
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR PATTERNS IN TERMS OF EATING HABITS OF STUDENTS STAY AWAY FROM HOME

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ABSTRACT

We looked at the eating habits of college students to see whether there were any distinctions between those who lived at home and those who did not while attending university. Two hundred fifty-eight first-years at the University of Ferrara responded to a self-administered survey on their personal details, eating habits, and self-perceptions of weight Results. Homeschooled kids eat more raw and vegetables that have been cooked fish, meat, poultry, ripe fruit, eggs, bread, and cereals, and engage in greater physical activity. On the other hand, college students who ate away from home tended to eat more processed foods, such as chips, milk, and alcoholic beverages. The vast majority of solitary college students have altered their eating patterns since moving out. In addition, they were more likely to be stigmatized for being overweight than their family-supported counterparts. Discussion. Nutritional educational efforts on university students, who are often overlooked by these measures, would be beneficial, since students living alone have additional challenges when trying to adopt a healthy diet.

Key words: Dietary Habits, University Students, Food, Frequency

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1. Introduction

Even in the younger demographics, chronic illnesses are substantial sources of morbidity and death in all industrialized nations. Therefore, the WHO acknowledges the importance of a balanced diet for prevention. Increased rates of obesity or osteoporosis have been linked to improper food habits and a lack of physical exercise [1, 2].

Although young people are adopting healthier habits overall, they are less likely to follow a healthy diet in terms of food variety, fruit and vegetable consumption, and meal time [3, 4]. A person's health [6] and quality of life [5] for the rest of their lives may be profoundly affected by the choices they make during their time in college or university. Students may be roughly classified into two groups: those who continue to live at home with their family members and those who are compelled to live away from home because their chosen institution is located in an unusual or remote location. For both, the start of college coincides with a newfound sense of independence and autonomy. This is typically the first time young people have the freedom and independence to make their own food decisions and preparations [7]. College students have long been recognized to struggle with maintaining a healthy diet [8].

This study set out to do just that by looking at how a cohort of Ferrara, Italy, college freshmen live outside of the classroom. Particularly taken into account were factors such as the regularity with which one engages in leisure activities, one's diet, and one's

The research was conducted according to the guidelines laid forth in the Declaration of Helsinki by the World Medical Association. This is a case study that relied on a questionnaire, therefore no human or physiological samples were used, nor was any personally identifiable information collected. As stated in article no. 23 of the mentioned Helsinki declaration, subjects' privacy was protected, their personal information was kept confidential, and the investigation's effect on their physical, mental, and social well-being was minimized by keeping their identities hidden. Everyone who took part in the study gave their verbal permission.

In March and April of 2011, college students were asked to take part in a survey on their eating habits. All individuals were needed to be eating normally and not have any issues linked to their diet. Undergraduates who satisfied the study's inclusion criteria were given a questionnaire to fill out on their own time.

2. Data Inputs, Food Lists

Data on demographics, friends and hobbies, nutrition, health, and BMI were collected through questionnaire (Supplementary data; see www.iss.it/anna for access).

- (i) The demographics were the focus of the first section.
- (ii) The second segment looked at cultural factors to determine whether or not students lived at home throughout the school year and how often they participated in popular forms of student entertainment (such as going to the bar, attending a cultural event, going to the disco, or participating in sports).

The Menu In the third phase, which looked at the amount of food was eaten and, more specifically, where food had been set up, the frequency The survey (FFQ) was used, which relied on a comparable survey used by Papadaki as well as Scott and previously employed for a study on the same elements regarding the lifestyle of undergraduates.

There were many different types of meat and poultry, bread and cereals, dairy (including cheddar and yoghurt), cakes (including candy, sugar, sweets, biscuits, ice cream, cakes, scones, and pastries), eggs, and pizza on the food frequency list.

Fresh fruit juice, milk, soft drinks, wine, beer, spirits, and coffee/tea were the many drink options available. Each food item's consumption frequency was ranked as follows: never, once per month, twice per month, weekly, daily, three times per day, and four times per day.

Questions on the time and location of daily meals were also included in the section on eating habits. The students were also questioned whether they felt there had been a shift in their dietary habits since commencing college. In the last component of the survey, students were questioned about their overall health, including their self-perceived dietary habits (normal weight, underweight, or overweight).

3. Comparative Analysis of Home and 'Outside' Food

When asked about their typical eating habits, almost all of the students (84.9%), those who never miss breakfast (8%), and those who go out for breakfast (2%), reported eating at home for breakfast. Seventy-seven percent of those polled reported eating lunch at home or eating meals cooked at home; this was especially true of those who did not live at home (79.3%), compared to students who did (75.4%).

