

## A Study on Consumer Attitude towards Buying Organic food Products during COVID-19 Pandemic with reference to Coimbatore District

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### ABSTRACT:

Organic food industry is booming business in India and it's expected to grow even larger in the near future. Consumers buy organic products because they believe that organic product contains higher levels of antioxidants that neutralize harmful cell activity and for environmental concerns. Consumption of organic food products is highly dependent on the awareness levels, spending capacity and accessibility. Consumer believes that the Organic foods have high nutritional value and it keeps oneself away from diseases. During this COVID 19 pandemic most of the consumers have become aware of organic food that contains healthy and nutritional value. The main purpose of this research is to study to consumer attitudes towards purchasing organic foods during COVID-19 Pandemic. The area of the study is confined to Coimbatore District. The attitude of the consumers towards purchasing of organic products is the main objective and hence the study is descriptive in nature. Convenience sampling technique has been applied to select the sample group from the available infinite population in the district. Hence usable data of 314 has been collected and hence it is the sample size for the study. Primary data as first hand data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questioner was collected through Google forms. Secondary data collected from the websites, supports the study in the discussion of the findings and hence the findings of the study show that the Health Conscious, environmental concern and consumer knowledge have positive impact on the Consumer Attitude.

**Key words:** Health Conscious, environmental concern and consumer knowledge

### I. INTRODUCTION

Eat Healthy, Stay Healthy, Stay Home, Stay Safe! - A daily chant or a morning alarm to all of the people and societies on the earth during the pandemic era as a result of the outbreak of Corona

Virus across the world. The Pandemic is causing a lot of changes in the daily lives of people around the world. At a first sight, everyone is expected to follow World Health Organization (WHO) and governmental advice to protect against COVID-19 infection and transmission.

What one eats affects one's physical and mental health, and both are a priority. Diets vary greatly from one country to the other based on many factors including eating habits and culture. Yet, when it comes to food habits, there is a lot of things we know about how to choose the right combination of food to achieve a healthy diet in spite of where we live. In this context, choice of organic food products is being advised widely as a great source for healthy diet.

Healthy diet and Good nutrition is very important during pandemic. Infections cause many health issues and the body needs extra energy and nutrients. It is still possible to consume healthy foods during these difficult times to keep one's body healthy. Yet, when it comes to food, there is a lot that we know about how to select the right combination of healthy food to attain a healthy diet regardless of where we live. Fruits and vegetables provide lots of vitamins and minerals to add as a healthy diet. But consciousness may be extended to find whether the fruits and vegetables are free from pesticides and chemicals. That's why suggestive measures to shift an Organic Way!

According to nutritionist Naini Setalvad, 'An organic diet is not just about nutrition, it is the Art of Eating it reflects your attitude to life and to the world, because good food sustains life-bad food kills. For healthy growth, we need PURE food. Organic food is safe, pure, more nutritious, environment friendly, protects against diseases and maintains peace of mind. A pure diet fosters purity of mind, body and soul. Be it the Bible, Quran or the Bhagvad Gita, the first advice is 'to keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the lamp of wisdom and keep our mind strong

and clear'. 'Organic food really has more nutrients, vitamins and mineral, including vitamin C, iron, and magnesium and phosphorous than conventional produced food. This is because in organic farming, great emphasis is on nourishing the soil which in turn gives healthy plants.<sup>1</sup>

According to a 2016 study in the *British Journal of Nutrition* "When it comes to meat and milk, organic products can have about 50% more omega-3 fatty acids, a type of unsaturated healthy fat, than conventionally produced products.. Organic milk tested in the study also had less saturated fat than non-organic.<sup>2</sup>

#### Statement of the problem:

Organic products provide long term benefits to people and also the environment and hence it has become the need of the hour. People's lifestyle has changed a lot and everyone is more concerned about the health. During this COVID-19 Pandemic situation we are more concern about our health and we have to strengthen our immune system. A common individual in the society is now aware of the health issues that arise from the non-organic food that contains chemical additives and harmful fertilizers. Health concern plays an important role in the attitude of consumers towards organic products. The study has been conducted considering only the people belonging to Coimbatore District for understanding their attitude and also the health conscious of the people during COVID-19 Pandemic.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Schifferstein et al (1998)** examined the health related determinants with regard to organic food consumption in Netherlands. The Data was collected from the customers of natural and health stores. Results indicate that absence of chemicals ,better taste and environment friendliness were the major reasons to go for organic foods among customers. Organic food purchasers conveyed that consuming organic food is a part of their life.
- **Sääksjärvi et al. (2009)** conducted a nationwide survey in Finland to measure the knowledge of the consumers regarding functional foods, using a multi-dimensional index. Results

indicated that demographic profile of the consumers such as gender, age, education and income are the key influencers affecting the attitudes of the consumers and their knowledge of functional foods, which in turn, affects their purchase behaviour for these food items. The study also suggested that one of the main goals of the marketers and producers of functional food items is to inform and educate the consumers regarding the ingredients of these products along with the perceived health benefits attached to them.

