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# Socio-Demographic Factors Affecting Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy among Local Government Employees

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The meaning of food is redefined. Human development witnessed the politicization of food and how key messages were relayed through the food we share or what we simply call "gastrodiplomacy." This study was conducted to determine the socio-demographic factors that affect attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy among employees of a local government unit in the Philippines. This is a descriptive-relational study that employed a one-shot survey among 327 respondents. Data were collected using a two-part questionnaire that included questions on: a) socio-demographic characteristics consisting of age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, monthly income, and nature of job position; and the b) researcher-made instrument on attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. It was found out that respondents had a generally 'high positive attitude' towards office gastrodiplomacy, although only age and length of service were significantly related. The findings of this study provide a breakthrough on research on office gastrodiplomacy in the Philippines, where such practice is prevalent yet understudied or has not been tackled at all as of writing.

**Keywords:** *Office gastrodiplomacy; office relations; office management; personnel management; office food; office politics; public administration*

## INTRODUCTION

Food is a basic need, a necessity for our survival. It is present in our day-to-day activities. We eat food primarily to nourish ourselves, satisfy our cravings, celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, and

the like. Eating is also a common activity between friends and companions. This act of sharing food allows peers to build harmonious relationships with each other (Chapman & Goodwin, 2001).

Paul Rockower, a scholar of public diplomacy, popularized the term gastrodiploamacy, which he defines as 'winning the hearts and minds through stomachs' (Rockower, 2011). Though a relatively new term, gastrodiploamacy already appeared in the February issue of the magazine *The Economist* in 2002 by an unknown author (Anon, 2019).

Researchers of gastrodiploamacy looked closely at how relationships are founded and propagated on and around food. Spence (2016) proposed a comprehensive definition of gastrodiploamacy as the 'use of food to convey a specific message to others' (Spence, 2016).

Psychologists highlighted how food modifies psychological processes when the physical self has ingested something through the bodily systems. Several researchers have provided enlightenment on how food affects intrapersonal aspects of the mind structure, such as how food and taste preference affects attitude and personality traits (Sagioglou & Greitmeyer, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Herz, 2011; Macht & Mueller, 2007). Further, substantive scientific evidence has also shown correlations on how food shapes interpersonal relationships, thus eliciting complex psycho-social behaviors such as social familiarity and acceptance, affiliation, social cohesion, etc. (Spence, 2016; Davey, 2016; McCouat, 2014; Williams & Bargh, 2008; Rozin et al., 1999).

Scholars of organizational studies revealed a positive relationship of food with the different work-related processes and mechanisms. Among them is the capacity of food to improve office relations between employees and supervisors and among employees themselves (McCouat, 2014; Gallo, 2014; Williams & Bargh, 2008). Provision of office food was also found out to be related to work productivity (Kniffin et al., 2015; Taylor, 2014; Balachandra, 2013; Kozinski, 1993). In addition, employees also reported that office food make employees feel more valued and appreciated by the organization (Taylor, 2014; Baldoni, 2013), increases their job satisfaction (Malcolm, 2016; Taylor, 2014), and improves employee retention (Taylor, 2014). Lastly, post-modern literature has also provided evidence on the causality of office food provision and work engagement and motivation

(Ariely, 2016; Wooley & Fishbach, 2016; Rot et al., 2015; Schwartz & Porath, 2014; Baldoni, 2013; Halvorson & Rudelius, 1977).

Despite evidently widespread literature in support of office gastrodiplomacy, there are no studies to cite by far to show public's feelings, behavior, and views towards gastrodiplomacy or people's attitude towards this practice, more so its relationship with socio-demographic characteristics. Herein, the researcher compiled all relative works of literature that associate socio-demographic characteristics with gastrodiplomacy.

### **Socio-demographic Characteristics and Gastrodiplomacy**

Unlike the younger population, older people have a lesser preference for food. Researchers contend that food perception is different between these two groups. According to Browning et al. (2019), older people tend to perceive food and eating rituals as an essential component of the enjoyment of a happy old age (Browning et al., 2019). They revealed that it is primarily because food-related experiences are quite different between the two groups. This is supported by the findings of Edfors and Westergren, who argued that current views of food and meals are greatly influenced by past life experiences (Edfors & Westergren, 2012).

