Dr. Amanda Patel is an assistant professor of Management and Entrepreneurship Department at Sawyer Business School of Suffolk University. So recently Dr. Patel published a very interesting study in Journal of Applied Psychology, which is considered one of the most premier academic journals in the business field. Let us know more about Dr. Patel and her study.

So Dr. Patel, what are your general research interest and expertise area?

So when I went into graduate school, I knew that I was very interested in employee health and wellbeing. So very broadly that is my research interest. And over time, it has become more niche I like to say. And I really spend a lot of time focusing on employees' physical health behaviors, like eating and exercising and then sleep.

Thank you very much. And then in this article we see that you focused on the health eating climate. Could you touch upon the highlights of this article?

Yeah, so my co-authors were Trevor Watkins and Giselle Antoine. And it was a really fun team to work with. But we started out kind of piggybacking off of some of Trevor's work, but we spent some time talking about workplace healthy eating and what does that actually mean? And that took a lot of time and effort to come up with a definition that would be general enough to span across cultures, but specific enough to capture what is healthy and not healthy.

So we came up with the definition of workplace healthy eating is a diet rich in nutrients and low in unhealthy components. And we used consumption stereotype theory to kind of hypothesize about the impact of what we eat in the workplace and how that would affect others' perceptions of us and their subsequent behaviors towards us.

And then we also did this within the context of the organizational health climate. This is great, thank you so much for highlighting that particular aspect.

So now we're moving into the research methodology that you and your co-authors are using in this article. And then we see that in this particular article, you used a mixed method approach with a piloting study at the beginning and then followed by three separate studies, and then in which case you both used the survey methodology as well as the experimental design.

So could you share with us the fun part (laughs)
03:07 or any surprise when you are running all these studies?
03:12 - Yeah, the fun part was definitely the experiment
03:18 because we manipulated Taylor and whether or not Taylor
03:22 was a healthy eater or an unhealthy eater.
03:26 And so the way we did that was we showed a picture
03:28 of an office desk with either a salad or a bottle of water
03:33 or a salad and a bottle of water or pizza
03:37 and a pop or soda I guess if you're from New England.
03:42 And that was fun because we used my actual work desk,
03:47 and so we went out, we bought these food items
03:49 and then we took pictures of my desk
03:51 with these different food items.
03:54 But yeah, so that was probably the funnest part, yeah.
04:01 - Very interesting, especially we saw that in your study
04:05 that you took the screenshot
04:07 about different dishes by the computer.
04:10 That is really interesting.
04:11 And then people feel that kind of like it's related
04:15 to their day-to-day kinda like a workplace.
04:19 - Yeah, thank you. - Have you ever encountered
04:22 any kind of hiccup or like some difficulties
04:27 when collecting the information or running all these tests?
04:31 - Yeah, definitely, so one of the biggest ones
04:36 we actually had with this journal,
04:39 and with any journal I think, with any publication,
04:41 but we always get questions about whether
04:44 or not the way we measured something is accurate.
04:48 So as I mentioned earlier,
04:50 we were looking at coworkers' perceptions of self-control.
04:54 And so our reviewers wondered,
04:58 well, was it driven by perceptions of self-control
05:00 or is there something
05:01 about the actual focal person's true self-control?
05:06 So when we were asked this,
05:08 we were a little bit miffed about how to answer it.
05:12 So what we ended up doing
05:14 was we had all the contact information
05:17 for the people who participated in our field study,
05:21 thankfully, we emailed them and explained our situation.
05:25 We said, Hey, we got an R and R at this top tier journal.
05:29 This is really important.
05:30 Can you please answer these last few questions for us?
05:35 And we have them rate their own self-control.
05:37 And then we went back, we tested the correlation,
05:40 and then we actually put it
05:41 as a control in our field study model
05:43 and we were excited to see everything held.
05:46 - Well, this is so true actually I think,
05:49 in terms of the measurement problem,
05:51 often time is to consider very challenging questions
05:55 from many, many journal reviewers and editors.
05:59 Yeah, this is great, thank you so much
06:02 for sharing that part of the insight with us.
06:05 So now we are moving into
about the future research direction
and then this particular health eating culture and climate,
its implication in the real business world.
So the question we are interested in asking,
in knowing is do you plan to do any follow up study
or research on the related topic?
- Yes, we are literally actually last week wrapped up
more research on this where we
have now done both experiments and a field study,
two field studies where we extend this idea
of workplace eating behaviors
and we actually look at two different things.
So the first is I say I'm comparing my eating
how does that make me feel?
Shame, pride, what have you.
The other thing that we're looking at
is when we're thinking about someone else's eating,
to what extent do we perceive food shaming
or how much have we experienced food shaming?
So two of these kind of like moral emotion reactions
but one is a behavior directed at you
and the other one is a feeling you may feel
from these observations.
So I don't know, stay tuned (laughs).
This is very interesting, brilliant idea.
I really, really love this and congratulations
on completing two field study already.
- Thank you. - Yes, and so in your opinion,
what could be the future direction
of this health eating culture and climate moving forward?
- From an academic perspective,
I think this is an extremely new area of research
and there is a lot to be done
in terms of cultural differences around eating,
how we perceive people who eat different types of food
because of their culture, whether that aligns
with their culture or not.
So that could be a really interesting one.
Also maybe considering things like food deserts
and how that impacts what people eat at work
and then our perceptions of those people
and their experiences at work.
So I really think the sky's the limit on this
because we're just now starting
to build the foundation for this area.
- Yeah, this is social especially people eating healthy food
is super important not to ourself
but also to the organization culture.
And it's also influenced the people's self-control
and how then they collaborate with each other.
And then you also mentioned about this cultural perspective
that people might be eating different food,
which is also very, very important.
Not to mention the eco-friendly sustainability
that may also somehow play a role into this particular area.

