

Eating Habits Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Eating habits are a major concern about the health status of university students. This study aimed to identify patterns of eating habits among university students. The nature of the study was quantitative in which data were gathered with a self-administered questionnaire encompassing questions on sociodemographics and eating habits, which were evaluated by students on a 3-point Likert Type Scale. The population was BS and M.Sc. Physical Education students aged 18–26, the sample was collected 200 from males and females students of the Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, using a simple random sampling technique. Overall results showed students have a variety of food every day (Sig. .000), Students take three-time meals regularly (Sig. .000). Similarly, results of most statements have been marked as highly significant (Sig. .000) which were encircled by students like, count of calories intake, take whole grain food, eating more when feeling stress, very strict on their meal timing, take balanced diet, habitual of taking tea, tried to fad diets and so on. It is recommended that a balanced diet heaving on time has a substantial effect on student's health.

Keywords: *Eating, habits, Students, University.*

INTRODUCTION

Joining university is one of the most important times of a person's life. Among other implications of that period, food choices and food and healthy living practices need to be focused more responsibly (Trahearn *et al.*, 2021). This is a time when students enter the new educational period of their life, and they are given the freedom to make their own choices in food. They are more independent to choose their preference of food items than ever in their early stage of life. So, this independently leads to some issues regarding health. The tendency of overweight and obesity are considered more prevalent rapidly worldwide (Talukder *et al.*, 2021). This is confirmed by much evidence that overweight and obesity are increasing like

a brush fire. There is statistical prevalence that indicates that over one billion adults worldwide are the prey of overweight about half a million of them endured obesity (Awuchi and Awuchi, 2019).

Students encountered the move from support school to college as an upsetting period. Students additionally uncovered that the exam period when scholarly accomplishment weight is most astounding gives a ton of anxiety (Ward and Webster, 2018). Students firmly trusted that eating decisions amid unpleasant can be impacted in both headings. About tend to eat more beneficial. Students were found to be consuming more food during exams. Similarly, the type of food also mattered a lot. For example, fruits and vegetables were favorite among most of the students. Likewise, stress was found to be disturbing the eating behavior of university students. Underline the reason for this problem is to address practices that are identified as one of the motivating epidemics of obesity and overweight global factors (Ward and Webster, 2018). These include increased energy which contains a high proportion of fat and sugars but is low in vitamins, minerals, and other micro-nutrient-rich food consumption, as well as low consumption of pulse, milk, fruits and vegetables (Afari-Sefa et al., 2016). The emergence of dietary habits holds on continued after university education. A healthy lifestyle is an essential component of the adult population at the university level, and many studies show that it is a globally increased tendency to pay a great amount of consideration to explore the nutritional knowledge and eating habits of university students (Silva *et al.*, 2021).

In this context, the study of Larson *et al.* (2021) emphasized that there is a lot of Unhealthy eating behaviors among university students and strains the need to inspire healthy eating habits among students to attain a healthy way of life.

Even though there is rising attention across the globe which address specifically university students and the gender differences of preference in eating habits as well as statistics on eating habits of the university population in Pakistan are not ample (Sadia *et al.*, 2021). Healthy eating is essential for health educators to enhance public health (Kotecki 2021). This would help public health-related programs. Nutrition plays an important role to determine the overall health status of young people as multi customs of poor nutrition may cause overweight conditions which can make the matter the more difficult range of issues, including dietary insufficiency, infections, and socio-cultural factors. As the National Nutrition Survey 2011 points out that stunting, wasting, and micronutrient malnutrition exist endemic in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2021)

The present study intended to explore the dietary habits of university students and to accomplish this purpose the previous literature on this topic is reviewed. There is a huge body of research worldwide, especially across developed countries. In underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, there is no extensive work done in this area due to fewer resources, but some research studies are found which are done mostly at the university level and the target population is university students.

Ahmad-Qadri *et al.* (2021) examined the lifestyle and eating patterns of students of a private university in Karachi. The sample consists of 100 students who were studying in medical college at Baqai Medical University. The consent of the participant was taken, and the method of measurement was a self-administrated questionnaire. The male was more selected in the sample than the female. In terms of results, it was concluded that seven percent of the students were tobacco addicted. A higher percentage of students indicated that they used to consume junk food. Grain food consumption was second preferred eating. On the other hand, seventy percent of students used to walk 30 minutes as well as half of the population exercised daily. When the bodyweight was analyzed, half of the students had normal weight. There was no significant gender difference was found in males and females. The problem of overweight is related to junk

foods items and along soft drinks used by students. The proactive feature of the overweight was considered exercise and grain food consumption.

