



Eating Behavior among College Going Girls and its Impact on Nutritional Status

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ABSTRACT

College students are at risk for making poor dietary choices that can cause significant health problems. The present study was done to assess the eating behavior among college going girls, calculate the BMI & assessment of their nutritional status, assess the relationship between stress and eating behavior and to conduct awareness on healthy eating patterns and healthy diet options. The study comprises among 200 subjects in the age group of 18-25 years in Thrissur district. A specially designed questionnaire was formulated to elicit the anthropometric details, dietary pattern analysis, stress and physical activity of the selected subjects. Questionnaire form was distributed among the samples through online platform. The data obtained from the survey and the correlation of BMI and Eating Behavior, stress and eating behavior was analyzed using Microsoft Excel Office. The study showed that most of them having regular meals and prefer healthy foods daily thus the nutritional status was normal. But when the relationship between stress and eating behavior was analyzed majority of the students had the tendency to eat less and had unhealthy food while they are stressed in academics. Hence, an awareness class about the healthy diet was conducted based on the result of the data obtained from the survey method.

Keywords: *Eating Behavior, Body Mass Index, College Students, Healthy Foods*

1. INTRODUCTION

Eating behavior is an important in life as it can affect long term health outcomes because unhealthy eating habits such as consuming nutrient deficient food, skipping meals, and a lack of timely diet are understood to cause various health problems and nutritional deficiencies. A balanced diet and the consumption of quality food can contribute to sustaining the physical well-being and mental stability of individual. Likewise, a healthy diet is understood to play a significant role in the lives of university students which are a considerably large population group which could be targeted to prevent numerous health problems. Eating pattern and dietary habits are likely to be an additional challenge for student as they face many difficulties in the new environment. Poor eating habits include under- or over-eating, not having enough healthy foods required each day, or consuming too many food and drink, which are low in fiber or high in fat, salt and/or sugar. These unhealthy eating habits can affect our nutrient intake, including energy, protein, carbohydrates, essential fatty acids, vitamins and minerals as well as fiber and fluid. Poor nutrition can impair our daily health and wellbeing and reduce our ability to lead an enjoyable and active life. In the short term, poor nutrition can contribute to stress, tiredness and our capacity to work over time, and it can contribute to the risk of developing

some illnesses and other health problems such as being overweight or obese, tooth decay, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, type-2 diabetes, osteoporosis, some cancers, depression, micronutrient deficiencies, hormonal imbalance, eating disorders, etc.

Nutritional status has been defined as an individual's health condition as it is influenced by the intake and utilization of nutrients. The factors that influence the nutritional needs and nutrition intake of children can be categorized as biological and non- biological. Biological factors include age, gender, growth, disease states, and genetic makeup. There are different types of methods to assess nutritional status such as dietary, biochemical, and anthropometric measurements. As nutritional assessment methods that can be applied in four forms of nutritional assessment 2 system: surveys, surveillance, screening, or interventions. The nutritional status of an individual is usually a result of multiple factors that interact with each other at different levels. Recognizing the role of diet in the onset of many diseases and assessing the nutritional status of an individual, family and community are important for public health. Nutrition is the science that interprets the interaction of nutrients and other substances in food in relation to maintenance, growth, reproduction, health and disease of an organism. It includes food intake, absorption, assimilation, biosynthesis, catabolism and excretion. In humans an unhealthy diet can cause deficiency- related diseases such as night blindness, anemia, scurvy, preterm birth, stillbirth and cretinism, or nutrient excess health issues. Students are the future of a country. So proper nutrition is necessary to make them physically and mentally fit. Eating disorders may lead to the conditions such as obesity, metabolic syndrome and some common chronic systemic diseases like cardiovascular disease, diabetes and osteoporosis. Malnutrition can lead to stunning of marasmus in chronic cases. Good nutrition is an important part of leading a healthy lifestyle. An eating disorder is more than just about food. It is a type of mental illness that involves unhealthy thoughts and behaviors towards food, weight, and body shape. As eating disorders commonly develop during adolescence, they can blight physical and social development and many sufferers fail to reach their academic potential. Depressed mood is a common feature, partly because of these adverse consequences and also because of the distressing nature of the central symptoms of these disorders.

