Since 2001 ajfand AFRICAN JOURNAL OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND DEVELOPMENT
SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

Afr. J. Food Agric. Nutr. Dev. 2026; 26(5): 29654-29674 https://doi.org/10.18697/ajfand.152.26215

Date	Submitted	Accepted	Published
	29th July 2025	29th January 2026	11th July 2026

NAVIGATING NUTRITIONAL CHOICES: KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING FOOD PREFERENCES AMONG OFFICE WORKERS IN TSHWANE MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA

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SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

ABSTRACT

Workplace environments significantly influence employees' dietary behaviour. In South Africa, a standard eight-hour workday, excluding a one-hour lunch break, requires careful dietary planning to sustain productivity. The National Guide for Healthy Meals, published by the Department of Health of South Africa, advocates for workplace health promotion. Employees' health and well-being can positively impact the workplace; therefore, employers should create an environment that enables employees to choose healthy meals. The study explored demographic factors, nutritional awareness, and institutional influences on food choices among office workers at R21 Corporate Park. A quantitative cross-sectional survey using a 37-item online self-administered questionnaire was administered to 105 employees recruited through convenience sampling. Data were collected over three weeks in 2023. Correlation analysis was conducted using composite scores derived from grouped questionnaire items. Most participants were young adults in their 20s and 30s, many of whom had completed higher education and were working full-time. Taste (53%), convenience (46%), and time (45%) were the most influential determinants of food choices, while health influenced 39% of respondents. Although participants had nutritional knowledge, the majority did not prioritise nutritional value in their food choices, as evidenced by low rates of fruit (34.3% never) and vegetable (41.3% never) purchases during working hours. However, several employees demonstrated meal planning by bringing their own lunches. A weak but significant positive correlation was observed between healthier food choices and age ($r = 0.265$, $p = 0.007$), education ($r = 0.278$, $p = 0.005$), and institutional factors ($r = 0.240$, $p = 0.015$). Employees expressed a need for more diverse, healthier options, including vegetarian options. Although formal food policies were limited, workplace infrastructure, such as refrigerators and microwaves, supported bringing lunch from home. These findings highlight the need for integrated individual and institutional strategies, such as nutrition education, diversified food vendors, and workplace food policies, to promote sustainable, health-conscious food practices in corporate settings. Recommendations include enhancing food vendor diversity, promoting food policies, and workplace-based nutrition education.

Key words: Food choices, office workers, nutritional awareness, health consciousness, institutional factors

Citation: **Moyo S, Nxusani ZN, Zuma MK and XG Mbhenyane** Navigating Nutritional Choices: Key Factors Influencing Food Preferences among Office Workers in Tshwane Municipality, South Africa. *Afr. J. Food Agric. Nutr. Dev.* 2026; **26(5):** 29654-29674.
https://doi.org/10.18697/ajfand.152.26215

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SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

INTRODUCTION

The work environment greatly influences adults' dietary behaviours. In South Africa, employed adults spend 8 hours per day at work, excluding a 1-hour lunch break [1]. Due to the nutrition transition among adult workers, there has been an increase in low energy expenditure and high-calorie food consumption, leading to a rise in non-communicable diseases [2]. The National Guide for Healthy Meals, issued by the Department of Health in South Africa, encourages health promotion in the workplace [3].

Naber's study [4] noted that an average adult spends 90,000 hours working over their lifetime. Employees' health and well-being can positively impact the workplace; therefore, employers should create an environment that enables employees to choose healthy meals. Due to the nutritional transition, more people are consuming higher-calorie foods, resulting in lower energy expenditure and an increased risk of lifestyle diseases [5]. Clohessy *et al.* [6] indicated that, depending on the type of work and health conditions, a working adult typically consumes a third of their daily caloric intake at work. Food intake is vital for sustaining cognitive performance and overall work productivity.