- **Krivy and Mecking (2011)** examined the environmental and health consciousness of a consumer, and the effects of the behavioral costs on the purchase behaviour of the consumers for organic food products. Results of the regression analysis showed that income did not affect the organic food purchase although it significantly affected how much the consumer spent on organic food products. The study revealed that organic food consumption was more closely associated with health consciousness rather than environmental concerns and the motivation to eat healthy food had a stronger effect on the purchase behaviour of the consumer with regard to organic food products. Similarly, Higher education also affected the purchase of organic products positively. Household income had a strong effect on expenditure on organic food, but it did not have a significant impact on the probability of being a regular consumer of organic food products.

- **Guilabertand Wood (2012)** studied the importance of organic certification in winning the consumer belief on health benefits of organic labeled products. They argued that consumers had strong preferences for organic or non-organic foods based on their beliefs about the benefits of organic foods, and the reliability of the product labels. The results showed a correlation between choice of organic-labeled products and health beliefs. It was found that the consumers' taste discriminations were influenced by prior beliefs about health and organic foods, and that these beliefs were triggered by the label information. The study provided insights on public policy for strengthening organic food labeling process and certification programs.

- **Hirogaki (2012)** conducted a detailed survey among 1255 young Japanese consumers to study their attitudes, perceptions and buying behaviour for functional foods and the factors that shape the food choices of the consumers for functional food products. The results of the study revealed that health claims could increase the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thehealthsite.com/fitness/health-benefits-of-organic-food-sa214-124108/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fdbusiness.com/report-organic-contains-50-more-omega-3/>

acceptance of functional food among consumers. The study also revealed that the consumption of functional foods was closely associated with the consumers' motivation regarding health, and the more health conscious a consumer was, the more likely he was to buy functional foods. It was also argued in the study that demographic characteristics were also important factors which influenced the consumers' buying decision for functional foods. In addition, those consumers who attached more significance to the naturalness in food products bought less functional foods.

- **Kareklas et al. (2014)** provided a hypothetical assessment on the factors that influencing consumer purchase behaviour for organic food products. Finding of the study revealed that the consumers' beliefs that organic foods are healthier than other conventional food products (egoistic factor); and that organic foods are produced in an environmental friendly way (altruistic factor), influenced or shaped the attitudes and purchase intentions of the consumers towards organic food products. Thus, health as well as environmental concerns together drives the consumers towards making organic food purchases. The study also provided empirical evidences that those advertisings that highlighted both the egoistical and altruistic concerns of the consumers, were most effective in shaping the attitudes of the consumers towards organic food and in turn, led to purchase intentions for organic food products among the consumers.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a scientific and systematic way to solve a problem. It is used to identify select, process and analyze information about a topic. The research is done to understand the Consumer Attitude towards Buying Organic food Products during COVID-19 Pandemic in the Coimbatore district. The study has been conducted based on the following objectives:-

#### Objectives of the study

- To study the consumer attitude towards purchasing of organic products.
- To study about health conscious of the people during COVID-19 Pandemic.