There is vast literature investigating the differences in the views and perceptions of men and women over food. Relevant literature includes salient discussions centered on how women view food more critically than men in terms of health, dietary practices, and preferences. Mannippa et al. (2017) reported that compared to men, women responded differently to food cues in the environment on the behavioral and neural level. This means that women undergo a more evaluative process whether they intend to eat or not.

Some researchers also investigated how one's level of education influences perceptions toward food. One of them is the study of Bartkiene et al. (2019). They revealed that education is a significant factor influencing perceptions of healthy eating. They reported that higher education groups tended to have a lower tolerance of perceptions and believed healthy diet and eating claims more strongly (Bartkiene et al., 2019). The same is true in the study of Li and Powdthavee (2015), who supported the same finding stating that level of education leads to better health habits which includes one's eating activities. They further stated that the level of education could

lead to better health habits which includes one's eating activities (Li & Powdthavee, 2015).

Brandon (2018) has contended that the length of time is a particular factor that influence food habits. According to him, exposure to certain food-related practices eventually leads people towards developing a habit that they will hardly notice later on (Brandon, 2018). Meanwhile, in a study by Hicks (2018), income was found to be a significant predictor of one's eating habits. She revealed that study participants who were from low-income families tended to have poorer health choices. According to Fadulu (2019), there exists an inequality in eating habits between the wealthy and the poor, which is actually worsening. Fudulu has pondered that income gap is a precursor to healthy eating gap. Among the reasons he identified were the price of healthier food, access to healthy alternatives, and transportation concerns.

In a study conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Economic Research Service (ERS) (2019), it was found that situational factors affected people's food choice as well as eating and health habits. These factors included the affordability of food prices, location and accessibility of food resources, length of time between meals, and number of hours spent working, to name a few (USDA-ERS, 2019). Because of hectic schedules, people who work beyond office hours, bringing their work home, may prefer fast foods to lessen the burden of food preparations (USDA-ERS, 2019). Indeed, unlike those who work beyond office hours like people who have technical jobs (e.g., teachers, lawyers, and accountants), employees who undertake day-to-day tasks in the office or hold clerical and staff positions may have relatively different eating patterns.

## Local Literature

As overwhelming as it may seem, gastrodiplomacy is an unexplored research agenda in the Philippines. Meanwhile, there is existing literature which may not explicitly describe gastrodiplomacy in exact terms but nevertheless tackles how food shapes people's cultural distinctiveness or even non-distinctiveness (Zappia, 2015). As stated by Manalasan (2013), Filipino food has undergone diasporic development shaped by people's associations with nearby geographic neighbors and by historical and cultural traditions, especially during the era

of colonization. However, though these are interestingly compelling topics that deserve much discussion, they do not offer perspectives similar to the focus of the present investigation. As such, pieces of literature like these (e.g., the history of Filipino cuisine or the authenticity of Filipino food) are excluded in this review, but only those that benefit the study to support further analysis of the dimensions of food studied are discussed. Indeed, there are many dimensions of food research, but they do not address the gaps identified in this study. The author maintains that there is no established scholarship in office gastrodiploamacy in the Philippines. This paper's ultimate task is to provide groundwork in this area, which perhaps would eventually be used by future scholars who aim to envision embracing the same intellectual interest. Hereunder are pieces of literature that help frame the analysis of the field.

In the article of Florendo (2019), he analyzed the symbolic value of food in Filipino society, particularly in the formation of culture, values, and philosophy of Filipinos as a people. According to Florence, various cultural practices of the Filipino people reveal the Filipino philosophy (Florendo, 2019). Indeed, the value of food in culture can never be overstated. Food is one of the material aspects of culture inherent to a specific social community. Food conveys a symbolic message and may also a medium of communication (Florendo, 2019).

Office gastrodiploamacy is widely practiced in almost all offices in the Philippines, both in public and private. This can be associated with the contentions of Mayuga (2017) that Filipinos, indeed, are food lovers. Food is essentially embedded Filipino culture. We can even cite the earliest accounts in history wherein Philippines' ties with the West were built around food, eventually leading to the famous blood compact with the Spanish colonizers (Agoncillo, 1990).