The last twenty years have seen a global rise in overweight and obesity among currently employed adults and young adults [5]. Overweight and obesity are linked to the nutrition transition, where rising income drives increased consumption of sugar snacks and energy-dense foods with little nutritional value. Eating can be part of socialising with co-workers and may provide a sense of belonging. A study conducted on South Korean employees by Park *et al.* [7] reported that shared meals served both as a form of socialisation and as a culturally expected practice.

Whether driven by preference or circumstance, food choices made during working hours can potentially impact workers' health, productivity, and overall well-being. Recognising the social environment and all influences on food decisions is crucial for encouraging healthy eating and reducing food-related health issues. Factors such as socio-demographic characteristics, food environments, nutritional knowledge, and awareness influence workplace food choices. Understanding these factors provides a foundation for developing practical strategies to promote healthier eating [8]. Despite increasing concern about workplace dietary patterns, limited evidence exists on how South African corporate food environments shape employees' daily food choices, particularly in rapidly growing business hubs like Tshwane. Recent African workplace studies support these findings. A Ghanaian study by Aikins *et al.* [9] reported that the limited availability of healthy food vendors around office parks restricted workers' ability to make nutritious choices. Similarly, a survey in Kenya conducted by Mwangi and Wanjiru [10] revealed that insufficient

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SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

institutional food policies and the prevalence of convenience foods in office parks impacted employees' dietary habits. In Nigeria, Ojo *et al.* [11] also found that workplaces with limited healthy food outlets increased reliance on convenience foods.

Although international studies emphasise the significance of workplace food environments on dietary behaviours, evidence from South Africa remains scarce. The existing South African nutrition research primarily focuses on household food insecurity, community-level nutrition transitions, and school-based food environments, with relatively few studies exploring institutional and environmental factors in work settings. Research conducted in the Western Cape and Gauteng, for example, has indicated that urban employees frequently work in food environments dominated by fast-food outlets offering few healthy alternatives [12,13]. Ndlovu & Mchunu [14] reported that most South African companies lack formal food policies, offer limited healthy vendor options, and provide inconsistent access to supportive infrastructure such as cafeterias, microwaves, refrigerators, and nutritious meals. These structural and environmental factors influence workers' eating habits, often leading them to prefer convenient, energy-dense foods when healthier options are unavailable.

This study, therefore, examined the multidimensional factors influencing food choices among office workers at R21 Corporate Park, Tshwane Municipality, South Africa, including demographic characteristics, nutritional awareness, and workplace food environments and institutional structures. The specific objectives were to: 1) assess the availability and variety of food options in and around R21 Corporate Park in Irene and their impact on office workers' food choices; 2) evaluate the influence of socio-demographics on food preferences; 3) determine whether nutritional awareness guides healthier dietary decisions; 4) explore the effect of institutional factors on employees' dietary choices. By addressing these objectives, the study offers new evidence necessary to develop strategies that promote healthier consumption in workplace settings and enhance employee health outcomes. The findings would support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by fostering healthy behaviours and reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases.

MATERIALS AND STUDY METHODS

Study Site

The study was conducted at Route 21 (R21) Corporate Park in Irene, Tshwane Municipality in South Africa. The target population consisted of employees working within the park. This business precinct hosts a diverse mix of enterprises, including both large corporations and small to medium-sized businesses across various

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PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

sectors. The Park provides office space for approximately 300 companies and supports a workforce of over 10,000 people. Among these businesses are several multinational corporations, including those listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange [7].

