential to the digestive process, it's the vehicle that carries food to the tissues and carries away waste; it does control body temperature.

If we don't drink water properly then it may affect the function of kidney, liver and body fat store in our body. Drinking not enough water is the cause of lot of disease like joint pain, renal problem and top of the list is obesity. Different perception about water. Different region of the world has different types of water if people migrate from one region to another then the water didn't suit their body it may cause of stomach ache. One story I heard from my mother that put onion under the arm and stand in front of the sun in early morning for five minutes then the water of other area may not affect our health. The salty water is the cause of throat problem, constipation and overweight. The boring water is purer water in urban and rural areas. It makes skin color refreshing and shiny. In our religion the zamzam water has very much importance muslins believe drinking zamzam water is the cure for many diseases even in the time of death people gave this water to their relatives. This water has healing qualities.

Another important function of water is that of a lubricant. The fluid surrounding the joints reduces friction and facilitates their motion. Internal organs like small intestine have fluid around them to glide easily without harm. Even tears serve as nutrients. Water also keeps all air passages moist. Water is a miracle drink. It is a drink for life Try this miracle drink regularly and you will experience the miracle yourself. Water heals both body and soul

Perceptions.

- One glass of water at night before exiting works miracles-cleanses your body, quenched your skin and take care of soul.
- Make this your habit after brush up your teeth you have to drink one glass of lukewarm water Your internal system will improve a lot and it resolve the constipation problem.
- Water is good for cough and cold: Try drinking water
- Water boosts your endurance when exercising. Therefore, drink water before- in the middle and after exercising. This will help you a great deal lot.
- Drink lots of water along with the high fiber foods. Your constipation problem will be solved.
- Drink more water will improve your thinking.
- Loose fat by water: In YouTube there are number of diets for weight loss i.e., in early morning drink five glass of water.

Milk – The Drink of Life

The only food that most mammals including human receive during the first week of their lives is milk. It provides an almost complete diet during this stage of their development, containing carbohydrates, protein, and fat, minerals calcium especially and a variety of vitamins. Milk is called as Nature's most nearly perfect food because

it contains all types of minerals, vitamins and proteins, carbohydrates. We are very fortunate, in the present days, to find a variety of milk choices. If you are cutting down of fat reach for the fat free or low-fat milk. The low-fat milk reduces the blood pressure problem. Milk is 90% of water, which help prevent you from getting dehydrated before and after the workout. The dairy products are made with milk e.g. yogurt, butter, cheese cream different sauces, throughout in the life of human this product plays very important role. In that globalize era this product helps different dairy company e.g., Olpers, every day, Nestle, Haleeb. The working of product is same but for earning more money for own sake business man launched new dairy products day by day.

Perceptions of people about water:

- Drinking 3 glasses of fat free milk or low-fat milk is good for your bones.
- Drinking lukewarm milk before going to bed helps to sleep well.
- The child who did not drink milk in their childhood had short height.
- Milk is fattening.
- The people who consume at least 3 serving of low-fat dairy are less like to be overweight.
- Drinking milk during pregnancy makes the skin color fair of the new born baby.

Fruit Juices – The healthy drink:

Fruit Juices are real healthy drinks. Fruit juice really taste good, looks good and it does you good. Fruits are gift of God to mankind. Fruits provide us energy and strength. The presence of so many minerals and vitamins etc., in the fruits is a dear indication of its effectiveness for our body systems. In this dearness era the fruits are not in excess of every person. Generally, it is a considered opinion that raw fruit is better than the juice- Very correct. But the fruit juice has its own importance and value. Here are some of them.

- Fruit Juice is digested much earlier than the fruit itself. In fact, fruit juice provides instant energy as it is easily assimilated in the blood stream
- Fructose (fruit sugar, available is easily digestible and is tastier than the normal sugar
- Fruit juice is considered to be very effective in curing the digestive problems. Constant use of fruit juice cures very effectively the ailments connected with digestion problems Fruit juice especially beneficial in the ailment of liver.
- Try fruit juice instead of any medicine for constipation Orange papaya constipation. In case, constipation is persistent, you should eat figs, apricot and grapes
- Fruit juice has hidden power of cleansing the blood and that is why people who take fruit juice regularly have red and bright face and the natural charm is visible on their face.
- Fruit juice is equally good for the healthy as well as the sick. Fruit juice, apart from providing instant energy does help stimulation of heart and the mind and also brings feeling of freshness.

In this dearness era the fruits are not in excess of every person. But in form of fruit juices, we enjoy the flavor of the food which are not in our excess e.g., kiwi, coconut etc. but on the other hand some people believe these pack form juice hasn't any nutritional value. With advance technology human made different kinds of juicer machine which is helpful to quickly made any kind of juice. If someone is sick, then we will take fruit juice to him.

Tea – The Mind Relaxation Drink:

Tea is a natural beverage. It is one of the most versatile drinks. Hot or Cold, it can be sweetened to suit individual taste, flavored with a variety of fruits, spices and herbs. It has no fat, sugar or calories. It's we who mix sugar and milk in the tea and thus add sugar, fat and calories and make it harmful. Tea is a delicious and refresher. That's why people love tea. Tea is a natural plant food. Different company made variety of tea packs which is helpful to made tea in second. Four form of tea: the black tea, green tea, herbal tea, pink tea.