At both samples, around 8% of children reported eating their lunch at the school cafeteria. Student households (16.9%) and those who live alone in apartments (12.0%) were more likely to report using non-home alternatives (bars, takeout, etc.) than were student households with children.

Most pupils ate dinner with their families every night. "Meat (5.73 portions/week), pasta/rice (5.20 portions/week), bread/cereals (5.1 portions/week), cakes (5.14 portions/week), raw vegetables/salads (4.69 portions/week), fresh fruit (4.64 portions/week), milk and yogurt (4.16 portions/week), and coffee/tea (6.84 portions/week) were the most used foods and drinks, respectively."

On average, people eat 3.10 servings of cooked vegetables per week, 2.61 servings of snacks per week, and 2.14 servings of sausages per week. People drink 2.83 servings of non-alcoholic beverages per week, and 2.72 servings of fruit juices per week. A smaller percentage of students reported weekly intakes of the following processed foods: "pizza (1.45 servings), pulses (1.43 servings), sandwiches (1.26 servings), eggs (1.25 servings), fish (1.24 servings), fries (0.97 servings), beer (1.24 servings), wine (1.08 servings), and spirits (0.77 servings)."

Many food groups seemed to have different consumption patterns depending on one's gender. Women were found to consume significantly more raw vegetables "(5.25

portions/week, $p = 0.0002$), fresh fruit (5.21 portions/week, $p = 0.0142$), cooked vegetables (3.63 servings/week, $p = 0.0001$), and nonalcoholic beverages (2.38 portions/week, $p = 0.0001$). To the contrary, men ate significantly more sandwiches (1.66 portions/week, $p = 0.0001$) and beer (2.28 servings/week, $p = 0.0001$), prepared meals (1.96 portions/week, $p = 0.0016$), condiments (1.73 portions/week, $p = 0.0080$), pizza (1.55 portions/week, $p = 0.0025$), wine (1.34 portions/week, $p = 0.0011$).

Consumption patterns were also affected by where people really lived. Students who lived at home reported eating more treats, veggies, and sandwiches, albeit the differences were not statistically significant. “Coffee/tea (7.56 portions/week, $p = 0.0279$), fresh fruits (5.43 meals/week, $p = 0.0089$), and meat (4.12 servings/week, $p = 0.0030$) were the only other categories in which statistical significance was identified. There was a significantly significant difference in the intake of raw (5.78 servings/week), cooked (3.91 servings/week), and fish (1.60 servings/week) across this group of students.”

In contrast, students who lived away from home drank considerably more alcohol, ate much more processed foods, and drank considerably more milk (5.13 portions/week, $p = 0.0343$). Both sets of students ate pasta, snacks, fruit drinks, sauces, and pizza at almost the same rates.

Female college students who live at home with their families eat more fruit ($p = 0.0295$), raw vegetables ($p = 0.0018$), cooked veggies ($p = 0.0002$), seafood ($p = 0.0007$), and subs ($p = 0.0419$), but they tend to drink less milk ($p = 0.0239$). Men who live at home are more likely to consume fish ($p = 0.0001$), meat ($p = 0.0013$), and sausages ($p = 0.0089$), and eat raw vegetables more often ($p = 0.0114$) and cooked vegetables more often ($p = 0.0114$).

There was little variation between sexes when it came to the percentage of students who reported changing their diet as a result of college. There was a statistically significant distinction between students living with family (75.42%) and those living away from home (92.14%) when it came to the dietary changes ($p = 0.0002$).

Figure 3 depicts students' perceptions of their own nutritional state; the majority (54.3%) of students who live at home report feeling physically healthy, whereas only 56% of students who do not do so report feeling this way. Students that are underweight make up a small percentage (3.9%). very 8.9% of respondents judged themselves to be overweight, while 27.9% were deemed to be very slightly overweight. Overall, college students living away from home are more likely to report being overweight (10.7% vs. 6.8%), moderately overweight (28.6% vs. 27.1%), or underweight (4.3%) than their homeschooled counterparts. There was no statistically significant difference between sexes in terms of body mass index classification.

Young students in Ferrara who participated in the research were shown to have significant challenges maintaining a healthy lifestyle, engaging in insufficient levels of physical exercise, and adopting unfavorable food habits. Given that slightly more than half of students do not believe they have a normal weight, these circumstances highlight the

challenges students experience in keeping a proper nutritional condition. In addition to a more active lifestyle—including sports for approximately an hour, 2-4 times a week—it is well-known that healthy eating necessitates a varied and balanced diet with regard to quantities [12].

