

Inclusion through food at the workplace

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to determine the role that food plays in the inclusion of employees at the workplaces in India. The basic research would be exploratory. The research would be Qualitative in nature. Both primary and secondary research would be involved. The primary data would be collected through telephonic interviews and other virtual means like Skype etc. The data would be analysed through the use of Open Coding and text analysis.

The implications of the research are very practical. Once companies understand the impact that food has on inclusion, they would come up with new initiatives to make sure that the food served on their premises includes everybody irrespective of region, religion, age etc. This would make them a more inclusive place to work which can also help with employer branding and talent attraction. While a fair amount of research has been done in the domain of Diversity and Inclusion in terms of demographics like Sexuality, Age, Gender etc., the literature for inclusivity in terms of food remains extremely scarce. Hence, this research would add a lot of value in this particular field.

Keywords

Inclusion, Food Inclusivity, Culture, Demographics, Workplaces in India.

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Introduction

Eating food together is a definitely a closer shared understanding as compared to crouching about a spreadsheet of an Excel document according to Tracy Stuckrath who happens to be an advocate for dietary requirements. She has, in the past, urged employees to understand, regard and incorporate food requirements in order to make the place where employees work a comprehensively more inclusive work environment. "Food is one aspect of our lives that brings everyone together, it's the common ground" according to her. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a disability can be characterized as a mental or physical weakness that majorly constrains at least one or more of the major activities of one's life. The U.S. Congress later widened that definition in 2018 to incorporate consumption of food as one of the major activities of life. "At the point when you have a food hypersensitivity or a dietary limitation ... you can't simply approach a buffet like every other person. The food is not named, and it is not safe for individuals with food sensitivities and dietary limitations" says Tracy Indeed, even the fragrance of certain types of foods, for example, peanuts and fish, can be hazardous and even fatal to individuals who have serious food hypersensitivities according to ACAII (American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology). The U.S. Department of Transportation has also stated in May, 2019 that a serious food hypersensitivity is an inability according to the Air Carrier Access Act "if presentation to the allergen confines the traveller's capacity to inhale," composed Rosie Spinks who is a correspondent for Skift. The impetus for that declaration came from a protest by a parent of a young lady who was 7 years old at the time who suffered from a sensitivity to nuts and was restricted from boarding her plane early. The parent needed to clean their seats to prevent the exposure of their child to nuts of any kind.

Disregarding the dietary limitations of an employee can get an organization into serious legal trouble.

Stuckrath referred to the account of a lady with a fish hypersensitivity who told her boss about her medical condition and requested that other employees be communicated that seafood should not be made in the kitchen of the company. Her solicitation was overlooked, and she endured a serious hypersensitive response that brought about an emergency room treatment, a specialists' remuneration guarantee and fourteen days of missed work. She eventually filed charges for discrimination.

What's more, in 2015, a previous Panera labourer sued his company for segregation, saying that his senior supervisor and associates prodded and insulted him regarding his nut allergy. What's more, they fooled him into eating a treat that had nuts in it.

This topic gains an even bigger importance in the context of the Indian society where people from different cultures, religions and creeds live and work together. The workplaces in India therefore take up almost a social aspect as people are different from each other in a variety of ways. Hence, this study will attempt to explore exactly what aspects relating to food play an important role in determining the inclusivity at the workplace. Companies focus their inclusion efforts on people processes like Performance Appraisals, Compensation etc. but this study will help to bring forward a much more fundamental aspect in an employee's life, which is food.

Literature Review

Even though they are often used together, inclusion means something entirely different than diversity (Molly Struve, 2019). While inclusion is an indication of the perception on part of the employees of the workplace, diversity is indicative of the differences between workers in

terms of factors like race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, nationality and age (Roberson,2006). In his article for Forbes, Inclusion Is Invisible: How To Measure It published in the year 2019, Paolo Gaudiano talks about the difference between diversity and inclusion and how measuring Inclusion is much harder compared to measuring diversity. He also talks about how inclusion is invisible to those who enjoy it and only the people who have experienced any incident or incidents of exclusion or discrimination can comment on the degree of inclusivity in an organization. Gaudiano talks about the analogy between health and inclusion. Just like people don't think about their health as long as they are healthy, they don't think about inclusion until they go through an experience in which they are excluded. He talks about how an effective way to measure inclusion in a particular organization is to create a questionnaire with a list of "incidents of exclusion," and ask the people in that organization to indicate whether and how often they experience these types of exclusion. He mentions the phenomenon of "Code Switching", where people behave or speak differently in the workplace than they do in their personal lives and the toll it exacts on them. He also talks about how the simple practice of conducting satisfaction surveys decreases churn rates and increases productivity. There are qualitative measures in which inclusion can be measured (Fitzpatrick & Sharma,2017) such as Attitudes (Whether the training on inclusion has any affect or not can be quantified with the observation of differences in the company including but not limited to employee's attitudes), Engagement and satisfaction (When it comes to measuring inclusion, employee engagement surveys are an extremely effective and valuable way) or Transparency and openness in answers (If a company collects data from the exit interviews of employees, inclusion can be quantified by looking at how open and transparent those answers are as they reveal the level of comfort of employees to disclose their feelings). There are Quantitative measures discussed as well. They are Diversity in the leadership of the company (How much diversity exists in the leadership of a company with regards to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, nationality and age determines to a very large extent how inclusive/exclusive the company really is), Grievances and labour relations issues (Ideally, inclusion should have a consequence where there is more transparency and the relations between employer and employees is strong which results in a reduction in the number of complaints), Performance (According to the Human Capital Trends report of Deloitte, organisations that are inclusive are 3.6 times can deal with problems and issues relating to human capital as compared to organisations that are not.