Most companies at R21 Corporate Park lacked on-site canteens or subsidised meal services, leaving staff dependent on external restaurants, supermarkets, and delivery services. While some offices offered minimal kitchen facilities, food provision was decentralised, with most relying on individual purchases or home-prepared meals. The options available were dominated by convenient foods such as fast food, ready-to-eat meals, and sugary drinks, while healthier choices like fruits, vegetables, and salads were limited. This situation explains the reported discontent with food variety and nutritional value, and led to a reliance on fast food, delivery, and employees bringing meals from home. To better understand employees' dietary preferences within the structural limitations of the corporate park food environment, some contextual clarifications were introduced.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to investigate the determinants of food choices among office workers at R21 Corporate Park. It aimed to capture dietary behaviours, perceptions, and contextual factors at a single point in time within a real-world setting. Given the absence of a centralised employee registry and the diverse organisational structure of the corporate park, convenience sampling was used to recruit participants from across the corporate park. Although this approach limits generalisability, it is suitable for exploratory workplace nutrition research in complex institutional environments.

Fisher's formula was used to estimate the sample size, assuming a 95% confidence level and a 10% margin of error. This was deemed acceptable because the study was exploratory, and it was challenging to determine an accurate sampling frame for the corporate park workforce. A target sample size of 100 participants was calculated. Ultimately, 105 participants were recruited, surpassing the minimum requirement. The wider margin of error reflects the workforce's heterogeneity and practical constraints on access and voluntary participation. Data was collected over three weeks in 2023.

A systematic, self-administered online questionnaire with 37 items was used to gather information. The questionnaire was adapted using previously validated workplace nutrition and food environment questionnaires. Items assessed socio-demographic characteristics, perception of the workplace food environment, nutritional awareness, and institutional factors influencing dietary choices.

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PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

Content validity was assessed by the members of the Human Nutrition and Dietetics research team who reviewed the questionnaire for relevance, clarity and consistency with the study's objectives. A pilot study was subsequently conducted with 10 participants from a similar workplace setting. Duplicate items were removed, response scales were improved, and food and beverage option categories were expanded. The final analysis did not include the pilot data.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a self-administered, web-based questionnaire hosted on Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), a secure, widely recognised platform for research data collection and management [15]. The survey consisted of 37 multiple-choice questions and included optional open-ended sections for comments or feedback. It required approximately 20 minutes to complete. It captured key variables, including socio-demographic characteristics, perceptions of the workplace food environment, nutritional awareness, and institutional factors influencing dietary choices. The questionnaire was adapted from validated workplace nutrition and food environment tools used in prior studies [6] and piloted with 10 individuals to assess clarity. The survey was voluntary and self-directed. Respondents completed the survey at their convenience, without guidance from the research team. Access was provided through a QR code on recruitment flyers at park entrances and food service areas. Participants used their own devices to submit responses anonymously.

Ethical Consideration

The study received ethical clearance from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University (Reference No. S23/11/316). Before data collection, permission was obtained from the management of R21 Corporate Park and the park's food outlets to recruit participants from their employees. All participants provided informed consent electronically at the beginning of the online questionnaire, confirming their voluntary participation in the study and ensuring adherence to ethical research standards.

Statistical analysis

Data were collected using the REDCap online platform and then exported to Microsoft Excel for pre-processing. Subsequently, statistical analyses were performed in SPSS version 27 using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to address the study objectives. The dataset underwent a systematic cleaning process that involved removing duplicate entries, identifying inconsistent responses, and examining patterns of missing data.

Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode), and measures of variability (standard deviation and range), were used to summarise the dataset and provide an overview of

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Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

respondent characteristics and behaviours. Adjacent categories (such as "moderately influential" and "quite influential") were interpreted descriptively, with an analytical focus on aggregated higher-influence responses to improve interpretive clarity, even though the questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale to capture varying degrees of perceived influence. To investigate relationships between variables, inferential analyses were conducted using Pearson's correlation coefficient. This allowed for the examination of associations among key constructs, including socio-demographic attributes, purchasing behaviour, food selection, frequency of food purchases, preferred purchase locations, and institutional factors. Correlation analyses utilised composite scores derived from relevant questionnaire items for each construct, ensuring that each construct was analysed as a whole rather than through individual items.