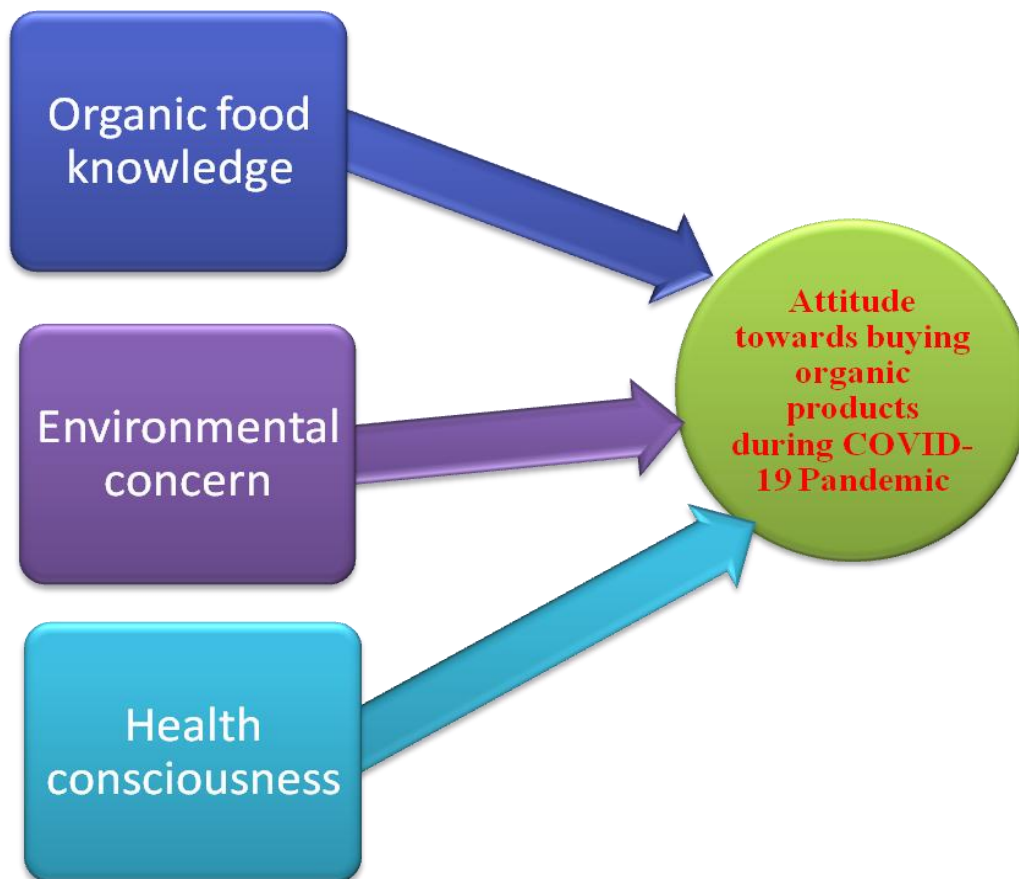
#### Research type, sampling technique, sample size, tools for data collection and data analysis.

Coimbatore was known as a hub of entrepreneurial farming, since the year 2016, there has been a 50% increase in the number of certified

organic farmers and 45% increase in acreage. According to the Tamil Nadu Organic Certification Department only 106 farmers had obtained the certification from 2007, when TNOCD was formed, to 2016. But in the past three years, the number has gone up to 160. Organic farmers say the market for certified organic produce in the city is good<sup>3</sup>. Hence, the area of the study is confined to Coimbatore District. The attitude of the consumers towards purchasing of organic products is the main objective and hence the study is descriptive in nature. Convenience sampling technique has been applied to select the sample group from the available infinite population in the district. Hence usable data of 314 has been collected and hence it is the sample size for the study. Primary data as first hand data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questioner was collected through Google forms. Secondary data collected from the websites, supports the study in the discussion of the findings.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Percentage analysis, chi square test and correlation analysis were applied in data analysis.

<sup>3</sup> <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/tracking-indian-communities/organic-agriculture-brings-back-business-for-coimbatore-farmers/>



The above Figure 1 showing the conceptual framework for the study.

#### **Organic food knowledge:**

The information stored in a person's memory which influences the way that the customer understand and evaluate the possible choices of organic products. Knowledge about the organic product is very important while purchasing food products. Knowledge about organic products can affect attitude about the product and ultimately , buying decision of the customers.

#### **Environmental concern**

Environmental concern is one of the main motivational factors towards purchasing organic food products. Several studies have shown that

organic production causes less harm to the environment. Consumer are increasingly getting environmental conscious and willing to contribute to protect the environmental via any means.