Similarly, inclusive organisations are 2.9 times more likely to be able to identify, invest in and build leaders), Social distance and Attrition Rate (If the development is better, it results in less grievances on part of the employees and a reduced social distance which further results in the retention increasing and the attrition rate going down) as well as Innovation, creativity and agility (Organizations that are inclusive are 1.8 times more likely to be receptive to change as compared to organisations that are not. They are also 1.7

times more likely to leaders when it comes to innovation in their particular market and more likely to be productive which will result in an increase in the cash flow for the company).

There are a lot of way in which Diversity and Inclusion is beneficial in the workplace (Maric,2019) namely: - Financial Performance (Research has shown that companies in the top percentile with regards to gender diversity experience outperform by 21%), Decision Making (Diversity is one of the crucial factors for better decision making), Reputation (Companies that promote diversity have a better reputation as they are seen as more compassionate and more responsible in a social sense), Attracting Talent (Deloitte states that close to 67% of people who are looking for jobs use the diversity present in the company as a crucial criterion when weighing their choices in terms of employment with regards to the employer).

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She also talks about the practices that a company can implement to ensure diversity and inclusion. Some of these are: - Being fair to all the employees, establishing a sense of belonging, Opportunities for growing that are offered to all employees are equal, rewriting job descriptions and ads to make them gender neutral so that they attract both male and female job seekers.

Inclusion is defined as "the degree to which the employee perceives it that he or she is respected member of the workgroup through the experience of treatment that satisfies its or its need for belonging and uniqueness" (Shore et al., 2011). Employees who work in a workplace that is inclusive tend to feel comfortable, authentic, full of support and that people trust them (Ferdman, 2014) and more crucially, that they are able to focus all of their effort in an efficient manner to a particular organisation (Roberson,2006). As we can see from the above definitions, inclusion is basically psychological construct at the level of an individual, something which can take similar properties as that of the group or the organisation as a whole. If we were to conceptualize in this way, it will have a couple of implications. Firstly, since inclusion is a concept that has shared characteristics (Dixon & Cunningham, 2006; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), the employees and leaders at the workplace tend to have personal opinions if the workplace is inclusive or exclusive. Secondly, Ferdman (2014) also says that inclusion should be something that is analysed on the basis of phenomenons. Therefore, conceptualizations of inclusion have a chance of to be specific with regards to their content and impacted by the related conventions and expectations that exist in that particular setting. Macintosh

and Doherty (2010) have made a case for the same as well when they talk about the evaluation of an organisation's culture.

According to Ferdman (2014), individuals, behaviours of leaders, groups and teams, characteristics of organisations and factors of societies have the ability to impact the level to which people get to feel included or excluded within the organisation. On a personal note, interactions between people are particularly salient. However, the way that employees tend to act when they are around their LGBTQ peers (Nishii & Rich, 2014) as well as the way they speak also has the ability to impact the feelings and perceptions of inclusivity. Another factor that needs to be taken into account here is that these interpersonal interactions do not have to be particularly obvious as very subtle behaviours can determine inclusivity or a lack of it (Cortina, 2008). Finally, the access to status and power for people who work in an inclusive workplace ought to be equal, irrespective of who they are outside of their work (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Nishii & Rich, 2014) - a characteristic which has long been recognised in order to facilitate some useful conversations and personal exchanges (Allport, 1954).

Employee groups as well as the leadership also has the ability to influence the perceptions at the workplace of a culture that is inclusive of the LGBTQ community, as they determine the norms of behaviours and the way that employees interact with one another including equality in terms of treating one another, how crucial it is for employees to be able to express their opinions and ideas, the expectation for collaborating with each other and engaging in conflict in a productive manner (Ferdman, 2014; Avery, 2011). The theory of social learning (Bandura, 1986) helps in explaining these things. According to Bandura, "Almost all of the learning experiences that tend to result from direct experiences can also occur in a vicarious way by observing the behaviours of other people and the consequences that they endure for them (p19). Something that illustrates these effects, there is also evidence that the employees at organisations will behave in a way that is inclusive when they are expected to do so by their leaders (Umphress, Simmons, Boswell & Triana, 2008). It goes on to show that co-workers have a crucial part to play when it comes to displaying and promoting inclusion (Cunningham & Sartore, 2010; Huffman, Wartrous & King, 2008) and those kind of behaviours from peers which is supportive in nature can point towards inclusivity (Melton & Cunningham, 2014). These days, more and more organisations are experiencing a workforce which is extremely diverse, therefore highlighting the requirement for the leadership of an organisation to the changing and ever evolving environment at the place of work (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008; Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen & Kossek, 2008; McKay, Avery, & Morris, 2009; Pless & Maak, 2004; Sanchez-Burks, Bartel, & Blount, 2009; Scott, Heathcote, & Gruman, 2011). By reviewing the diversity literature, Shore et al. (2009) is of the opinion that, even until the recent past, researchers have very much thought about diversity from the point of view of a single lens, mostly gender, race and ethnicity. But, in the recent past, this particular research area has focused more on determining the importance of Inclusion and Diversity at the workplace (Bilimoria, Joy, & Liang, 2008; Nishii, 2013; Q.