4. Essentials of the Food Protocol Pyramid

In their New Food Pyramid for the Modern Greek Diet, researchers at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (INRAN) stress the value of seasonal eating, regular exercise, and consuming foods grown in one's own region. In keeping with cultural and religious norms, serving sizes and alcohol intake should be restrained [13]. Sport was the most common form of recreation among students, but it was practiced less frequently than the average for each week recommended for health maintenance, which is consistent with previous research describing a decline in all forms of exercise coinciding with the start of university [14, 15]. A recent survey conducted in Southern Italy [11] found that this meant less time spent on sports and other leisure activities overall for students living on their own. The majority of respondents, and notably those who were living away from home, acknowledged that they had altered their food intake while attending college. The difficulty students have in maintaining healthy diets has been previously addressed [16].

Lifestyle shifts, fast food's allure as a convenient option, personal preferences in terms of flavor and convenience, cultural norms and expectations, cultural norms and expectations in terms of body size, and personal beliefs are all factors that affect what people eat [17].

This study's findings corroborate those of others that have documented the rise of unhealthy eating patterns among today's college students, particularly when it comes to the avoidance of healthy foods like fruit and vegetables, milk and dairy products, fish, eggs, pulses, and sweets.

College students with a wide variety of cultural backgrounds and dietary traditions struggle worldwide to adopt a healthy diet that satisfies the Guidelines [19, 24-27]. Despite these caveats, we did find cereal by-product consumption that is in accordance with the Guidelines.

In line with prior research [28, 29], women have been found to consume a greater variety of healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables, while consuming fewer processed foods and alcoholic beverages. This is likely due to increased knowledge of the importance of a healthy diet [7, 30] or a more conscious effort to maintain a healthy weight [31].

While many students have been impacted by this trend, those who are living away from home have been hit the worst. Because they are not responsible for shopping for and preparing meals, college students living at home with their parents are more likely to consume a nutritious diet rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and fish [7]. In line with previous research [23, 32], we found that students living away from home strayed farther from the ideal model

of the Mediterranean diet, with significantly lower intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and fish, and significantly greater consumption of ready meals and fries. It's possible that these students' dietary preferences reflect their newfound freedom [3, 33–34], their lack of expertise in the kitchen, their rushed schedules, their tight budgets, or all of the above. The weekly intake of alcoholic drinks is greater among students living out of family than among those staying at home, which is consistent with the results of other authors [36, 37].

Many studies show that students gain weight throughout their time at university, though they lose some of it after the first year [27]. This is likely due to a number of factors, including a shift toward a sedentary lifestyle, an increase in social eating and drinking, increased access to fast food and alcohol, and a decrease in sleep, all of which contribute to hormonal disorders [38–42]. Previous research has demonstrated that college students living away from home are less likely to eat a balanced diet and engage in regular physical activity, and that these factors contribute to a heightened sense of abnormality among college students living alone, whether they are underweight or overweight.

Slightly over half of those polled said they were at a healthy weight; these people, naturally, followed a diet that was closer to the the Mediterranean diet, in a higher intake for vegetables, grains, and impulses and fewer servings of meat compared to the healthy weight of those polled. Those who self-identified as overweight, on the other hand, reported increasing their consumption of fatty foods such sausages, pizza, and focaccia, as well as alcoholic beverages.

One of the study's strongest points is that it pays special attention to a group that is often overlooked in surveys of lifestyle characteristics like eating habits. In addition, there are no targeted preventive services for college students. When comparing their weekly food and drink intake, students living away from home tended to consume more meat and alcohol and less fruits and vegetables.

More importantly, this subset of students was more likely to feel their weight was abnormally high. Dissatisfaction with one's physique may lead to eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia nervosa, especially in young and female persons [43]. However, not everyone who experiences this condition will go on to develop an eating disorder.

All of these factors point to the possibility that university life, and especially living away from home, may play an integral part in the development of unhealthy lifestyle habits, though more research is needed to determine whether or not these factors actually represent risk factors.

5. Conclusions

Despite the importance of healthy eating habits for the main avoidance of many chronically degenerative illnesses, no targeted health promotion intervention in the nutrition sector is offered to young people such as college students. It seems appropriate to expand health education programs for all young adults, and it would be beneficial to adopt targeted

nutritional educational interventions with college students, who are often left out of such initiatives.

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