#### **Health Consciousness**

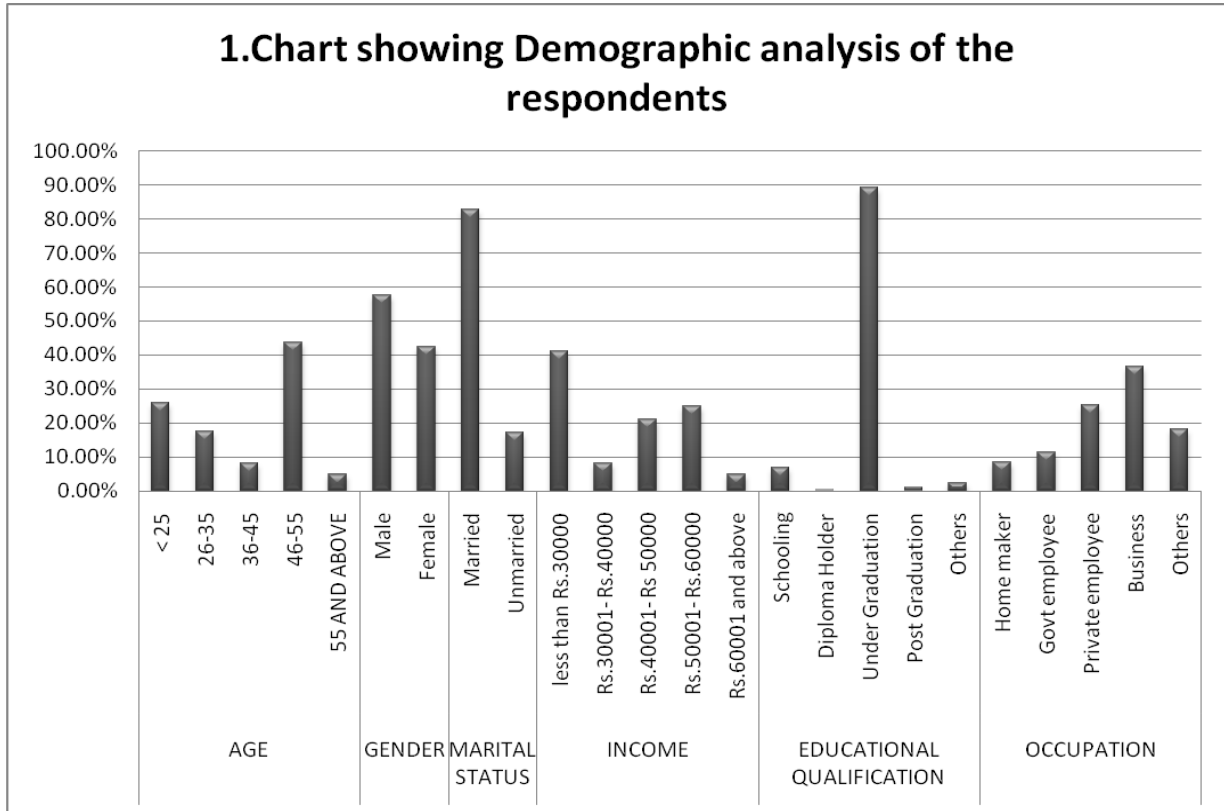
Today's life is getting very competitive and demanding. Consumer has hardly time for physical activities but highly exposed to the diseases like Covid 19. Consumers are very much concern about their health and their food choice to stay healthy during Covid 19 pandemic. Health concern is the important factor that has influence over consumer attitude toward organic food products.

**ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION  
 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS**

**1.TABLE SHOWING DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	PARTICULARS	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	OF PERCENTAGE
<b>AGE</b>	LESS THAN 25	81	25.8%
	26-35	55	17.5%
	36-45	26	8.3%
	46-55	137	43.6%
	55 AND ABOVE	15	4.8%
<b>GENDER</b>	Male	181	57.6%
	Female	133	42.4%
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>	Married	260	82.8%
	Unmarried	54	17.2%
<b>INCOME</b>	less than Rs.30000	129	41.1%
	Rs.30001- Rs.40000	26	8.3%
	Rs.40001- Rs 50000	66	21.0%
	Rs.50001- Rs.60000	78	24.8%
	Rs.60001 and above	15	4.8%
<b>EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION</b>	Schooling	22	7.0%
	Diploma Holder	1	.3%
	Under Graduation	280	89.2%
	Post Graduation	3	1.0%
	Others	8	2.5%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>	Home maker	27	8.6%
	Govt employee	36	11.5%
	Private employee	79	25.2%
	Business	115	36.6%
	Others	57	18.2%

Source : Primary data



**INTERPRETATION:**

From the above table it is found that 25.8% of the respondents are between the age group less than 25, 17.5% are between 26-35 years, 8.3% are between 36-45 years, 43.6% are between 46-55 years and 4.8% are 55 and above, 42.4% are female and 57.6% are male. Majority of 82.8% are married and 17.2% are unmarried. Regarding Income, about 41.1% earns less than Rs.30000, 8.3% earns Rs.30001- Rs.40000, 21.0% earns Rs.40001- Rs.50000, 24.8% earns Rs.50001- Rs.60000 and 4.8% earns Rs.60001 and above. 7.0% respondents completed Schooling, .3% respondents are Diploma Holders, 89.2% respondents are Under Graduates, and 1.0% respondents are Post Graduates and 2.5% respondents having other qualifications. 8.6% respondents are Home makers, 11.5% respondents are Govt employees, 25.2% respondents are private employees, 36.6% respondents are doing and 18.2% respondents belongs to others category.