Black tea : Majority of tea harvested becomes black tea It is made by exposing the tea leaves to air to promote a essential biochemical procedure that turns them a deep red- brown color and gives black tea its unique rich taste. During pain of menstruation black tea is given to the girls.

Green tea: The leaves are quickly steamed or heated; they retain their green color. It is most famous in china and japan. Most of our youth used green tea for weight loss. And it is healthy to drink a cup of tea before taking meal.

Herbal tea: Is the blend of plant leaves, flowers or roots and various spices or fruit flavors.

Pink tea: Mostly produces in Kashmir because of that it is called Kashmiri chai, mostly made in winters with adding nuts in it which made body warm.

Perception of people about tea

- Tea is a good source for strengthens tooth enamel and combats cavities.
- Drinking tea also may reduce the formation of plaque and inhibit growth that contributes to tooth decay.
- Tea has a property of relaxation and rejuvenation, tea's potential to stimulate alertness and mental performance.
- Drinking tea make skin color dark. Most of belief that there is such kind of thing in tea after drinking that it burns our skin like sun heat burn our skin and change our skin complexion into dark.
- Drinking tea makes you feel tired/ sleepy. Drink tea it makes their body lethargic so they can't do any work actively.
- Drinking tea is good for migraine patient. It makes your mind relax
- Tea is good which makes human mind active and bones strong.
- Drinking tea during pregnancy is dangerous for the fertility of baby.

Alcohol – The Killer Drink

Alcohol is a forbidden drink in Islam. It is sin to drink alcohol in our religion Islam. Many people who drink heavily and live long enough, show this effect of brain loss in symptoms which are easily recognizable. Premature aging, memory loss, reduction of sexual activity. The damage of liver due to alcoholic drinks, the heart muscles also become weakened due to heavy drink. Alcohol can harm male sperm. It is dangerous for pregnant women. Heavy drinking during pregnancy is likely to result in deformed baby.

Carbonated Drinks – Unhealthy Drinks

The carbonated drinks are highly acidic. It has high sugar content, carbonic acid, chemical and coloring etc. which is no way helps in digestion. Carbonated drinks linked to bone fractures. Consumptions of colas and other carbonated beverages is associated with bone fractures in teenagers. Most of our youth used it as a fashion, mother give it to their children in their lunch box. Some low-class children feel inferior in front of those child. In different entertainment shows these brands Pepsi, Coca-Cola, Fanta are sponsored to earn money.

Social Implications

The liquid diet has its own significance in our daily life. In all over the world for the survival of human these all kinds of drinks play vital role water. Water the magic drinks, milk drink of life juices healthy and carbonated drinks healthy and unhealthy drinks alcohol the prohibited drink in our religion but in other religion it is used it on celebration purpose. Some used it when they are sad some when they are happy these all drinks have symbolic importance. Like these liquid drinks versatile the brand business i.e., water brands Nestle S.A, PepsiCo, Pak Turk to alcohol brand Murree Brewery etc. Some people support these brands system some were not. The people who were not support these food brand systems they are also using these products in their daily routine.

Conclusion

It is understood that for any human body food is the basic and important need. We also categorized those needs based on cultural patterns, environmental conditions, religious myths, etc. Means the nutritional needs of the human beings are different and are feel through our learned behavior of eating. In every culture the food eating pattern is different and may be because of the consuming level of their body. No doubt human beings are survived from a large struggle of the process to adopt the things (human evolution). Human beings have travelled

a huge period for the adaptation of food. They also eat food before and now, but the good and healthy diet they performed many experiments and a huge period to adopt the food for their needs. Human do not eat food at the first time, human adopt the food slowly and gradually. Some people are so fond of eating that their sole purpose of life is eating. On the other hand, some people only eat for the sake of living. People fond of eating spend their major portion of income on restaurants and hoteling. Other focus on their health and they are very much concerned about their healthy lifestyle towards food, they regularly go to gym and do exercise to make their body shape fit. Thus, food plays an important role in building human health and fitness. Then there comes another category of people who eat some selective section of food to fight against some certain disease. People also arrange a food pattern to have better intelligence, for example eating dry fruits can increase the ability of brain to work faster. So these were all the ways of eating food according to some particular reasons followed by people in our society, and society has different obsessions about different eating habits. There are so many societies in the world which have different dietary patterns and that dietary patterns are based on their different nutritional need and the eating pattern of the that society. Furthermore, that needs are directly associated with the religious, cultural and environmental factors. Eating unhealthy food, timing of eating food, urbanization, globalization, cooking pattern, eating pattern and other factors and activities can directly impact on our health. And, when our diet is affected it may cause disturbance in our daily life as well as our surrounded population can also be disturbed. So, it is clear in mind that, take simple and hygienic diet for the good and better health. The cultural and environmental factors also impact on our health through the help of our food eating, cooking and dietary patterns.

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