In Filipino culture, food plays a vital role in promoting solidarity or 'oneness' in a particular politico-social unit (Zappia, 2015; Manalasan, 2013). This was demonstrated in the discussion of Fernandez (1994) on how Filipino food reflected the relations among his fellowmen. She provided a description of a usual street food alley where Filipino's use of sawsawan (sauce) is imminent. According to her, the use of sawsawan reveals a communal and participatory relation. She argues that Filipino food manifests a democratic nature and an indiscriminating attitude towards his/her fellowmen (Fernandez, 1994).

Food-sharing or gastrodiplomacy is generally part and parcel of every Filipino comradeship. Though the law, particularly the Code of Ethics for Public Officials (RA 6713), does not explicitly approve this, it did not implicitly prohibit the same. Office gastrodiplomacy is a customary practice in whichever organizational culture exhibited, most especially during inter-agency collaborations. Gastrodiplomacy, eventually, has become a standard operating procedure among public officials who intend to send a cordial message and has been a vital element that enhances organizational cohesiveness, strength, and participation, among others.

Gastrodiplomacy is an unexplored research agenda in the Philippines. No local literature (as to the extent that the researcher conducted his review) can empirically support the same contentions as those famously revealed by foreign researchers.

Moreover, existing studies examined office gastrodiplomacy primarily only within the context of the private sector and among private office relationships. Little research has been conducted from the perspective of the public sector, hence, the conduct of this study.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to determine whether socio-demographic factors affect attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy among employees of a local government unit in the Philippines. Specifically, this study aimed to do as follows:

1. describe the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of the following:
  - a. age;
  - b. sex;
  - c. educational attainment;
  - d. length of service;
  - e. monthly income; and
  - f. nature of job position;
2. determine the city government employees' attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy;

3. determine if there is a significant relationship between the city government employees' socio- demographic characteristics and their attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy;
4. determine if there is a significant relationship between the city government employees' socio-demographic profile and their attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy.

## **Hypotheses**

This study endeavored to test whether there is no significant relationship between the city government employees' socio-demographic characteristics (i.e., age, sex, educational attainment, length of service and nature of job position) and their attitude toward office gastrodiplomacy.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study is a descriptive-correlational study that employed a one-shot survey design. This non-experimental design was used to determine the factors that may affect the attitudes of employees of a local government unit (LGU) in the Philippines towards office gastrodiplomacy.

### **Study Population**

The target population consisted of all regular and full-time staff employees. The LGU profiled 1,788 for which sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula at 327 respondents with the margin of error at 5%. Stratified random sampling was then used to determine the number of respondents per department.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A letter of informed consent was attached to each questionnaire to get the respondent's consent to voluntarily participate in the study. The researcher explained the nature, purpose, and objectives of the study, and

the respondents were assured that the data gathered from them would be kept confidential and would be used solely for this study. The respondents were further informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to refuse to answer the questionnaire if they were not willing to participate in the study.

## Research Instrumentation

The research instrument consisted of two parts. Part I determined the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees which included their age, sex, level of educational attainment, length of service, monthly income, and nature of job position. Part II was a researcher-made questionnaire that contained 21 statements about attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. One (1) point was given for every statement with a “yes” answer and zero (0) for “no”. The raw score was added, and the sum was categorized as follows:

| Category          | Raw Score |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Positive Attitude | 10 – 21   |
| Negative Attitude | 0 – 9     |

## Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts in the field of research for validation. Comments and recommendations of the panel members were included in the final version of the questionnaire. The revised instrument was pilot tested among employees of another LGU with almost the same characteristics. Ten percent (10%) of the total sample size was included as participants of the pilot study, which constituted 33 respondents.

The Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated to measure internal consistency and scale reliability. Reliability coefficient for attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy was at 0.914.

## Data Collection

A letter of permission stating the purpose of the study was sent to the LGU Administrator. The letter also served as an endorsement approval presented to the heads of the different offices and departments. The researcher



personally gathered the intended data. Respondents were briefed on the purpose and content of the study and the questionnaire that they would answer. Further, the physical presence of the researcher was of paramount importance in assisting the respondents whenever they had questions and clarifications relating to the items. The respondents were given ample time to answer the questionnaire from the time they voluntarily decided to participate in the study. At the request of the respondents, the researcher collected the answered questionnaire a week later.

Upon collection of the answered questionnaire, the researcher double-checked each item to ensure the completeness of responses. Questionnaires with incomplete answers were returned to the respondents for completion. Data were coded, tabulated, and processed with the aid of the computer.

