

**SUPPLY OF LOW QUALITY FOOD ITEMS IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS OF PAKISTAN.****Farzana Mallah**

For a long time, Pakistani kids' access to nutritious meals has been a source of worry. Since millions of kids rely on school meals for their daily nourishment, it's crucial to make sure the food is of excellent quality and adheres to nutritional guidelines. Pakistani academic institutions' access to low-quality food is a developing problem that has to be addressed right now. Both the pupils' academic performance and health and well-being are impacted by this problem. We must examine the underlying causes of the availability of subpar food in educational institutions, as well as how it affects students, in order to recommend workable remedies. However, there are far too many complaints of youngsters receiving poor quality or even harmful meals. Amongst the numerous things that contribute to this issue are inadequate storage facilities, a lack of cleanliness and hygienic conditions, & inadequate oversight by educational organisations. Stakeholders and policymakers in the educational sector need to pay close attention to this scenario because it is unacceptable. We must act decisively to solve this issue since it threatens the health and wellness of our children.

Lack of effective supervision and oversight is the main factor contributing to Pakistan's academic institutions' poor food supply. The supply of food to academic institutions is not adequately regulated or governed by any formal structure. Due to a lack of control, low-quality foods are distributed, including those that are out-of-date and don't fulfil the minimal nutritional requirements. Additionally, there is no system in place to punish individuals accountable for

delivering subpar meals. There is a considerable effect of poor food availability on students at academic institutions. It is challenging for pupils to focus and study successfully when they are malnourished since it impacts their physical and cognitive development. The negative impacts of low-quality food supplies are particularly harmful to students who rely on academic institution meals for nutrition. Additionally, the availability of poor-quality food can result in a number of health problems, such as food poisoning, which further compromises attendance and academic performance. Authorities must act proactively to guarantee the availability of nutritious meals at educational facilities. The creation of a regulating organisation to monitor the calibre of foods supplied to academic institutions is one potential remedy. This regulatory organisation may be in charge of establishing and implementing minimum nutritional requirements for food products, keeping an eye on the supply chain, and holding vendors accountable for any subpar goods.

The promotion of locally sourced food production and consumption is another option. This strategy would motivate neighbourhood farmers and businesses to create premium foods that could be sold to educational institutions. In addition to ensuring the quality of food products, this will help local economies expand. The authorities should also fund educational institutions so they may buy premium food goods in addition to these actions. This assistance might come in the form of funding or training to aid academic

institutions in creating efficient supply chains and keeping track of the calibre of the food supplies they get. Academic institutions should also put students' health first and make sure they receive high-quality food that complies with basic nutritional requirements.

Public education on the value of consuming high-quality food is also crucial. When it comes to food products, Pakistani customers frequently place a higher value on price than quality. Consequently, there is a need to increase public knowledge of the advantages of eating high-quality food, including their beneficial effects on health and academic performance. Food poisoning, allergies, and digestive difficulties can all be caused by low-quality foods, such as those that are out-of-date or include toxic ingredients. Furthermore, these concerns might harm students' academic performance because it is challenging to concentrate on academics while one is coping with health issues¹. Institutions must thus make sure that the food items offered to students are of a good calibre and adhere to the necessary requirements.

The availability of subpar food products shows that organisations fail to treat their roles seriously, which might harm the institution's reputation². Therefore, it is crucial for institutions to make sure they are offering their students high-quality services in all areas, including food provision. In addition to violating this fundamental right, the availability of poor-quality food in educational institutions fosters unfairness and inequality³. Therefore, regardless of their socioeconomic status, institutions must make sure that they are giving their students access to nutritious and secure meals.

Giving students the option to request high-quality meals from their academic

institutions is crucial. Students have the right to ask their educational institutions for food that satisfies fundamental nutritional standards. Establishing student-run associations that support the usage of excellent meals in educational settings is one way to achieve this. These organisations can work alongside colleges and universities to monitor the standard of the food and hold sellers accountable. Food handlers' awareness of staff hygiene procedures and food safety regulations fell short of expectations. Additionally, while food handlers' attitudes towards food safety were excellent, their practises fell short of the standard level of satisfaction. As a result, measures are needed to increase knowledge and strengthen food handlers' practises in order to lower the incidence of food-borne illnesses.⁴

In Pakistani academic institutions, there exists a pressing requirement to tackle the problem of accessibility of poor-quality food products. It is essential to create an inspection structure to keep an eye on food quality, promote the intake of locally sourced foods, provide financial support for educational establishments, educate the public about the benefits of eating high-quality foods, and give students the ability to demand excellent food. By taking these steps, we can ensure that children are given nourishing food that satisfies their fundamental needs, enabling people to develop to their full potential.

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