The adverse physical consequences of dieting, weight loss and purging behaviors are notable and sometimes prove fatal. Body mass index value indicates the nutritional status of adults. BMI is an estimate of body fat based on weight and height of adult men and women. Obesity is often defined as a condition of abnormal and excessive fat accumulation in the adipose tissue to the extent that health may be adversely affected. The prevalence of obesity is increasing worldwide at an alarming rate in both developing and developed countries. It has become a serious epidemic health problem, estimated to be the fifth leading cause of mortality at global level. Moreover, it is a risk factor for many diseases such as certain cancers, hypertension, type II diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, metabolic syndrome and coronary heart disease. One of the major causes of obesity is the changes in the diet, in terms of quantity and quality. Underweight among children and adolescents is associated with higher risk of infectious diseases, and for girls of childbearing age, is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes including maternal mortality, delivery complications, preterm birth, and intrauterine growth retardation. Stress is defined as a disturbance to one's "physiological homeostasis or psychological well-being". It was associated with the selection of less healthy food. Women under stress seek comfort from highly palatable foods or snack foods. When under stress, people chose "unhealthy food" (e.g., high-calorie, high-fat snack food, sugary food, sweets, and carbohydrate-rich food) rather than healthy food and the associations between eating behaviors, stress, and sex are inconclusive. Stress increase and also decrease food intake and there is a correlation between the amount of over-eating and stress. College students experience stress related changes in lifestyle due to increased workload, new responsibilities, and interpersonal relationships. Extreme levels of stress can hinder work effectiveness and lead to poor academic performance and attribution. During the transition from high school to university, they failed to adjust to new environment and the stressors can lead to negative dietary habits such as excessive alcohol consumption and stress-related under- or over-eating.

College is a stressful time period for most of the students and the common problem is disordered eating. Poor eating habits are an important public health issue and 4 economic implications. Many food preferences are established early so transition to independent living during the university days is an important event. Physical inactivity and unhealthy dietary habits are the behaviors that have adverse effects on weight status in young adulthood, and the future health of adults. College life is a critical period for young adults regarding food choice and the subsequent weight changes. A balanced diet can help the students to increase energy levels, promote a functioning immune system, improves their ability to cope with stress, and increase concentration and performance in school. Healthy eating is influenced by a variety of factors. Eating a balanced diet is vital for good health and wellbeing. Food provides our bodies with the

energy, protein, essential fats, vitamins and minerals to live, grow and function properly. We need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amount of nutrients for good health. Inadequate nutrition affects student's health and academic success. College students are at risk for making poor dietary choices that can cause significant health problems. If students do not attain adequate nutrition daily it can result in a decrease in academic or physical performance.

2. METHODOLOGY

Methodology adopted for the study entitled "Eating Behavior among college going girls and its impact on their Nutritional Status" is discussed under the following headings:

- Selection of area
- Selection of samples
- Selection of tools and techniques
- Interpretation of data
- Conduct of awareness session

Selection of area

Thrissur is the rich cultural nerve centre, heritage and traditional legacy of the state of Kerala. The cuisine of Thrissur is linked to its history, geography, demography and cultures of the land. Rice is the staple food of the people in Thrissur. This district is also enriched with food courts, cafe, street foods etc. and the main customers of fast food or street foods are college students. Altogether there are 55 colleges in Thrissur district. So the area selected for the present study is Thrissur District.