Additionally, open-ended section data from 28 participants were analysed using thematic content analysis. Responses were systematically categorised into themes and codes, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, perceptions, and contextual insights related to food choices and nutritional attitudes. This analytical approach enhanced the depth and richness of interpretation, supporting a nuanced understanding of the findings. Given that data were collected via an online platform, potential biases, such as recall and social desirability biases, may have affected participants' responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographics and food choices

The demographic characteristics in Table 1, comprising 105 participants, provide context for understanding food decision-making in a corporate setting. The most significant proportion of respondents were young to middle-aged adults, with 48.6% aged 23 to 38 and 39% aged 39 to 54. The predominance of young to middle-aged adults is notable, given that this group often navigates demanding work schedules. Younger adults may have unique food preferences and restrictions, be busier with work commitments, have limited time to prepare food, and be more likely to choose takeaway and fast-food options [16]. Table 6 shows that age is statistically significant, but it shows only a weak correlation with healthier food choices ($r = 0.265$, $p = 0.007$). Multiple studies have shown that as individuals age and gain more life experience, barriers to healthy eating, such as food costs and a lack of time, are reduced, leading to a preference for more nutritious options [16].

The gender distribution was nearly equal (51% females and 47.6% males), enabling balanced insight into gender specific behaviours. However, no significant association emerged between gender and food choices ($r = 0.055$, $p = 0.588$), suggesting that both men and women in the corporate setting are equally influenced

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Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

by environmental constraints, particularly the limited availability of healthy food choices. This contrasts with the broader literature, which highlights gender differences in dietary patterns, where women often prioritise health and nutrition over men [17].

Educational attainment was high among the respondents, with 40% holding postgraduate degrees and an additional 23.8% holding bachelor's or diploma-level qualifications. Education level was significantly correlated with healthier food choices ($r = 0.278$, $p = 0.005$), supporting the finding that increased nutrition literacy improves awareness of healthy eating habits [18]. However, the weak strength of this correlation highlights the gap between knowledge and practice: even highly educated individuals may choose convenience eating when environmental supports are insufficient [19].

The corporate food environment

The corporate food environment emerged as the primary factor influencing dietary behaviour. A large majority (89.5%) expressed dissatisfaction with the available food options, citing a lack of variety (Table 2). Furthermore, most workplaces lacked snack dispensers (84.6%) and drink dispensers (65.4%), indicating limited access to snacks and beverages during working hours. Only 13.6% noted that food was "always available" in their offices, highlighting the restricted nature of the workplace food environment and its effect on dietary choices during the workday. This scarcity probably contributed to employees' reliance on fast foods (25.7%) and food delivery services (18.1%) for lunch. This pattern aligns with global evidence showing that employees in work settings with limited healthy options are more likely to consume high-calorie, convenience foods. Research in South Africa has similarly documented that corporate parks and office complexes frequently operate as "micro-food-dessert", characterised by few health food options and fast-food dominance [12,13].

Qualitative response reinforced these quantitative findings. Participants' comments on the corporate food environment revealed that they were not entirely satisfied and wished for better facilities. They describe the workplace as lacking in both food variety and healthy options: *"It would be nice to have a floating van inside, that drives around lunchtime selling fruits and hot dogs"; "Just need more and better food options in R21 — too few vendors and restaurants"; "More options would be nice. My food options are not available in the R21 Corporate Business Park; I would love more food suppliers/restaurants around Route 21."*

These *verbatim* comments indicate dissatisfaction and unmet demands for healthier food options. These findings align with the literature, which shows that food availability is a primary determinant of dietary choices in work settings. Clohessy *et al.* [6] note that limited access to healthy food contributes to unhealthy eating

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Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

patterns and increased risk of lifestyle-related diseases. The absence of healthy options essentially limits even nutritionally aware individuals' ability to act on their knowledge.