### **Statistical Treatment and Analysis**

Data gathered were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics such as mean and frequency distribution were calculated for all variables. For inferential statistics, the following were utilized:

**Chi-Square test.** This was used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between two nominal variables and between nominal and ordinal variables.

**Cramer's V.** This was used to determine the degree of relationship between two nominal variables and between nominal and ordinal variables.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents was categorized according to age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, monthly income, and nature of job position. The profile is presented in Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Socio-demographic Characteristics*

| <b>A. Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents</b> | <b>f</b>   | <b>%</b>     |
|--|------------|--------------|
| <b>Age</b>   |            |              |
| 24 – 35 years old                                  | 97         | 29.7         |
| 36 – 45 years old                                  | 104        | 31.8         |
| 45 – 60 years old                                  | 126        | 38.5         |
| <b>Total Mean = 42.3 years old</b>                 | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Sex</b>   |            |              |
| Male   | 125        | 38.2         |
| Female   | 202        | 61.8         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Educational Attainment</b>                      |            |              |
| Undergraduate                                      | 44         | 13.5         |
| College Graduate                                   | 237        | 72.5         |
| Postgraduate                                       | 46         | 14.1         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Length of Service</b>                           |            |              |
| 1 – 10 years                                       | 208        | 63.6         |
| 11 – 25 years                                      | 91         | 27.8         |
| 26 – 40 years                                      | 28         | 8.6          |
| <b>Total Mean = 11.2 years</b>                     | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Monthly Income</b>                              |            |              |
| P8,000 – 16,000                                    | 164        | 50.2         |
| 16,001 – 30,000                                    | 92         | 28.1         |
| above 30,001                                       | 71         | 21.7         |
| <b>Total Mean = Php 22,311.3</b>                   | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| <b>Nature of Job Position</b>                      |            |              |
| Sub-professional                                   | 140        | 42.8         |
| Professional                                       | 187        | 57.2         |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

On average, the respondents were 42.3 years old. Out of 327 respondents, 29.7% were 24-35 years old, 31.8% were 36-45 years old, and 38.5% were 46-65 years old. Female respondents (61.8%) outnumbered male respondents (38.2%). In terms of educational attainment, at least one in ten was an

undergraduate (13.5%), at least seven in ten were college graduates (72.5%), while there were at least one in ten on the postgraduate level (14.1%). The data in Table 1 further reveals that the respondents had an average of 11.2 years of experience. The distribution further shows that more than half (63.6%) had 1-10 years of experience, almost one-third (27.8%) had 11-25 years of experience, and barely one-tenth (8.6%) had 26-40 years of experience. Meanwhile, data on the monthly income shows that the respondents, earned an average of Php 22,311.3. At least half of them were low-income earners, within the bracket Php 8,000 – Php 16,000. Nearly one third (28.1%) were middle-income earners, within the bracket Php 16,001 – Php 30,000. The remaining one-fourth (21.7%) were high-income employees, earning above Php 30,001. Finally, as to the nature of job position, professional employees constituted 57.2% of the total respondents which was closely followed by sub-professional employees consisting 42.8% of the total respondents.

### Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy

**Table 2**

*Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy*

| Office Gastrodiplomacy | Yes        |              |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|
|                        | F          | %            |
| Positive Attitude      | 267        | 81.7         |
| Negative Attitude      | 60         | 18.3         |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>327</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Table 2 shows the overall attitude of the respondents towards office gastrodiplomacy. As shown in the data, eight out of ten (81.7%) employees had positive attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. This is consistent with the contentions of Mayuga (2017) that Filipinos generally loved to eat food. In addition, this reflects that Filipino culture, values, and philosophy are built and foster social relationships around food (Florendo, 2019; Fernandez, 1994).

## **Distribution of Respondents according to their Socio-Demographic Characteristics and their Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

Table 3 presents the findings on the relationship analysis between respondent's socio-demographic characteristics according to age, sex, educational attainment, length of service, monthly income, nature of job position and their overall attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy.

### **Age and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

A higher proportion of respondents (89.7%) who were 24-35 years old had a favorable overall attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy as compared to those who were 36-35 years old (83.7%) and 45-60 years old (73.8%). Inversely, a higher percentage (26.2%) among respondents aged 45-65 years had unfavorable attitude as compared to those who were 36-45 years old (16.3%) and those who were 24-35 years old (10.3%).

