

The 48th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Nutrition Society of Australia, 3-6 December 2024

Food and nutrition constructs related to teacher wellbeing: baseline findings from the Australian longitudinal teacher food and nutrition-related health and wellbeing study

T. Jakstas^{1,2}, A. Miller³, V.A. Shrewsbury^{1,2}, T. Bucher^{4,2} and C.E. Collins^{1,2}

¹*School of Health Sciences, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia*

²*Food and Nutrition Research Program, The Hunter Medical Research Institute, New Lambton Heights, New South Wales, Australia*

³*School of Education, The University of Newcastle, Callaghan, New South Wales, Australia*

⁴*School of Health Professions, Bern University of Applied Sciences, Bern, Switzerland*

Teacher food and nutrition (FN) practices influence their personal health and wellbeing outcomes, with implications for students. As educators, teachers role model FN practices to students and act as health promoters. Our team's recent scoping review outlined the lack of standardised methods used to assess FN constructs in teachers, with limited validated and composite tools available that measure FN constructs, especially culinary factors, alongside measures of wellbeing⁽¹⁾. The importance of teacher FN education, to facilitate effective school health promotion, is highlighted by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization. Therefore, understanding the scope of teacher FN practices in relation to teacher wellbeing is critical, yet limited evidence currently exists. This research aims to examine baseline data on teacher FN practices and potential FN predictors of teacher health and wellbeing from the Australian longitudinal teacher FN-related health and wellbeing study. The Teacher Food and Nutrition Questionnaire (TFNQ) consists of nine sub-scales and 21 single-item measures using pre-defined food, nutrition, and wellbeing constructs. This provides a composite evaluation tool to collate data on teacher FN practices for comparison with wellbeing outcomes, including stress and burnout. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient (r) were used to assess relationships between food, nutrition, and wellbeing constructs, and linear regression to determine slope of significant relationships using diet quality (i.e., the Fruit and Vegetable Variety index), wellbeing (i.e., burnout) and professional FN confidence as outcome variable(s) of interest. A total of $n = 112$ secondary teachers completed the baseline TFNQ (September 2023). Of these, the majority were female (87.5%), aged 31–45 years (52%), with 90% on full time contracts. Mean diet quality score was 92.0 (maximum score (MS) of 190), with sub-scale score for vegetable (63.2/122 MS) and fruit (28.9/68 MS) intake. Of the wellbeing measures, burnout (16.3/24 MS), stress (7.3/10 MS) and coping (6.2/10 MS) were measured alongside teacher food skills confidence (105.7/133 MS) and food agency (40.9/55 MS). Teacher FN confidence to role model healthy FN practices was moderately correlated to food agency $r = -0.43$ ($p < 0.001$), and personal subjective wellbeing 'satisfied' $r = 0.41$ ($p < 0.001$). A moderate correlation was observed between vegetable intake and food skills confidence $r = 0.42$ ($p < 0.001$), with a moderate negative correlation observed between food agency and teacher burnout $r = -0.43$ ($p < 0.001$). Overall, these baseline data confirm teacher diet quality is suboptimal, with teacher food agency and/or food skills confidence demonstrating moderate correlations with all three study outcomes of teacher wellbeing, diet quality and professional FN confidence. These data provide a snapshot of secondary teachers' FN practices and wellbeing. Results inform development of professional development to support FN behaviours as a contributing factor for optimal teacher health and wellbeing.

References

1. Jakstas T, Follong B, Bucher T *et al.* (2023) *J Behav Nutr Phys Act* **20**(1), 108.