Understanding the organisational food environment is critical to promoting employee health. As defined by de Castro and Canella [21], the organisational food environment refers to the settings within institutions where food is sold or provided to workers or students. Institutional factors, including food availability, accessibility, and organisational policies, play a pivotal role in shaping food choices. Supportive organisational policies, such as designated lunch breaks, access to refrigerators and microwaves, and subsidies for healthier food items, can facilitate healthier eating behaviours. Lindberg *et al.* [22] emphasise that such policies not only support balanced diets but also enhance employees' nutritional awareness and overall well-being. By implementing these supportive measures, workplaces can foster environments that encourage and reinforce healthy dietary practices.

Factors influencing food choices

The results presented in Table 3 show that employees' food choices were made by a variety of factors, with distinct trends emerging across levels of influence. The majority of participants rated taste as highly influential (76.2%), followed by time (67.7%). These findings align with those of Blanck *et al*. [23], who found that taste was a dominant influence on food choices among working adults. Even in educated populations, practicality often takes precedence over nutritional intentions. The consistent prioritisation of quick, tasty, and accessible meals over healthy ones reflects the high-pressure, time-constrained nature of corporate work environments [23]. Participants' verbatim comments also emphasise the importance of convenience as a factor influencing food choice: *"They are swift with delivery and always available but costly". "I prefer food that is easy to access because my lunch break is short".* These observations confirm findings from studies conducted in high- and middle-income countries, where time constraints and work-related stress contribute to reliance on convenient, ready-to-eat meals [6,22].

Health played a highly influential role in food choice for 65.7% of respondents. This indicates a gap between health awareness and dietary behaviour, in line with evidence that environmental constraints often override individual health intentions [19]. Respondents also emphasised that: "*We need more healthy and hearty meal options". "Wish we could be given two choices or options like fruits, nuts and seeds, and cheese and crackers as well*". Studies show that workers in obesogenic office environments have limited food options during the working day. Obesogenic environments are settings with few healthy food outlets or stores combined with limited access to physical and fitness facilities that promote obesity, according to Guo *et al*. [24].

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June 2026
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Convenience has become a key factor in food choices, with 65.4% of respondents rating it as highly influential. This heavy reliance on convenience reflects the fast-paced nature of corporate work environments, where employees have limited breaks and need to make quick decisions about what and where to eat. Therefore, convenience is not just a preference, but also a necessity caused by environmental constraints. When access to healthy food is restricted, even health-conscious individuals tend to opt for convenient options. This pattern is consistent with behavioural economics research, which shows that people at work often choose options that require minimal time, effort, and travel [6,22].

Most respondents (60.6%) rated cost as highly influential. Some respondents highlighted affordability challenges and dissatisfaction with the prices of available food: *Finding something to eat at the corporate park is expensive. I prefer bringing lunch and snacking. "We put money together to buy food to keep in the office cupboard, fridge or freezer. Make turns to cook on an induction plate. This was more cost-effective, and food in the office park is too expensive and takes too long to deliver".* This indicates that income plays a significant role in determining dietary food choices and habits. It significantly influences the types of food individuals can afford. The relationship between income and food choices is complex, with income levels affecting the quantity and quality of food consumed. Existing literature from South Africa demonstrates that employees with higher incomes are better positioned to access fresher, higher-quality, and more diverse food options, whereas those with lower incomes frequently encounter restricted dietary choices due to financial constraints (Kenney *et al*. [25]). The absence of subsidised healthy meals within the workplace further exacerbates the cost barrier.

Religion showed the most divisive responses. While 29.5% rated it as extremely influential, 36.2% reported it as not influential. This suggests that religious dietary restrictions strongly shape food choices for some employees but are irrelevant to others.