The result of the Cramer's V test for the relationship between two variables yielded a value of 0.172 with a p value of 0.008 which was significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that the age of the respondents had a significant influence on their attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. Therefore, the hypothesis that there was no relationship between age and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy is rejected.

This finding implies that younger employees tend to have favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy than the older ones. This is in contrast with the findings of Browning et al. (2019), who said that older people tended to value food and eating rituals more primarily because of their food-related experiences in the past, where limited food resources affected their food choice and eating habits. The present results of this study can be associated with the higher appetite levels among the younger population. Moreover, another possible rationale is how younger employees may tend to think that eating is more of a social activity than merely a biological or nutritional process.

## Sex and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy

A little higher proportion of male (82.4%) respondents had a favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy than the female (81.2%) respondents. On the contrary, a little higher proportion (18.8%) of female respondents had a more negative attitude compared to their male counterparts (17.6%).

The result of the Cramer's V test for relationship between two variables yielded a value of -0.15 with p value of 0.783 which was not significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicated that age has no significant influence on attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. The hypothesis, therefore, that there was no relationship between age and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy cannot be rejected.

**Table 3**

*Distribution of Respondents according to their Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy*

| Socio-demographic Characteristics | Overall Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------|-------|----|------|-----|----------|
|                                   | Positive Attitude                               | Negative Attitude | Total |    |      |     |          |
|                                   | F   | %                 | f     | %  |      |     |          |
| Age                               |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
|                                   | 24 – 35   | 87                | 89.7  | 10 | 10.3 | 97  | 100.0    |
|                                   | 36 – 45   | 87                | 83.7  | 17 | 16.3 | 104 | 100.0    |
|                                   | 45 – 65   | 93                | 73.8  | 33 | 26.2 | 126 | 100.0    |
|                                   | Total   | 267               | 81.7  | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0    |
| Cramer's V: 0.172                 |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
| <i>Weak relationship</i>          |   |                   |       |    |      |     | p=0.008  |
| <i>Significant</i>                |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
| Sex                               |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
|                                   | Male  | 103               | 82.4  | 22 | 17.6 | 125 | 100.0    |
|                                   | Female  | 164               | 81.2  | 38 | 18.8 | 202 | 100.0    |
|                                   | Total   | 267               | 81.7  | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0    |
| Cramer's V: -0.15                 |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
| <i>Weak relationship</i>          |   |                   |       |    |      |     | p= 0.783 |
| <i>Not significant</i>            |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |
| Educational Attainment            |   |                   |       |    |      |     |          |

|                               |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----|------|----|------|-----|-------|
|                               | Undergraduate        | 36  | 81.8 | 8  | 18.2 | 44  | 100.0 |
|                               | College Grad         | 192 | 81.0 | 45 | 19.0 | 237 | 100.0 |
|                               | Postgraduate         | 39  | 84.8 | 7  | 15.2 | 46  | 100.0 |
|                               | Total                | 267 | 81.7 | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0 |
| Cramer's V: 0.033             |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>No relationship</i>        |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Not significant</i>        |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <b>Length of Service</b>      |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
|                               | 1 – 10 years         | 176 | 84.6 | 32 | 15.4 | 208 | 100.0 |
|                               | 11 – 25 years        | 75  | 82.4 | 16 | 17.6 | 91  | 100.0 |
|                               | 26 – 40 years        | 16  | 57.1 | 12 | 42.9 | 28  | 100.0 |
|                               | Total                | 267 | 81.7 | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0 |
| Cramer's V: 0.195             |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Weak relationship</i>      |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Significant</i>            |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <b>Monthly Income</b>         |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
|                               | P8,000 –<br>16,000   | 135 | 82.3 | 29 | 17.7 | 164 | 100.0 |
|                               | 16,001 –<br>30,000   | 80  | 87.0 | 12 | 13.0 | 92  | 100.0 |
|                               | above 30,0001        | 52  | 73.2 | 19 | 26.8 | 71  | 100.0 |
|                               | Total                | 267 | 81.7 | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0 |
| Cramer's V: 0.125             |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Weak relationship</i>      |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Not significant</i>        |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <b>Nature of Job Position</b> |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
|                               | Sub-<br>professional | 110 | 78.6 | 30 | 21.4 | 140 | 100.0 |
|                               | Professional         | 157 | 84.0 | 30 | 16.0 | 187 | 100.0 |
|                               | Total                | 267 | 81.7 | 60 | 18.3 | 327 | 100.0 |
| Cramer's V: 0.069             |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>No relationship</i>        |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |
| <i>Not significant</i>        |                      |     |      |    |      |     |       |