So do you have any kind of like thing

that you would like to share
to the business professionals and managers?
And then if so, what might those elements be?
- Yes, I think one of the first things

that came to mind with this study is this is all based
on consumption stereotypes theory,
which is we know that people stereotype others based
on what they eat.

So a couple of basic examples,
eating a salad is associated with femininity.
Eating meat is associated with masculinity.
So this is not an area

that people often think about

in terms of stereotyping.

So I think for business professionals,
what I would say is start thinking about these stereotypes
and how to mitigate some of these effects.
We think about gender, race, religion,
but this is another important one 'cause our results held
across several different methodologies.
And then the other thing which is related
is I would encourage business professionals to think
about how they're promoting eating in the workplace
and what type of climate they're creating
and really focusing on promoting a healthy eating climate
as that mitigated some of these negative effects.

- Well, thank you so much

for providing all these important suggestions
to the business professionals
and then those like business world managers.

This is very important.

So now we're going to move
into the last section of our entire interview,
which is about the publication advice and then experience
that you could share with our peer, our fellow colleagues.
So the first question that we're wondering
is when you are submitting this article,
what made you choose to submit
to the Journal of Applied Psychology?

- We chose the Journal of Applied Psychology

because it was important for us to strive from the top
and then work our way from there based
on the feedback we got.

- Yeah, this is great because like many of the peers

are thinking about writing an article,
and then let's shoot for the best, and then go from the top
and then let's see how far we can go in this case.

So thank you so much for sharing that part of the insight.
And so the last question we would like to know
is what kind of like advice would you like to give
or share with the fellow colleagues when they're thinking
about really trying to submit to the premier journals?
12:09 - I think my piece of advice for this comes a little bit
12:16 before you're thinking about where to send it
12:18 but when you're thinking about the ideas you have
12:21 and that is put together a group
12:24 of people you have fun working with.
12:27 Trevor and Giselle are two of my favorite people
12:31 to work with in terms of academia.
12:33 And we were all three doctoral students
12:36 when we started this project.
12:38 And we started it, Trevor was the one
12:42 who had come up with the idea himself, come to us and said,
12:45 "Hey, I know you like to do these types of things."
12:48 And then honestly, because it was so fun,
12:51 it didn't feel stressful to submit
12:54 to a premier journal at all, it was just fun.