M. Roberson, 2006). To be a little more specific, there has been a concerted effort towards understanding how internal processes which are not conventional in nature can help to promote inclusion at the workplace (Shore et al., 2011). For example, Wasserman, Gallegos, and Ferdman (2008) are of the opinion that leaders play a crucial role when it comes to championing initiatives that focus on inclusion. Rather than trying to silence resistance when it comes to initiatives relating to inclusion, leaders ought to try to battle this resistance in order to lend support to the idea and the vision of a workplace which is inclusive (Wasserman et al., 2008). Therefore, inclusion is really a budding concept that is theoretically and fundamentally different as compared to diversity (Shore et al., 2011). In a broad manner of speaking, inclusion can be defined as the involvement of employees as well as the incorporation of diversity into the programs and policies of the organization, whereas diversity is linked to the variation in terms of the make-up of a work group (Q. M. Roberson, 2006). Even though there are a lot of definitions as far as inclusion is concerned (e.g., Lirio et al., 2008; Q. M. Roberson, 2006), the 2 generic ideas of belonging and uniqueness come out of these conceptualisations (Shore et al., 2011). The subject of belongingness mirrors a feeling of acknowledgment for every single hierarchical part, while the uniqueness topic infers that the commitments of all representatives are esteemed whereby every part encounter respect and the chance to voice their opinions in the working environment. The shared characteristics over these definitions propose that we have to start seeing how this sort of work atmosphere can be encouraged to give all representatives the chance to feel like they are unique and they belong there. Expanding upon these predominant topics relating to inclusiveness and keeping in accordance with the generic definition of the work environment (e.g., Reichers & Schneider, 1990; Schneider, 1990), the phrase 'climate for inclusion' is characterized as a common view of the workplace including the strategies, policies and tasks that direct a mutual understanding that comprehensive practices, that inculcates a sense of belonging and uniqueness, are considered the norm and are also supported and compensated. The learning and integration paradigm (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996) proposes that when associations earnestly work and grasp assorted variety by connecting it to work procedures, assignments and methodologies, the outcome is a considerable improvement as far as group functioning is concerned. However, employees will only bring their true and whole selves to work if and only if they feel comfortable at their place of work. In addition, it was found by Tulenko and Kryder (1990) that in order to be creative, employees must feel comfortable which without question involves the application of differences between individuals. In addition, employees belonging to groups that are traditionally underrepresented are often discriminated, excluded, and marginalized (Goldman, Gutek, Stein, & Lewis, 2006). The feelings that these employees experience as a result affect their want as well as their ability to make a contribution to the organization in a negative manner (L. Roberson & Block, 2001). Therefore, an atmosphere of consideration, that causes a feeling of belonging and uniqueness, gives a kind

of solace expected to representatives to apply their personal differences to work procedures, techniques, as well as assignments. Since the incorporation and-learning viewpoint underlines the requirement for a few fortifying frameworks and procedures (Thomas and Ely, 1996), the job of authoritative prize frameworks, work-bunch synthesis, bunch size, and objective association are likewise investigated on the grounds that these components are principal in strengthening the significance of working environment consideration. Taken as a whole, the article investigates the way in which an association wide turnover exertion planned for standardizing work environment consideration through the development of an atmosphere for incorporation can empower representatives to apply their individual contrasts to work procedures, systems, and assignments. Q. M. Roberson (2006) talks about how research is desperately needed when it relates to finding out the parameters of an environment that is truly inclusive. Shore et al. (2011) contest that "there is still much to do when it comes to research in order to understand how organizations can create an inclusive environment, one which provides opportunities for the tapestry of employees who work with each other in the world's global economy" (p. 1275). In addition, Wasserman et al (2008) also says the leadership in an organization has an extremely critical part in moulding a workplace which is truly inclusive in every sense of the word. Hence, researchers have for a very long time realized the role that the leadership plays in the shaping of perceptions of the environment (Dragoni, 2005). Leaders have a tendency to convey their own interpretations and understanding of organizational policies. They serve as "interpretive filters" when it comes to procedures, policies, and tasks (Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). If we talk about food at the workplace as just an additional component of work, we can see that there are a lot of likenesses in the capacities and conveyance of work environment talk which highlights food somehow or another.