This finding implies that sex is not a significant factor that affect attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. One rationalization that may be suggested in support of this finding can be attributed to the cultural distinctiveness of Filipinos and their attitude towards food in general. It can be said that Filipinos, regardless of sex, show nearly the same attitude towards the ceremonial function of food, as it is emphasized in every household that

the whole family should eat together. Filipino families view this practice as bonding time for them; thus, it appears normal for Filipinos to have a positive view towards food and eating.

This finding, however, contradicts the study of Mannippa et al. (2017), who said that sex was a determinant of attitude towards eating. They contended that women tended to have an evaluative attitude towards eating or not eating.

### **Educational Attainment and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

A higher percentage (84.8%) of respondents who were on the postgraduate level had a favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy as compared to those who were on the undergraduate (81.8%) and college graduates (81.0%) groups. Inversely, those were college graduates (19.0%) tended to have a more unfavorable attitude compared to those who belonged to the undergraduate (18.2%) and postgraduate (15.2%) groups.

The result of the Cramer's V test for relationship between two variables yielded a value of 0.033 with a p value of 0.833 which was not significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that educational attainment had no significant influence on the respondents' attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. The hypothesis, therefore, that there is no relationship between age and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy cannot be rejected. This finding implies that educational attainment is not a factor that affects attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. This finding contradicts the study of Bartkiene et al. (2019) who said that there was a direct relationship between educational attainment and perceptions towards food and other food-related practices.

### **Length of Service and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

A higher percentage (84.6%) of the respondents with 1-10 years of experience generally had a more favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy compared to those with 11-25 years of experience (82.4%) and those with 26-40 years of experience (57.1%). Inversely, a greater proportion (42.9%)

of those with 26-40 year of experience had a more unfavorable attitude compared to those with 11-25 (17.6%) and 1-10 (15.4%) years of experience. The statistical analysis for a test of relationship generated a Cramer's V value of 0.195 with a p value of 0.002 which was significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that length of service had a significant bearing on the respondents' attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no relationship between age and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy is rejected.

This finding implies that younger employees tend to have a more favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy than the older employees. One outstanding reason that can be associated with this finding was the contention of McCuoat (2014) on the ability of food to lessen organizational boundaries and hierarchies when employees eat with their supervisors. As such, younger employees may generally have a more positive attitude as they may see such practice as a way to socialize with other employees at work, unlike older ones who had already established their social circles.

This is, further, consistent with the contention of Brandon (2018), who said that length of time was an indicator of influence on people's food habits. This idea can also be attributed to the study of Davey (2016), who said that sharing a meal with office colleagues helped create social networks.

### **Monthly Income and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

A higher percentage of those earning between Php 16,001-30,000 (87.0%) generally showed a favorable attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. This was closely followed by respondents earning between Php 8,000-16,000 (82.3%) and far behind by those earning above Php 30,001 (73.2%). Inversely, there was a greater percentage (26.8%) of those earning above Php 30,001 than those earning between Php 8,000-16,000 (17.7%) and those earning Php 16,001-30,000 (13.0%).

The statistical analysis for test of relationship generated a Cramer's V value of 0.125 with p value of 0.047, which was not significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that monthly income had no significant bearing on the respondents' attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. The hypothesis, therefore, that there is no relationship between age and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy cannot be rejected.



This finding implies that monthly income has no bearing whether one feels favorable or not towards office gastrodiplomacy. This finding is not consistent with the contentions of Fadulu (2019) who argued that income determines people's attitude towards food. It can be reasoned out that employees do not necessarily view office gastrodiplomacy as an opportunity for nutritional intake alone. Instead, food in the office or food shared in such space takes more meaning as cultural and ceremonial symbols within the organizations.

### **Nature of Job Position and Attitude towards Office Gastrodiplomacy**

A higher percentage (84.0%) of the professional respondents indicated a favorable attitude in contrast with those in the sub-professional (78.6%) job positions. Inversely, a higher percentage (21.4%) of sub-professional respondents indicated an unfavorable attitude compared to those in the professional (16.0%) positions.