## 2. CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

### 2.1. Chi-square analysis- Relationship between demographic profile and Attitude towards buying organic products

Independent variables	Dependent variable	Chi-square	p-value	Result
Age	Attitude	1.015	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Age and Health conscious</b>
Gender		27.238	.007	There is a significant relationship between <b>Gender and Health conscious</b>
Marital status		27.652	.006	There is a significant relationship between <b>Marital status and Health conscious</b>
Education		1.703	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Education and Health conscious</b>
Occupation		88.925	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Occupation and Health conscious</b>
Income		84.835	.001	There is a significant relationship between <b>Income and Health conscious</b>

Source: Primary data

#### Interpretation:

From the above table it can be observed that, there is a significant relationship between Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income and Attitude towards buying organic products, since the p value is less than the significance level 0.05. So the null hypothesis is

rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that the demographic factors Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income have a significant relationship with Attitude towards buying organic products. Hence, based on the demographic profile the purchasing power and preference of the customer differ.

### 2.2. Chi-square analysis- Relationship between demographic profile and Health conscious towards buying organic products during Covid 19 Pandemic.

Independent variables	Dependent variable	Chi-square	p-value	Result
Age	Health conscious	1.531	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Age and Health conscious</b>
Gender		45.431	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Gender and Health conscious</b>
Marital status		25.654	.009	There is a significant relationship between <b>Marital status and Health conscious</b>
Education		1.466	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Education and Health conscious</b>
Occupation		1.612	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Occupation and Health conscious</b>
Income		1.221	.000	There is a significant relationship between <b>Income and Health conscious</b>

Source: Primary data

#### Interpretation:

From the above table it can be observed that, there is a significant relationship between Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income and Health conscious towards buying organic products during Covid 19 Pandemic, since the p value is less than the significance level 0.05. So the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is significant difference

between the demographic factors such as Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income and Health conscious towards buying organic products during Covid 19 Pandemic. As the lifestyle and attitude differs among different age group, gender, income states and so on, their opinion on health consciousness also differs especially during Covid 19 Pandemic.

### 3. CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Correlation analysis is used to measure and analyse the degree of the relationship / association between two variables. To analyze the relationship between the variables namely Attitude, Health

conscious, Environmental concern and Consumer knowledge towards buying organic products, Correlation analysis has been carried out in this study.

#### Relationship between Attitude, Health conscious, Environmental concern and Consumer knowledge towards buying organic products

Variable	Attitude	Health conscious	Environmental concern	Consumer knowledge
Attitude	1			
Health conscious	.619**	1		
Environmental concern	.493**	.620**	1	
Consumer knowledge	.606**	.775**	.617**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Among the variables considered, highest correlation exists between **Consumer knowledge** and **Health consciousness** Factors ( $r=0.775^{**}$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), followed by association between **Environmental concern** and **Health conscious** ( $r=0.620$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), there is an association between **Attitude** and **Health conscious** ( $r=0.619$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), there is an association between **Environmental concern** and **Consumer knowledge**

( $r=0.617$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), there is an association between **Attitude** and **Consumer knowledge** ( $r=0.606$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) and there is an association between **Environmental concern** and **Attitude** ( $r=0.493$ ,  $p<0.000$ )

It could also be inferred that there is positive correlation between all the variables namely **Attitude**, **Health consciousness**, **Environmental concern** and **Consumer knowledge** towards buying organic products which is significant at 1% level.

### IV. FINDINGS

#### Percentage analysis:

It was found that Maximum 43.6% respondents belong to the age group of 46-55 years.

It was found that Maximum 57.6% respondents are male.

It was found that Maximum 82.8% respondents are married.

It was found that Maximum 41.1% respondent's income level is less than Rs.30000.

It was found that Maximum 89.2% respondents are Under Graduates.

It was found that Maximum 36.6% respondents are doing Business.

#### Chi square:

The demographic factors Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income has a significant relationship with Attitude towards buying organic products.

The demographic factors Age, Gender, marital status, education, occupation, income has a significant relationship with Health conscious towards buying organic products.

#### Correlation:

It was inferred that there is a positive relationship between Attitude, Health conscious, Environmental concern, Consumer knowledge towards buying organic products

### V. CONCLUSION

Organic food products have become the need of the hour mainly because of its health benefits. This is mainly due to the prevailing life style which leads to many health issues. During this COVID 19 pandemic most of the consumers have become aware of organic food that contains healthy and nutritional value. The main purpose of this research is to study to consumer attitudes towards purchasing organic foods during COVID-19 Pandemic and hence the findings of the study show that the Health Conscious, environmental concern and consumer knowledge have positive impact on the Consumer Attitude. The consumers are absolutely satisfied with the quality of the organic products and they think it is really important to purchase organic food during this COVID 19 and government also insisting people to take healthy and nutritious food to prevent them from COVID 19.

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