Invariably, when we talk about inclusion, it is often accompanied by the term 'Culture' resulting in the phrase 'Culture of Inclusion' (Hanson, Wolfberg, Zercher, Morgan, Gutierrez, Barnwell & Beckman, 1998). Even though in the domain and context of education, (Zollers, Ramanathan & Yu, 2010) talk about how the characteristics of the culture of a school are related to the effectiveness of its inclusion program. There is evidence to support that there is a strong correlation between national culture and the implementation of inclusion management programs (Peretz et al, 2015). Continuing upon earlier research (Peretz et al., 2015; Toh and Leonardelli, 2013; Van der Vegt et al., 2005) it can be argued that the cultural setting impacts the effectiveness of inclusion management in the foundation of an inclusion climate. The impacts of culture and how the development of an inclusion climate at the workplace relies on cultural values of the country has been documented (Stoermer, Bader, & Froese, 2016). Therefore, we can conclude that inclusion at the workplace is dependent on culture (both organizational and national).

The factors of food practices could be categorized under 4 concepts, namely: - culture, social, personal, and situational were presented (Dickens, 1965). The variations in food practices have a correlation to the use of food by people

belonging to a particular culture (Leininger, 1969). Foods can also be categorized on the basis of culture as: "traditional" foods are those foods that are found more in the culture of origin; "basic" foods are those foods that are found in both cultures; and "new" foods are those foods that are found more in the host culture (Dewey et al, 1984). People in different cultures have different food behaviours (Axelson, 1986). Studies conducted by Freedman & Grivetti, 1984 indicate that food-related behaviour is modified by culture. Therefore, it can be concluded that food plays an important role in the culture of people and both influences and is influenced by it.

As we can see, inclusion at the workplace is dependent on culture and food plays an important role in the culture of people, therefore, by establishing a transitive relationship, we can see that inclusion at the workplace is related to the food being served at the workplace. The research gap thus identified and the research question this study aims to answer is thus "What are the aspects of food that contribute to inclusivity/exclusivity at the workplace"?

Research Methodology

The Basic research that was done for the purpose of this study was exploratory since the aspects of food when it comes to increasing inclusivity at the workplace remains unexplored especially in comparison with traditional people processes like Performance appraisals, Promotion, Compensation, Hiring etc.

Hence, the study aims to shed some light on what particular aspects of food contribute to and therefore, can be utilised by organisations to improve inclusivity at the workplace. A qualitative approach was considered most appropriate for this study for a couple of reasons. One is its ability to make clearer certain social phenomena which are not particularly straightforward to comprehend (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). The other is its ability to reveal certain new aspects and parameters which probably would not have been thought of before (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As far as the type of qualitative method is concerned, the Narrative method was considered the most appropriate as it encapsulates the past and present experience of the participants at their workplace with regards to the food being served. It also gives an insight into the company's attitude towards food at the workplace. Emphasis was not just on the content of their story and opinions, but also the way in which they talked about the food served at their companies noting their tone and moods. The general mood of almost all the candidates was of discontent and frustration.

Trustworthiness- The trustworthiness of the data can be determined from the reliability and validity of the data (Seale, 1999).

Reliability- Even though it was initially decided to measure the reliability of the data, it was eventually done away with due to the existing literature which states that since reliability issue concerns measurements then it has no relevance in qualitative research (Stenbacka 2001) adding that the issue of reliability is an irrelevant matter in the judgement of quality of qualitative research.

Validity- The quality of a research can be related to the generalizability of the result and thereby to the testing and increasing the validity or trustworthiness of the research (Johnson, 1997, p. 283). Since the results of this study do not pertain to a particular type of industry or job role, it is extremely generic and is hence, valid.

Sampling

The sample size was 20 i.e. a total of 20 people were interviewed for the purpose of this study. The inclusion criteria were that they should be working professionals at companies which have more than 1 office campus and they should have meals at their office on a frequent basis in order to be able to judge the food and their company's policy regarding food especially with regards to inclusion. The people interviewed were of a similar economic and social background in order to avoid inherent biases due to higher or lower expectations from the food served.

Even though both primary and secondary research were involved, the data was mainly collected through primary research while the secondary research served more like a reference point that provided a direction. The data for this qualitative study was collected during the months of April, May and June 2020. The participants in the research study were Indian citizens of Indian origin, who were working Blue collar jobs residing in various Tier 1 Indian cities, mostly Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore.

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing countrywide lockdown, traditional in-person interview methods could not be employed to understand the interviewees' experiences. Telephonic interactions were the primary medium through which participants were encouraged to share details of their experiences, and a pre-constructed list of questions was used to guide the conversations in a pre-determined manner. These questions were formulated using important trigger points and areas of study highlighted by prior research in the field, along with some novel questions. However, the interviews were mostly unstructured and free-flowing and the participants were encouraged to be open and uninhibited in their views and opinions so as to add new perspectives to the study.

The interviews were conducted in English, a language all the interviewees were proficient and comfortable conversing in, following which recorded audio files of the interviews were transcribed to text form and then cross-checked for accuracy. The participants were interviewed on an individual or one-to-one basis.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the interviews of the participants of their experiences with regards to food at their places of work, the method of Open Coding was used. This involved certain aspects that were discovered during secondary research and some new aspects that came up during the study. Initially, open coding approach was used (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify all the relevant segments of data from the transcripts of the interview, typically seven to eight sentences long, and they were coded based on in-situ or within quote vocabulary – identifying 18 relevant data segments during this process.