Another study was done by Sajwani et al. (2009) to discover the eating pattern and lifestyles of medical students. The other aspects of the study are to compare medical and non-medical students in terms of intention to gain knowledge and practice associated with daily life. The sample consists of 100 students which were included medical and non-medical students for their respective departments. Self-report was utilized to assess situations and barriers related to health issues. In terms of the result, the barrier of financial resources and the time shortage was most problematic for them to establish a healthy lifestyle.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the eating habits of Punjab University students. Information on differences in eating practices at the campus may guide health educators to target interventions more specifically for campus students to enhance their healthy eating habits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative study through the paper-pencil survey method was conducted on the students of BS and M.Sc. programs of the Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore. A sample of 200 students was selected N=100 with ages 18-24 years from BS students (n=50 males and n=50 females) and N=100 from M.Sc. (n=50 males and n=50 females) with ages 20-26 years.

The procedure of Data Collection

Data was collected from BS and M.Sc. students by researchers themselves. For, this purpose, researchers visited their classes. Firstly, researchers explain the objective of the study to students then read each statement to remove the ambiguity related to each statement.

Research Tool

A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection, which was contained in 20 statements. It was developed under the supervision of experts. These statements were observed through a 3-Points Likert-Scale (A= Agree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided) by participants. While validity was checked through pilot testing. The reliability coefficient was .707, which shows that the rating scale was reliable.

Plan of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed on a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS ver 21). Frequency distribution and chi-square test were used to analyze the results of the existing study.

PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

Programs	No. of Students	Percentage
BS	100	50%
M.Sc.	100	50%
Total	200	100%

There were a total of 200 students from two different education mediums who participated in this study. Among them, 50% (100) students were from a BS program and 50% (100) students were from the M.Sc. program.

RESULTS SUMMARY

Sr.	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	Chi-Square	P-Value
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1	I have a variety of food every day.	89	7	4	1.3962	.000
2	I take 3 times meal regularly.	27	67	6	57.620	.000
3	I count my calories intake.	74	16	10	74.960	.000
4	I take whole grain food.	43	55	2	46.340	.000
5	I eat more when I'm stressed.	65	34	1	61.460	.000
6	I'm strict on my meal timing	61	33	6	45.380	.000
7	I take a balanced diet.	49	47	4	38.780	.000
8	I'm habitual of taking tea.	64	32	4	54.080	.000
9	I limit my Saturated fat intake less than 10%? (e.g., butter, cheese, cream, fatty meats)	68	29	3	64.220	.000
10	I have tried fad diets.	62	36	2	54.320	.000
11	I add more salt to food while serving at the table.	61	29	10	39.860	.000
12	I eat or buy food of my choice from the market.	66	31	3	59.780	.000
13	I like to eat a salad with my meal.	68	28	4	62.720	.000
14	I go for a walk after taking dinner.	56	47	3	41.540	.000
15	I like to eat plants food.	43	56	1	49.580	.000
16	I'm habitual of taking mid-night snacks.	27	67	6	57.620	.000
17	I prefer homemade food.	43	55	2	46.340	.000
18	I almost skip my breakfast. (3 to 4 days)	61	33	6	45.380	.000
19	I eat fruits almost 3 to 4 days a week	64	32	4	54.080	.000
20	I like to eat Fried food.	62	36	2	54.320	.000

FINDINGS

Entering university is an important part of being a student. Students go through certain changes. Most dominantly they are given more freedom of choice in their life. Such freedom of choices also includes free choice and developing their new food habits. An intake of good food ensures a healthy lifestyle.

This study was delimited to all the students of BS and M.Sc. programs of Department of Sports Sciences and Physical Education, University of the Punjab, Lahore

Findings of the study revealed that most of the participants were agreed to having a variety of food every day, they take 3 times to meal regularly, they almost skip their breakfast (3 to 4 days) and count their calories intake. Similarly, the majority of the participants of the survey also revealed that they take whole grain food, they eat more when feeling stressed, they are strict on their meal timing, they take a balanced diet, and they are habitual of taking tea. Similarly, respondents also believed that they limit their Saturated fat intake to less than 10% (e.g., butter, cheese, cream, fatty meats) and they have tried fad diets. After careful analysis of the data, the researchers concluded that students at the university level add more salt to food while served at the table. Therefore, the study also concludes that numerous factors play an important part in determining the nutrition habits of the students at the university level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Eating Habits Among University Students

- Students should not use fat food excessively.
- Students should not skip their breakfast because it harms health.
- Students must take a balanced diet it will be beneficial for their health. “Healthy body has a healthy mind”.
- Students should not take much saturated foods.
- Students should not take tea more than usual.
- Students should not add more salt to food while serving.
- Students should not eat more fried food.

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