Selection of samples

With many populations of people and institutions, it is straightforward to identify the type of units to be sampled and also conceive a list or frame of the units in the population. The units may be people, households, medical institution or firms from the target population and would provide an ideal frame from which the sample units could be selected. Hence, we often select people from the universe for the study purpose. The purpose of this study is to determine the eating behavior of college going girls. So 200 college going girls were selected from the

District. Here convenience sampling technique is used. In this survey, girls were taken as a sample. Because girls are engaged in house hold activities and they likely to skip breakfast of being busy or running late. They also develop eating disorders due to increased workload, less structure, anxieties, learning issues, or poor self-esteem. They are more likely to suffer from nutritional deficiencies than men due to women's reproductive biology, low social status, poverty, and lack of education. So by educating girls through awareness programs saves lives and builds stronger families and communities.

Selection of tools and techniques

The tools and techniques used for this study include online survey using questionnaire method. Questionnaire method is a popular method of data collection. These are the range of ways of getting information from people, usually by posing direct or indirect questions. In this method a questionnaire is mailed to the respondents who read, understand and fill the form. The questionnaire was distributed among 200 college going girls after explaining the purpose of study.

Interpretation of data

The data obtained from the survey and the correlation of BMI and eating behavior, stress and eating behavior was analyzed using Microsoft excel office. Interpreted data is presented in the next chapter

Conduct of awareness session

Nutrition affects the overall development of not only an individual, but also an entire nation. It is inevitable that college students face a new environment for meal preparation, planning, and eating as they transition to their college life. Nutritional counselling and education involve people gaining knowledge about nutrition and being encouraged to bring about required changes in their food habits. The goal of nutritional counselling and education is to motivate individuals to eat healthy and sustainable diets. Hence, awareness class about the healthy diet was conducted based on the result of the data obtained from the survey method. This helped the students to become aware about their life style and to maintain a healthy nutritional status. About 24 students were attended the awareness class and it is based on the data obtained from the survey. Pamphlet is also distributed online among the college students to make them more aware about the

good eating habits and healthy foods

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results pertaining to the study, “Eating Behaviour among College Going Girls and Its Impact on Their Nutritional Status”. The details regarding to the regularity in meals of the selected samples are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Regularity in Meals

Regularity Meals	Numbers	Percent
Always	40	20.0
Often	21	10.5
Sometimes	4	2.0
Never	135	67.5

According to M. Amruth and Akshath Kumar (2019), majority of the female students have regular meals (75.2%) and only the remaining 24 percent have it irregularly. The above table shows that majority of the subjects (67.5 %) never had their meals regularly, 20 percent had their meals regularly. But the rest of the samples had it irregularly. 10.5 percent had their meals often and 2 percent sometimes had their meals. During 2019, majority of the females had their meals regularly but at present majority is not having their meals regularly.

TABLE 2
BMI and Nutritional Status

BMI	Numbers	Percentage
Underweight	40	20
Normal	135	67.5
Overweight	21	10.5
Obese	4	2

Of the 200 samples under study, more than half of the samples (67.5%) were Normal, 2 percent were Obese, 10.5 percent were Overweight and 20 percent were underweight.

TABLE 3
Stress and eating tendency

Eating Tendency	Feeling Stress	Feeling Stress (%)	Not Feeling Stress	Not Feeling Stress (%)
Eating Less	129	64.5	33	16.5
Eating More	27	13.5	11	5.5

The above table shows that 64.5 percent of them had a tendency to eat less when stressed but 13.5 percent had the tendency to eat more when stressed. And 16.5 percent had a tendency to eat less even when not stressed. Only 5.5 percent were eating more even when not stressed. Thus we can conclude that majority of the samples were having less food intake due to academic stress.

4. CONCLUSION

College life is always a changing period for the adolescents and during that time students are at risk of making poor dietary choices due to increased influence of advertisements, peer pressure, academic stress, etc. and this can cause significant health problems in the future. If students did not attain adequate nutrition daily it can result in a decreased academic as well as physical performance. Among the college students girls are at higher risk of poor nutrition due to various circumstances. So there is a need to assess the eating behavior and nutritional status among college going girls.

5. REFERENCE

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