The result of the Cramer's V test for relationship between two variables yielded a value of 0.069 with a p value of 0.213 which was not significant, at 0.05 confidence level. This indicates that nature of job position had no significant influence on attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy. The hypothesis, therefore, that there was no relationship between nature of job position and attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy cannot be rejected.

This finding implies that attitude towards office gastrodiplomacy is not determined by one's job, whether it is sub-professional or clerical, or whether it is professional or scientific-specialist in nature. Again, it can be argued that this is perhaps related to the general attitude of Filipinos who view the ceremonial function of food as innately positive.

Moreover, this finding is not consistent with the report of the USDA – Economic Research Service (2019), which said that situational factors such as the nature of people's job positions directly affect access to food, thereby affecting people's attitude towards eating and actual eating practices.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Office gastrodiplomacy is a common practice in the Philippines. In public offices, however, it has been treated as a norm and a standard operating

procedure even in simple gatherings like casual office meetings or more organized events like official gatherings. Food is served to encourage higher engagement among employees and to ease out organizational hierarchies/ boundaries and establish harmonious relationships among co-workers. This is particularly true in the Filipino culture, where people tend to be more personal with work, thereby building social networks among colleagues and being attached to the office not only professionally but also socially. One cannot take away the notion that Filipinos are natural food-lovers, as a result of how they are nurtured during childhood and in their respective homes.

Office gastrodiplomacy is proven to influence work-related processes of which office managers may take advantage for the organization's benefit. In this study, it was found that age and length of service had a bearing on the respondents' attitude towards gastrodiplomacy. This means that those from the lower age groups and the younger employees positively perceived this practice. Relating this to previous studies, it can be said that these groups may feel more motivated, satisfied, and engaged in work (Ariely, 2016; Taylor, 2014; Baldoni, 2013). One major implication of the findings of this study is for office managers and the academic community to realize the ceremonial and cultural value of food within the organization and not merely to understand it within biological and nutritional domains. Gastrodiplomacy evidently develops healthy relationships within organizations and may also be instrumental in keeping, maintaining, and improving such relationships. Though not within the scope of this paper, it is suggested based on the present findings that gastrodiplomacy may increase efficiency, reduce organizational conflicts, and improve governance. There is high potential in food's ability to draw a grey line on the relationship between employees and supervisors, and such relationship reflects how they connect with their companies in general. In this sense, gastrodiplomacy may change the individual from being detached from the organization to being attached to it, thus softening the rigid boundaries within the different levels of organizational structure. Literature has long before suggested that increasing participation of individuals in organizations can lead to greater employee productivity, as they are not considered pawns but rather as partners for development. Albeit a widely studied topic in management sciences abroad, more dimensions of this topic remain unexplored, but this study may serve as a guide for future researchers to explore this growing field of knowledge in terms of the local literature.

As a groundwork in this emerging area, this study envisions that in further grappling with the intrinsic and extrinsic capacity of office gastrodiploacy, office managers may consider the findings, and perhaps a few concrete recommendations that are stated hereunder:

1. Office gastrodiploacy can provide opportunities to minimize the rigid organizational hierarchies. Hence, public administrators should make sure that they allow regular employees to eat together with their officials to provide the latter opportunities get to know more about their subordinates on a personal level. This may be achieved, say for example, by prescribing seat plans during official occasions.
2. Younger employees may be given an opportunity to be acquainted with the organization and with older employees through office gastrodiploacy. In this manner, generic stereotypes may be eliminated for the greater benefit of the organization.
3. The academe should encourage the proliferation of literature on office gastrodiploacy as one of the emerging areas in the management sciences. The comprehensive literature from foreign academic institutions may serve as a guide to re-test whether the same effects may be generated from the Filipino work setting.
4. This is a study in applied anthropology for modern organizations. This study encourages researchers to seek to apply anthropological themes in organizational and management research, precisely on how organizational culture influences organizational practices and processes, such as organizational conflict, employee engagement, efficiency, and governance.
5. For future researchers who would like to undertake the same study, it is recommended that they study the same sector in different regions of the Philippines to generalize the findings of the study. Further, it is also suggested that the study be extended to different industries such as banking, education, multi-national companies, etc.

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