Nutritional Awareness and Consumption Patterns

Despite most respondents having a high level of education, with 68.3% holding tertiary qualifications and presumably access to nutritional knowledge, their food purchasing behaviour did not align with health guidelines. When participants were asked about factors influencing their food purchases, only 37.1% identified nutritional value as a consideration (Table 4). This finding aligns with reported patterns of fruit and vegetable consumption at lunchtime, where only 15.3% reported purchasing fruit daily and 11.5% purchasing vegetables daily. Additionally, 29.5% of participants stated they brought lunch from home daily; however, the contents of these lunch boxes were not specified, leaving uncertainty about whether they included fruit and vegetables. These consumption patterns fall short of established

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Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

dietary guidelines, which recommend 2–4 servings of fruit and 3–5 servings of vegetables per day [27]. Instead, price (26.7%), proximity (17.1%), and taste (8.6%) were often prioritised. This pattern highlights a common finding in nutrition research: knowledge usually does not translate into behaviour, especially in environments where healthy options are limited [18].

This low intake corresponds with South African national data showing insufficient fruit and vegetable consumption among working-age adults [5]. These findings suggest that, even for individuals who recognise the importance of a balanced diet, translating these intentions into practice can be challenging in environments where access to healthy options is limited.

Almost half, 46.7%, of respondents reported bringing lunch at least two to three times a week. This behaviour suggests that employees compensate for the lack of healthy food options and the associated costs by bringing their own meals. Some employees indicated that they often pack meals to ensure affordability and dietary control: "*I prefer bringing lunch and snack because food here is expensive"; "We cook in turns in the office because it's more cost-effective".* These strategies highlight how workers adapt to unsupportive food environments. Moreover, the lower prioritisation of nutritional value, compared to convenience, cost and time, suggests that daily food decisions are influenced by immediate practical constraints rather than health priorities.

Institutional Factors and Food Policies

Institutional factors played a significant role in influencing workers' food choices. At the same time, Table 5 shows that most organisations provided basic food preparation infrastructure, including kettles (96.2%), microwaves (95.2%), refrigerators (93%), and dining areas (76%). These facilities alone were insufficient to provide healthy dietary behaviours. The availability of these amenities suggests that these workplaces are structurally supportive of staff bringing home-prepared meals.

Institutional factors were negatively correlated with the office environment ($r = 0.240$, $p = 0.588$) (Table 6), suggesting that certain institutional constraints may reduce the supporting role of the office environment in shaping food choices. This aligns with the organisational food environment model described by de Castro and Canella [21], which highlights the role of institutional settings in determining the availability, accessibility, and affordability of food options. These elements not only influence dietary decisions but also either constrain or enable them.

The number of lunch breaks reflects institutional norms related to employees' well-being and productivity. According to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (Act No. 75 of 1997), employers are legally required to provide a meal interval of at least

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Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

one continuous hour to employees who work for more than five consecutive hours [28]. Almost half of the respondents (47.6%) reported having only one lunch break per day. Lunch breaks influence the frequency of food consumption and the types of food eaten. Limited breaks often force workers to choose quick, calorie-dense foods that are easier to consume. This aligns with behavioural evidence showing that rigid work schedules restrict opportunities for health-conscious eating and reliance on convenience foods [19].

A key finding was that most respondents (87%) reported a lack of formal organisational food policies or guidelines. This lack of policies may contribute to inconsistent availability of healthy food across offices. Organisational food policies, such as subsidising healthy choices and regulating vending machine content, have been shown to influence consumption patterns [21, 26]. Food policies can serve as guidelines for what should be served at the cafeteria or other food-related gatherings.

The South African publication "The National Guide for Healthy Meal Provision in the Workplace" exemplifies the government's policies [4]. It offers guidelines for fostering healthier food environments for employees. Despite the existence of this guide, several challenges hinder its practical application. There are no formal systems for monitoring and evaluating organisational compliance with the recommended nutrition standards. Many companies may lack the financial capacity to subsidise healthy meals or upgrade dining facilities to enhance workplace food environments. Furthermore, since the guide is not legally mandated, employers are not legally required to follow it, resulting in low organisational adherence [3]. Collectively, these factors diminish the policy's impact, despite its potential to improve workers' dietary behaviours.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This study emphasises the complex nature of food choices among office workers at R21 Corporate Park, influenced by demographic, environmental, and behavioural factors. Despite high levels of education and nutritional awareness, taste, convenience, cost, and time remain the primary factors driving food selection, surpassing health and religious considerations. A notable preference for healthy snacks indicates that employees are conscious of and favour nutritious options. Additionally, food availability and organisational factors, such as access to fridges, microwaves, and kettles, potentially affect food choices. Although most companies lacked formal food policies, the presence of supportive infrastructure suggests potential to encourage healthier eating environments. These findings highlight the importance of combining individual and organisational strategies to promote sustainable, health-focused food practices in corporate settings. Enhancing the