Next, "similarities and differences" (Gioia et al., 2012: 20) were sought amongst the many open codes, a process of integrating, renaming and deleting various codes was followed through which 9 first order codes were identified. Next, second order themes were looked for, that is, deeper structures or patterns of potential aggregation or relationships across the first order codes, asking "whether the emerging themes suggest concepts that might help us describe and explain the phenomena that are being observed" (Gioia et al., 2012: 20). Through this process, 9 first order codes were aggregated into 4 higher level second order themes, each theme containing 2-3 first order codes.

During the time spent revealing discoveries and citing extracts from the transcripts, all endeavours were made to keep up devotion to the genuine words and expressions utilized by the interviewees to depict their experiences with regards to food at the workplace, albeit minor syntactic rectifications were made to the passages with the end goal of lucidity in cognizance. As a final point, the names of the interviewees that are mentioned in this paper are not real, in order to protect the identities of the participants and maintain a level of confidentiality.

Findings

A number of insights were drawn from the conversations about the participants' accounts especially with regards to certain new aspects relating to food that had not been considered before such as region, quality and the overall variety. Such aspects relating to food that affect inclusiveness at the workplace have presented in the following excerpts: -

Taste of Food: - The taste of the food being served is probably the biggest aspect of food that I look for. There is a popular notion that the food which is served on the campuses of all companies is bad in taste but that is actually not true. The companies who serve good food in terms of food invariably have employees who are more satisfied compared to companies who do not since they feel that their company cares about them according to Nikita. This sentiment was echoed by Aman, who said, there have been times when I got into trouble with the HR department because I picked up a fight with the canteen staff due to the pathetic and tasteless food that was being served. The taste was so bad, it reminded me of the food that was served in my hostel.

Hence, the taste of the food being served was identified as an important aspect of food which determines how much employees feel whether their companies care about them and is therefore, inclusive of them.

Religious Beliefs: - All participants who were interviewed were of the opinion that their religious beliefs with regards to the food being served at the workplace played an important role in them feeling included or excluded by their organisation. This was partly a new aspect in the sense that while the food served during religious holidays like Eid, Navratre etc. were found to have a significant role in affecting the inclusion at the workplace during the secondary research phase, the importance of food served even on a day to day basis with regards to the individual's religious beliefs was somewhat new.

Rhea who works in a Multinational FMCG company was of the opinion:

I have worked in a lot of companies in my career in various sectors and food has never been much of a priority as far as management of the workplace is considered especially with regards to inclusion. However, on a personal note, I have always felt more included and valued by an organization which takes out the time to ask employees their food preferences because being a Jain, I face a lot of limitations and there have been occasions where I had to skip a meal and sometimes both breakfast and lunch because there was no option for Jain food and I did not have the time to go out and get something to eat.

In addition, Imran, who is a Muslim, said that Being a Muslim, our religion dictates that we only consume Halal meat. Therefore, I will always prefer to work for a company that serves Halal meat but more importantly, bothers to make that distinction and bothers to inform its employees whether the meat being served is Halal or not.

Therefore, a strong correlation was observed between the organisation being cognizant of the religious beliefs of the employees pertaining to food and the feeling amongst employees of feeling included.

Food Allergies: - Allergies or lack thereof was one of the predetermined aspects with regards to food inclusivity at the workplace since the secondary research available for the subject is mostly western where allergies are more prevalent. The importance of this aspect was highlighted during the conversations with the participants as agreed by Ujjwal, himself suffering from a food allergy caused by the consumption of nuts who was of the opinion:

Having been severely impacted by a food allergy during the course of my life, it was not only important but almost necessary for me to work in an organization which takes into account the food choices of its employees. I genuinely feel that India lags far behind other countries especially western ones when it comes to the attention given to allergies at the workplace which is unfortunate since it is an extremely important aspect of people who suffer from one. Being an HR professional myself, I know the various facets that a company focusses its inclusion efforts on but unfortunately, especially in India, food is not one of them.

Kusha, who has worked for several MNCs, has faced a similar ordeal. She said People at my former company were aware of my allergy, not only did they used to make fun of it but a couple of times, they actually tried to trick me into consume milk and other dairy products knowing that I suffer from lactose intolerance just because they thought it would be funny to see me experience flatulence. This created a situation for me where I had to report it to the HR department and eventually, leave the company.

People suffering from food allergies have to face a lot of hardships in life. Allergies can be caused by something as basic and common and widely used as Wheat or dairy products or nuts. The people who suffer from it have to be extremely careful with regards to what they consume outside their homes. Hence, as expected, the general consensus among the participants was that an organisation should either hold a companywide survey or enquire employees about their allergies at the time of onboarding. This is also beneficial for companies as it insulates them

legally in a future scenario where an employee suffers a reaction due to their allergy.

