

CURRENT EATING PATTERNS AND LIFE STYLE ON THE HEALTH OF NAMIK KEMAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The aim of this study to determine the students' current eating patterns and life style on the health. A self-reported questionnaire was administered to 618 students. Students from Namik Kemal University in Turkey participated in this study. Chi-square analyses were conducted for non-parametric variables.

Descriptive statistics of some of the results obtained from the survey study are as follows: 39.8% of the students smokes, 55.3% of them come from the city, which 65.5% stay at a flat with their friends. It was reported that 38.2% of them have breakfast regularly, 45.1% have lunch regularly, and 79.6% have lunch regularly. In order to test whether or not there is any difference between the regular consumption of breakfast, lunch and dinner according to the students' gender, chi-square test was made. In chi-square test made at $p < 0.05$ level, it was discovered that there is difference in their consumption between the regular breakfast and lunch according to their gender. It was recognized that male students consume dinner more regularly. The most attractive foods are meat dishes, vegetable dishes, and meat pasty.

Keywords: eating pattern, life style on the health, student.

Introduction

It is obligatory for a living organism to feed itself in order to maintain its life (Çalıştır et al., 2005). Nutrition is to use and take most economically the food which provides sufficiently each of energy and nutrition components that are necessary for growing, development and living healthily and efficiently for a long time without making it lose its nutrition value and destruct health (Tanır et al., 2001). It is put forward scientifically that growing and development are prevented and that health is harmed when any of these components is taken insufficiently or excessively (Baysal, 1993). However, it must not be forgotten that nutrition is a sociological and psychological action as well as a physiological one (Çalıştır et al., 2005). To be healthy in the mind and body and retain health are possible with sufficient and balanced nutrition (Tanır et al., 2001).

Although nutrition is significant for each section of the society, it has a distinct significance for the university youth. Most of the students studying at university have to live away from their family environment for the first time in their lives. Before university, the nutrition habits of student continue as the family life requires, but the differentiating life with university can change the nutrition habits of the student. The changing nutrition attitudes not only concern the mental and physical situation of the student but also are able to affect his school performance. Therefore, determining the nutrition information and habits which the university students have and developing advices suitable for the situation are very important (Erten, 2006).

A considerable number of high education students study away from their families, and this situation causes difficulties in their nutrition, housing, school expenditures and health problems. The studies regarding the nutrition habits of the young at university report that very serious problems are lived in this period, that students usually do not care for meals, that they neglect meals, especially breakfast, that they eat such nutrients as bagel and tea and that satiating hunger and eating are

accepted as identical among the young (Yaman, Yabancı, 2006; Karaoğlu et al., 2005). Sufficient and balanced nutrition carries significance on the grounds that it affects people's health and successes and makes the following generations gain a good nutrition habit.

This study planned from that was planned and conducted in order to determine the students' information levels of nutrition and their nutrition habits at Namik Kemal University.

Materials and Methods

This research was conducted to determine the students' current eating patterns and life style on the health of the students surveyed. A self-reported questionnaire was administered to 618 students. Students from Namik Kemal University in Turkey participated in this study. The Questionnaire consisted of five parts and first part is about some personal information about students and their body composition. The second part contains questions that measure students' eating behaviour and its relation to nutrition knowledge. The third part includes some questions about student's attitudes toward nutrition habits. The fourth part poses some questions about choosing the foods and the last part collects student's recommendations. The collected data was analysed means, standard deviation and percent were calculated. In addition, this result supported by chi-square test for non-parametric variables.

Results and Discussion

It was determined that 38.3% of the students participating in the research were female, and 61.7% were male; 87.1% were between 18–21 ages, and 20.0% were between 22–25 while 1.9% were over 26; their age average was 20.5. It was found out that 55.3% of them come from the city which 65.5% stay at a flat with their friends which mothers of 48.5% graduated from primary school while fathers of 34.4% graduated from primary school (Table 1).

Table 1

Socio-demographic Features of the students		
Gender	Number	%
Female	237	38.3
Male	381	61.7
Age		
18–21	483	78.1
22–25	123	20.0
26 +	12	1.9
The place left for high education		
Village / Town	84	13.6
County	192	31.1
City	342	55.3
Accommodation		
Flat	405	65.5
Dormitory	141	22.8
With a relative	21	3.4
With family	51	8.3
Where did they nutrition education?		
In school education	138	22.3
Conferences and panels	116	18.8

According to Leigh (1983) smoking is a habit which affects health negatively. While a study conducted on students at Cukurova University reveals that smoking rate of girls was 39.0%, another study conducted on students at Ankara University reports that 27.9% of the students smoke 17–20 cigarettes a day (Yaman, Yabancı, 2006). In this study, 39.8% of the students smoke. The proportion of the students smoking 1–5 cigarettes a day is 12.2% while that of the students smoking 16 and more cigarettes a day is 40.2%.

Table 2

Students' smoking status		
Smoking	N	%
Yes	246	39.8
No	372	60.2
Number of cigarettes smoked per day		
1–5	30	12.2
6–10	63	25.6
11–15	54	22.0
16+	99	40.2

As nutrition education can be achieved with an individual's training himself in his own conditions, it can also be provided for individuals by means of formal and common education institutions. In this study, 22.3% of the students stated that they took lessons regarding nutrition whereas 18.8% expressed that they participated in the meetings such as conferences and panel (Table 1). Mazıcioglu and Öztürk (2003) reported

that 47.2% of the students took education regarding nutrition and that 27.7% of those taking education participated in a conference and education on nutrition outside the lesson while Erten (2006) in his study indicated that 27.7% of the students took education related with nutrition and that 98.5% of them took this education at school.