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June 2026
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ISSN 1684 5374

workplace food environment is vital for encouraging healthier choices and supporting national efforts to reduce the burden of diet-related non-communicable diseases.

To promote healthier food choices among office workers at R21 Corporate Park, both individual and organisational actions are essential. At the managerial level, employers have a vital opportunity to enhance daily access to healthy food by increasing the availability and variety of nutritious options in the workplace and by partnering with healthier food vendors that provide affordable, nutrient-rich meals. Implementing formal workplace food policies can complement these measures and align with national guidelines.

At the policy level, the national and local stakeholders should integrate nutrition into the workplace food standards. By incentivising businesses to create healthier food environments through recognition programmes or tax benefits, this study could help address the gaps identified. This alignment is critical in South Africa, where many urban corporations operate in food deserts, limiting access to healthy, affordable food.

Future research should expand to other corporate parks and adopt longitudinal designs to assess the long-term impact of interventions. Evaluating the nutritional quality of available food options would also provide deeper insights into how workplace food environments influence health and productivity.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to a single corporate park, which may reduce its generalisability to other workplace settings and increase sample bias. As a result, the findings might not represent the same influences on food choices in different geographical regions. The literature suggests that culture can affect food choices; however, this study did not investigate the cultural factors that influence these choices. Additionally, reliance on self-reported dietary behaviours may introduce recall bias, leading participants to either under- or overestimate their food choices.

ABBREVIATIONS

Redcap: Research Electronic Data Capture

R21: Route 21

QR: Quick response

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We want to thank Stellenbosch University for its institutional support and R21 Corporate Park Management for its cooperation throughout the data collection process. We extend our appreciation to all the participants who generously shared

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their time, without whom this study would not have been possible. The project was partially funded by the South African National Research Foundation (Reference UID: 115459).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of Interest.

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SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

Table 1: Socio-demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Socio-Demographics			
Age	23-38	51	48.6
	39-54	41	39.0
	55-65	11	10.0
	18 -22	1	2.0
	Choose not to disclose	1	1.0
Gender	Female	53	51.0
	Male	50	47.6
	Other	1	1.0
Education	NQF (7&8)	42	40.0
	NQF (5&6)	25	23.8
	NQF (9&10)	22	21.0
	NQF 4	13	12.4
	Other	3	2.9
Employment Status	Fulltime	95	92.2
	Contract/Intern	5	4.9
	Other	3	2.9
Office Environment			
Frequency to the office	5 times a week	42	40.0
	4 times a week	33	31.4
	Once a week	22	21.0
	2 times a week	2	7.6
Type of Business Employed in	Other	29	27.6
	Financial and Business	15	14.3
	NGO	14	13.3
	Media and Communication	13	12.4
	Technology and Software	9	8.6
	Health and wellness	7	6.7
	Service based	7	6.7
	Manufacturing and Industrial	7	6.7
	Food and beverage	4	3.8

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SCHOLARLY, PEER REVIEWED
Volume 26 No. 5
June 2026
PUBLISHED BY AFRICAN SCHOLARLY SCIENCE COMMUNICATIONS TRUST
ISSN 1684 5374