Hygiene of food: - The hygiene of food being served is a well-documented factor that was discovered during the course of the study and belongs to the Universal category. This sentiment is echoed by Kritika who said:

For me, personally, the hygiene of food plays a tremendous role in determining the extent to which the company cares about its employees and therefore, the extent to which the employees feel included within the organization. I am not someone who is particularly choosy about what he eats, however, I do want the food that I am served to be of good hygiene. If the company you are working for cannot even make sure that the cafeteria or mess or canteen where the food is being served is hygienic, it shows how much the company cares about its employees. I have worked for companies in the past which didn't put a lot of focus and emphasis on the food they served and while saying that it was the reason I left those organizations would be a bit of a reach, it was certainly a contributing factor.

The hygiene of food on offer was a previously unexplored aspect of food at the workplace. The respondents were of the opinion that the hygiene of the food being served was an equally important factor as the rest and needed attention from their companies. Most respondents had a problem with their current situation in this regard, saying that the hygiene of food and the place where food was being served could be improved by their respective companies.

Nutritious Value of food: The nutritious value of the food being served is a well- documented aspect of food. Like other aspects, this can also determine how included/excluded employees feel by their company. Priya, said that Since I suffer from a mild Vitamin C deficiency, I need food items that are rich in Vitamin C such as lemons in my diet. However, the cafeteria in my office campus does not serve salad on a regular basis and even when it does, it does not serve lemons with it. This leads to me having to carry Amlas and lemons along with me every time I go to office.

Rashika, who suffers from a protein deficiency said that Being a vegetarian, my diet relies heavily on milk and pulses in order to manage my protein deficiency. However, the mess at my office rarely provides these items and as a result, I have to compensate for the lack of protein in my lunch by loading up on proteins in my breakfast and dinner. I also need to eat protein bars for the same.

Variety in Food: The variety in food was another previously unexplored facet of food inclusivity which was discovered during the course of this study. These days, employees don't want just Dal-Rice but also Rotis and a Curry to go along with it.

Many people held this opinion and nowhere is this sentiment more apparent than when Abhas says:

There have been times at my current company when I felt like screaming because of the same monotonous food being served every single day. Just because you serve Dal-Rice every single day of the week does not equate to providing options for the vegetarian employees. A company which genuinely cares about its employees and want them to feel happy and satisfied would be cognizant of the fact that employees need options and variety in food. A survey could

perhaps be floated amongst employees enquiring about their food choices and based on the number of responses, the menu could be prepared so that it caters to the maximum number of employees.

More variety in food served was a newly discovered aspect during the course of the study. Vegetarians need more than just Roti-Subji, Non-Vegetarians need more than just Chicken and Vegans require more than just Salads. Even though there is a possibility that it might result in an increase in the costs, the people felt that it was definitely worth it as an increase in the variety of food served would increase the satisfaction levels of employees which would result in an increase in inclusivity as well.

Festive Occasions: This was one of the predetermined aspects that was found during the course of secondary research. Ritik said:

I have witnessed first-hand how a company can unconsciously exclude and alienate its employees by not making certain provisions during the time of a religious festive occasion. A couple of my friends who are Muslims were disappointed by the fact that our company did not make any special provisions for employees for Ramadan during the month of May. I have also worked in companies who do not make any provisions for any festival, period.

Companies need to understand that these gestures help with employee engagement and make employees more loyal towards the company, thereby increasing inclusivity.

Prashant added something similar, My parents are extremely religious and I have had an extremely religious upbringing. Therefore, I find it extremely disappointing that my company makes no special preparations during the periods of Navratre and Sawan. For me, it's the least a company can do for its employees in a country where the majority of the population is Hindu in order to make them feel included.

India is a secular country where people from different religions live together in harmony. Companies need to understand that by catering to the needs of a particular caste of religion, they are unconsciously alienating the employees who may belong to the minority and therefore, excluding them. They need to understand that religion plays an important role in people's lives and making special provisions at the time of festive occasions, specifically tweaking the menu a little bit, may go a long way in making employees feel that their company appreciates and cares about them.

Vegetarian/Non-Vegetarian/Vegan: The most documented and straightforward aspect of food that contributes to inclusion at the workplace was whether the food served is Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian, Vegan, a combination of them or ideally, all three. The reason behind the same is perhaps that this is a situation faced by people at not only the workplace, but every social gathering like parties, weddings, birthdays etc. Prateek was of the strong belief:

I think that it should be one of the things that companies ask employees when they are made to fill out forms during on-boarding. This could be beneficial from a company standpoint as well. If a company knows how many of its employees are Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian or Vegan, they would have better idea regarding the composition and quantity of food that should be dished out. It would make the entire supply-chain a lot more efficient and reduce the

wastage of food. Not to mention the added advantage of employees feeling more included by their respective organisations. I feel lucky that so far, all the organisations that I have been a part of catered to the needs of Vegetarians, Non-Vegetarians and Vegans.

Koushik added his 2 cents to the discussion, saying Being from the south part of India, I am a pure vegetarian and have never had non-veg food in my life. Additionally, my parents do not eat or let me eat from places that serve both veg and non-veg food and insist on eating from only those places that serve only vegetarian food. This was an issue at my last company. I wouldn't say that it was a major contributor to my leaving that company but it was a factor nevertheless.

