

Nutritional Status of College Students

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Abstract: Nutrition plays a vital role in maintaining health, academic performance, and overall well-being among college students. The transition from adolescence to adulthood often results in changes in dietary habits, lifestyle patterns, and physical activity levels. The present study was conducted to assess the nutritional status of college students and identify factors influencing their nutritional health. A sample of 100 college students aged 18–25 years was selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, anthropometric measurements, dietary surveys, and Body Mass Index (BMI) assessment. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of students had inadequate dietary intake, irregular meal patterns, and varying nutritional status. The study emphasizes the need for nutrition education programs and healthy lifestyle interventions among college students.

Keywords: Nutritional Status, College Students, Dietary Habits, BMI, Home Science, Nutrition

Introduction: Nutrition is the science of food and its relationship to health. Adequate nutrition is essential for growth, development, and maintenance of physical and mental health. College students often experience lifestyle changes such as irregular eating patterns, increased consumption of fast foods, meal skipping, and reduced physical activity. The college period is a critical stage during which lifelong dietary habits are formed. Poor nutritional practices can lead to malnutrition, obesity, anemia, fatigue, decreased concentration, and increased risk of chronic diseases. Therefore, assessment of nutritional status among college students is important for planning appropriate nutrition interventions.

Need for the Study: The nutritional status of college students directly affects their academic performance, productivity, and future health. Rapid urbanization, changing food habits, and increased dependence on convenience foods have altered the nutritional profile of young adults. This study seeks to evaluate the nutritional status and dietary practices of college students.

Statement of the Problem:

"A Study on the Nutritional Status of College Students."

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Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the nutritional status of college students.
2. To determine the dietary habits of college students.
3. To evaluate Body Mass Index (BMI) of students.
4. To identify factors affecting nutritional status.
5. To suggest suitable nutritional interventions.

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between dietary habits and nutritional status of college students.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant relationship between dietary habits and nutritional status of college students.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to college students aged 18–25 years.
2. The sample size is restricted to 100 students.
3. The study focuses only on nutritional assessment.

Operational Definitions

Nutritional Status: The health condition of an individual as influenced by nutrient intake and utilization.

BMI: Body Mass Index calculated as: $BMI = \text{Weight (kg)} / \text{Height}^2 (\text{m}^2)$

College Students: Students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

Review of Literature: A review of literature helps in understanding previous studies conducted on nutritional status among young adults.

Study 1: Smith et al. (2020) reported that 35% of college students skipped breakfast regularly, leading to inadequate nutrient intake.

Study 2: Kumar and Sharma (2021) found that 28% of students were overweight due to frequent consumption of fast foods.

Study 3: Patel et al. (2022) observed that female students showed a higher prevalence of iron deficiency anemia compared to male students.

Study 4: WHO reports indicate that unhealthy dietary practices among young adults contribute significantly to obesity and micronutrient deficiencies.

Previous studies indicate:

- High prevalence of meal skipping.
- Increased fast-food consumption.
- Rising obesity among youth.
- Inadequate intake of fruits and vegetables.
- Need for nutrition education programs.

Methodology

Research Design: A descriptive survey research design was adopted.

Area of Study: The study was conducted in a selected college.

Sample Size: 100 college students.

Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling method.

Tools for Data Collection

1. Structured Questionnaire: Included information on:

- Personal profile
- Socio-economic status
- Dietary habits
- Lifestyle practices

2. Anthropometric Measurements

- Height
- Weight
- BMI

3. Dietary Assessment

- 24-hour dietary recall method.

Variables:

- **Independent Variables:** Age, Gender, Dietary habits, Physical activity
- **Dependent Variable:** Nutritional status.

Procedure of Data Collection

1. Permission obtained from college authorities.
2. Students informed about the study.
3. Consent obtained.
4. Questionnaire administered.
5. Height and weight measured.
6. Dietary intake recorded.
7. Data compiled and analyzed.

Statistical Analysis

- Frequency
- Percentage
- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- Chi-square Test

Results and Discussion**Table 1: Distribution of Students According to Age**

Age Group (Years)	Number	Percentage
18–20	45	45%
21–23	38	38%
24–25	17	17%
Total	100	100%

Interpretation: Most students (45%) belonged to the 18–20 years age group.

Table 2: Meal Skipping Pattern

Meal Skipped	Number	Percentage
Breakfast	40	40%
Lunch	15	15%
Dinner	5	5%
None	40	40%

Interpretation: Breakfast was the most commonly skipped meal.

Table 3: BMI Classification

BMI Category	Number	Percentage
Underweight	18	18%
Normal	55	55%
Overweight	20	20%
Obese	7	7%

Interpretation: More than half of the students (55%) had normal BMI, while 27% were overweight or obese.

Table 4: Frequency of Fast Food Consumption

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Daily	20	20%
Weekly	50	50%
Occasionally	30	30%

Interpretation: Half of the students consumed fast food weekly.

Discussion: The findings reveal that irregular eating habits, meal skipping, and frequent fast-food consumption affect nutritional status. Similar findings were reported by previous researchers. The prevalence of overweight and obesity indicates a growing nutritional concern among college students.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary: The study assessed the nutritional status of 100 college students. Data were collected through questionnaires, anthropometric measurements, and dietary assessment methods. Major findings included:

- 40% skipped breakfast.
- 55% had normal BMI.
- 27% were overweight or obese.
- Fast-food consumption was common.

Conclusion: The nutritional status of college students is influenced by dietary habits and lifestyle factors. Although many students maintain normal nutritional status, unhealthy eating behaviors are prevalent and may increase future health risks.

Recommendations

1. Nutrition education programs should be conducted regularly.
2. Healthy food options should be available in college cafeterias.
3. Students should be encouraged to consume balanced diets.
4. Physical activity programs should be promoted.
5. Regular health and nutrition screening should be organized.

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