Table 2: Food choices for employees

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Preferred place of Food Purchase During Lunch	Fast Food	27	25.7
	Cafeteria	20	19.0
	Food Delivery	19	18.1
	Supermarket	15	14.3
	Other	14	13.3
	Lunch-box	8	7.6
	Street Vendors	2	1.9
Drinks Preference	Water	37	35.5
	Coffee and Tea	23	22.1
	Fruit Juice	22	21.2
	Soda	16	15.4
	Other	6	5.6
Snack Preference	Nuts and Seeds	29	27.6
	Fresh Fruits	24	22.9
	Dried Fruits	15	14.3
	Other	15	14.3
	Cheese and Crackers	12	11.4
	Sweets and Chocolates	8	7.6
	Vegetable Sticks	2	1.9
Colleagues' Influence on Food Choice	Moderately	28	26.7
	Not at all	27	25.7
	Slightly	23	21.9
	Significantly	15	14.3
	Very Significantly	12	11.4
Food Purchase at Lunch Break	Rarely	39	37.5
	2-3 times a week	30	28.8
	Once a week	22	21.2
	Never	7	6.7
	Daily	6	5.8

Note: When percentages do not add to 100, it is because of the missing numbers

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Table 3: Factors influencing the food choice of employees

Variables	Responses				
	1(Not Influential)	2(Slightly Influential)	3(Moderately Influential)	4(Quite Influential)	5(Extremely Influential)
	n (%)				
Taste	2 (1.9)	5 (4.8)	18 (17.1)	56 (53.3)	24 (22.9)
Health	4 (3.8)	10 (9.5)	22 (21.0)	30 (28.6)	39 (37.1)
Time	4 (3.8)	4 (3.8)	26 (24.8)	45 (42.9)	26 (24.8)
Cost	2 (1.9)	3 (2.9)	36 (34.6)	40 (38.5)	23 (22.1)
Convenience	5 (3.8)	6 (10.6)	25 (24.0)	46 (44.2)	22 (21.2)
Religion	38 (36.2)	6 (5.7)	15 (14.3)	15 (14.3)	31 (29.5)

Note: When percentages do not add to 100, it is because of the missing numbers

Table 4: Nutritional awareness

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Nutritional Awareness	Nutritional Value	39	37.1
	Price and Affordability	28	26.7
	Proximity to Office	18	17.1
	Variety	11	10.5
	Taste	9	8.6
Fruit Purchases during lunch	Never	43	41.3
	Rarely	29	27.9
	Sometimes	16	15.4
	Often	12	11.5
	Always	4	3.8
Vegetable Purchases during lunch	Never	36	34.3
	Sometimes	30	28.6
	Rarely	27	25.7
	Often	7	6.7
	Always	5	4.8
Home Packed Lunch	2-3 times a week	49	46.7
	Daily	31	29.5
	Rarely	12	11.4
	Once a week	11	10.5
	Never	2	1.9

Note: When percentages do not add to 100, it is because of the missing numbers

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https://doi.org/10.18697/ajfand.152.26215

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Table 5: Nutritional factors

Variables	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Availability of company food policies	Yes	87	84.5
	No	16	15.5
How many food breaks	1	50	47.6
	2	36	34.3
	3	11	10.5
	None	4	3.8
	I don't know	4	3.8
Fridge	Yes	97	93.0
	No	4	3.8
	I don't know	3	2.9
Microwave	Yes	100	95.2
	I don't know	3	1.9
	No	2	2.9
Kettle	Yes	101	96.2
	No	3	2.9
	I don't know	1	1.0
Dining Area	Yes	80	76.0
	No	23	21.9
	I don't know	2	1.9

Note: When percentages do not add to 100, it is because of the missing numbers

Table 6: Correlations between demographics, food choice, food environment and institutional factors

Variable	Pearson Correlation	p-Value
Age and Food Choice	0.265*	0.007
Food Choice & Gender	-0.055	0.588
Education and Food Choice	0.278*	0.005
Institutional Factors & Office Environment	-0.240*	0.015
Office Environment & Food Availability	0.082	0.420

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