All 20 of the respondents felt that the biggest aspect of food that determines inclusivity at the workplace is whether they serve Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian as well as Vegan food or not. Often times companies might not cater to the needs of one of these groups (especially vegans) and make them feel excluded. One practical suggestion that came during the discussions was companies could make employees fill out an additional segment regarding this at the time of on-boarding and adjust the food supply chain at the office campus accordingly.

Regional Food: This was another previously unexplored aspect relating to food inclusivity at the workplace. One primary reason for the same is the diversity among various cultures present in the country and its representation in the foods of various regions. It was found that barring North Indian food which is provided by most companies irrespective of the location of the office, the availability of South Indian and West Indian (Marathi, Gujarati etc.) foods was dependent on the location. For e.g., South Indian foods were really prominent in locations like Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai etc. but not so much in locations like Kolkata and Delhi. Similarly, Marathi and Gujarati cuisines were available in Ahmedabad, Mumbai etc. but not so much at other locations. Vishal, who belongs to Chennai, was of the opinion:

Being from the South, I feel almost alienated by my company due to the lack of South Indian cuisine. I work in Delhi, so I am used to the lack of availability of South Indian cuisine generally but working at a Multinational company, I thought they would be more inclusive of the larger population and take everyone's choices into account. It's not just the people from the southern part of India, I have Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali friends too who face similar issues.

The inverse was true in the case of Vibhor, who is from Delhi

Being from Delhi, I have had north Indian cuisine my entire life. Ever since I had to relocate to Bangalore due to professional commitments, it's been a nightmare. I am not a fan of South Indian food and that seems to be the only thing available here. More so, even on the few occasions when I find good quality north Indian food, it is way too expensive. The company's inclination is towards south Indian food as well since most of the employees are locals.

Hence, it can be seen that the food that served at the office campus of a company is largely influenced by its geographical location. This is something that employees do not particularly appreciate and feel that the menu should be

a uniform one that inculcates cuisines from all regions rather than being dictated by the location of the campus.

Superordinate Themes

4 superordinate themes came up and the 9 aspects of food that relate to inclusion at the workplace can be clubbed into these 4 themes. These Superordinate themes are: -

1) Quality of food (those aspects of food that determine the quality of food served). These are: - Taste of food, Nutritious value of food and the Hygiene of food served.

2) Faith Based factors (those aspects of food that can potentially include/exclude certain specific employees based on their religious beliefs and faith, for e.g. if a company makes special food provisions during Navratre and not Ramazan, they are excluding their Muslim employees). These are: - Religious beliefs and Festive occasions

3) Health- (those aspects of food that affect the health of the individual consuming it). These are Nutritious value of food, Hygiene of food served, Availability of veg/non-veg/vegan food and Food allergies.

4) Geography of food- (those aspects of food that relate to the location where the food is being served). These are: - Regional food and Festive occasions.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. Out of the 20 people interviewed for this study, 18 felt that food was an important part of their lives in general and 14 felt that their organisation focussing on their food requirements went a long way in making them feel more included within the organisation. There is a strong possibility that this number will only increase in the coming years since Diversity and Inclusion as a field in general is gaining a lot of importance and traction in organisations worldwide these days and Food Inclusivity specifically is an upcoming field. The number of aspects pertaining to food that affect diversity at the workplace increased from 3 to 9 during the course of this study. The facets of food that have a direct correlation as identified by this study are: -

1. Religious Beliefs: - It was found that people's religious beliefs (Jain people avoiding spicy food and food which has onions and garlic etc., Brahmin people who are non-vegetarian avoiding non-vegetarian food on Tuesdays and Thursdays) played a crucial role in them feeling included by their organization.

2. Food Allergies: - Similarly, people in general and people who themselves had food allergies specifically felt that organisations enquiring employees about their allergies would make them feel that their organisation cared about them as human beings and therefore, would make them more loyal towards their respective organisations.

3. Food Hygiene: - The hygiene of food on offer was a previously unexplored aspect of food at the workplace. The respondents were of the opinion that the hygiene of the food being served was an equally important factor as the rest and needed attention from their companies.

4. Variety in Food: - This was another new parameter discovered during the course of this study as a lot of the employees felt that the food being served by their companies was extremely monotonous and lacked variety. Even though there is a possibility that it might result in an increase in the costs, the people felt that it was definitely worth it as an increase in the variety of food served would increase the satisfaction levels of employees which would result in an increase in inclusivity as well.

5. Festive Occasions: - Similar to religious beliefs, the employees were of the opinion that organisations should make an effort during religious festivals to make changes to the menu and incorporate special items that are representative of that particular festival. Most people (85%) said that their organisations made special arrangements during religious festivals like Ramadan, Navratre etc. They also shared the sentiment that it would result in an increase in the feeling of inclusivity on part of the employees.

6. Vegetarian/Non-Vegetarian/Vegan: - This was perhaps the most important predetermined aspect pertaining to food affecting inclusion at the workplace. As expected, employees agreed that the presence or absence of relevant food options (Vegetarian/Non-Vegetarian/Vegan) went a long way in determining how inclusive or exclusive an organisation was. This was especially true in the case of vegans who often faced a situation where the only food option they had was a salad.

7. Regional Food: - The other interesting conclusion that came from the study was the correlation between the location of the premises of the company and the food served on campus. It was found that barring North Indian food which is provided by most companies irrespective of the location of the office, the availability of South Indian and West Indian (Marathi, Gujarati etc.) foods was dependent on the location. For e.g., South Indian foods were really prominent in locations like Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai etc. but not so much in locations like Kolkata and Delhi. Similarly, Marathi and Gujarati cuisines were available in Ahmedabad, Mumbai etc. but not so much at other locations. People who were not native to a particular location felt alienated when they did not find their local cuisine as part of the menu.

8. Nutritious Value: - The nutritious value of the food being served is a well-documented aspect of food. Like other aspects, this can also determine how included/excluded employees feel by their company

9. Taste of food: - the taste of the food being served was identified as an important aspect of food which determines how much employees feel whether their companies care about them and is therefore, inclusive of them.

Based on these subordinate themes, 4 superordinate themes were identified. These were: -

1. Quality of food (those aspects of food that determine the quality of food served).

2. Faith Based factors (those aspects of food that can potentially include/exclude certain specific employees based on their religious beliefs and faith).

3. Health- (those aspects of food that affect the health of the individual consuming it).

4. Geography of food- (those aspects of food that relate to the location where the food is being served).

Here are a few different ways organizations and managers can utilize food and drinks to make an increasingly inclusive work environment:

- Involving the workers in arranging the food served at various occasions.
- Offering standard, vegan and gluten-free menus during food provided at lunches and dinners at work.
- Survey workers about their dietary needs, and permit respondents to answer secretly in the event that they pick. A tech organization in New York did as such and utilized the data to name all the things in its organization cafeteria to make cafes aware of the eight nourishments that cause 90 percent of every unfavourably susceptible response: eggs, fish, milk, peanuts, shellfish, soy, tree nuts and wheat. On the off chance that an association can't oblige somebody who happens to have a dietary limitation, consider giving a food endowment. For example, a business that offered free breakfast and lunch to its representatives couldn't give its assurance for Halal meats to a new Jewish worker, so it gave that worker an allowance to cover the food the worker brought to work.
- Seeking out concealed fixings in the food your organization offers. Veggie lovers, for instance, won't have the option to eat the vegetable soup offered in the organization cafeteria if it is made with chicken stock, and the soup may likewise be beyond reach to laborers with diabetes on account of the high sodium content, Stuckrath brought up. Toaster ovens may cross-debase sans gluten bread. Consider furnishing a toaster oven with a non-gluten setting (bread that is sans gluten is denser, and the setting permits the bread to completely toast without consuming), to be utilized distinctly for sans gluten bread.
- Considering the selection of vending machines. Are solid decisions and affirmed fit and vegetarian choices included among the sweets and different bites customarily advertised?

Discussions and Limitations

This study discusses in-depth the various aspects of food that affect the inclusivity at the workplace. Often times, companies disregard the food being served by them as a necessity and don't put much thought into what is being served. This study attempts to point that corporates can focus on bettering certain aspects of food in order to improve the inclusivity at the workplace. One limitation with this project is the fact that the entire foundation of this study is still very much a theoretical concept which is yet to be put into practice. Hence, it's viability in terms of practical applications is still a little unclear.

Also, whatever small research that has been done so far on food inclusivity has been in the western countries more specifically USA, hence there is a chance that certain relevant adjustments need to be made before the same theory can be applied in an Indian context for workplaces in India.

The other crucial limitation that was faced while conducting this study was the fact that people had to stay at their homes due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Had that not been the case

and instead of virtual internships, the students across the country had physical, on location internships, they would have gotten to know the food that is served by their company on campus and the sample size could have been much bigger. Similarly, had it not been for the pandemic, the primary research could have been done in a more comprehensive manner by visiting the food courts and cafeterias of various organisations through first-hand observations.

Being a qualitative study involving in-depth analysis of interviews, the study was limited to a relatively small number of participants. Also, the inherent disadvantages of using a random sampling technique can be seen in the study. Random sampling technique faces the criticism of not being a true representation of the entire population. Hence, there is some merit in criticising the research of being limited in its scope since it was as only the employees who were a part of the social and the professional networks that were uncovered by this study participated in it. Therefore, the possibility exists that the views and opinions of the working professionals that were the participants of this study are not shared by the larger population.

However, due to the nature of the study, it was decided that random sampling was the best way to go about interviewing people. Further studies into this field utilizing diverse sampling techniques are recommended, in any case, to comprehend whether the experiences recorded by this study are like those of people who are a part of different networks. Similarly, as this study is a qualitative one, it discussed the various aspects and facets of food that relate on inclusion at the workplace. However, it does not discuss the degree to which each of these aspects affect inclusivity and their relative importance compared to each other. Therefore, further studies focussing on the quantitative aspect that deal with the degree to which each of the aforementioned aspects affect inclusivity at the workplace with regards to food could be conducted. In such studies, several aspects related to food inclusivity that might have been missed in this study could also come forward.

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