Table 3

The states of the students' consuming meals regularly						
	Female	%	Male	%	Total	X ² /p values
Breakfast						
I consume	105	44.1	132	34.6	237	38.2 X ² =3.399
Not consume	133	55.9	249	65.3	382	61.8 p<0.05
Lunch						
I consume	84	35.4	195	51.2	279	45.1 X ² =12.953
Not consume	153	64.6	186	48.8	339	54.9 p<0.05
Dinner						
I consume	189	79.7	303	79.5	492	79.6 X ² =0.018
Not consume	48	20.3	78	20.5	129	20.4 p>0.05

In order to test whether or not there is any difference between the regular consumption of breakfast, lunch and dinner according to the students' gender, chi-square test was made. In chi-square test made at p<0.05 level, it was discovered that there is difference in their consumption between the regular breakfast and lunch according to their gender. It was recognized that male students consume dinner more regularly.

The information about the students' meal consumption is given in Table 3. It was reported that 38.2% of them have breakfast regularly, 45.1% have lunch regularly, and 79.6% have dinner regularly. It was found out the food consumed most at breakfast is pastry, toast, bagel (43%), standard breakfast cheese, onion, jam, etc. (549.8), cornflex+ milk (2.0%), and those consuming only tea or coffee is 4.8%.

It was informed in another study conducted in Ankara that the most preferred food by university students is cheese-onion (67.4%) and bagel (53.7%) (Güleç et al., 2008).

In our study, it was mentioned that breakfast is omitted most while dinner is neglected least. In order to take the energy and food constituents at the suggested level in the youth age, the consumption of the main meal and snack must be approached with care. The number of meals is important in sufficient and balanced nutrition. While neglecting meals, especially breakfast, affects school success negatively in children and young people, it also paves the way for insufficient and unbalanced nutrition (Rampersaud et al., 2005; Dimeglio, 2000). In a study which Tumerdem et al. conducted on the students studying in different faculties of three universities in Istanbul, they discovered that breakfast and lunch are not taken regularly, and hunger is satiated

with hurry while dinners are prepared more carefully than other meals (Tumerdem et al., 1985). In a study which Arslan et al. (1994) conducted on young people of high education, it was found out that the most neglected meal is breakfast with 31.5%. Saygun (1987) determined the fact that breakfast is most often neglected among other meals. Isiksologlu (1986) and Ozpinar (2002) discovered that the least neglected meal is dinner. In a study which Nnanyelugo and Okeke (1987) performed on the university students in Nigeria, it was determined that the most neglected meal is breakfast by the proportion of 73%. Often, neglecting breakfast can spring from the difficulty of preparing breakfast and worry to be late for school. However, it is reported that breakfast has a very important role in beginning day eagerly, maintaining the activity suitably and preserving the level of sugar blood (Erten, 2006).

Table 4

The average scores and percentage distribution of the students' interest levels regarding food

Food Types	N	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	Mean Score
Fast food	579	6.8	16.0	9.2	39.8	21.8	3.86
Home cooking	585	1.5	1.5	3.9	33.5	53.9	4.56
Frozen food	570	5.8	20.9	14.6	35.4	15.5	3.37
Canned food	573	11.2	21.8	15.5	31.6	12.6	3.40
Pastry, cookie	579	0.5	5.8	9.2	38.8	38.8	4.33
Milk puddings	570	2.9	5.3	9.2	34.5	39.8	4.34
Pasta types	579	4.4	9.7	10.2	38.8	30.1	4.08
Egg	567	4.9	12.1	13.1	39.3	22.3	3.68
Vegetable dishes	582	6.3	7.6	10.0	42.7	27.5	4.63
Meat dish	575	2.4	5.3	4.9	38.5	41.9	4.71
Potato chips	582	1.9	11.2	8.7	39.8	32.5	4.35
Hamburger	582	5.2	12.6	9.9	38.0	28.5	3.91
Pizza	562	4.4	10.2	8.3	39.3	28.8	3.86
Meat pasty	579	3.6	6.8	7.3	34.0	42.1	4.55
Toast & sandwich	577	2.6	9.2	8.7	42.7	30.1	3.95
Döner	581	1.6	7.4	6.3	43.2	35.4	4.10
Patty types	581	1.1	9.9	7.5	37.7	37.9	4.16
Chocolate, sugars	577	1.6	5.5	7.5	36.9	41.9	4.21

*1 It absolutely does not attract my attention, 2 It does not attract my attention, 3 I have no idea, 4 It attracts my attention, 5 It absolutely attracts my attention

The students participating in the survey were asked what kinds of food attract their attention, and Table 3 was made up. The most attractive foods are meat dishes (4.71), vegetable dishes (4.63), and meat pasty (4.55). The least attractive foods are frozen food (3.37), canned

food (3.40), eggs (3.68), fast food (3.86), and pizza (3.86) (Table 4).

In recent years, fast-food consumption has been increasing with the increasing importance of time and the effect of the consumption habits imported from developed countries on the university youth. The fact that the young population demands much for this area has increased the fast-food sector in cities especially where universities exist. When the conducted researches are examined, it is seen that most of the students have fast-food consumption habit most (because it is the most practical one). As the young people consume much fast-food, home cooking attracts the students' attention more.

Conclusions

In this study in which the information and habits of university students regarding nutrition were evaluated, it was discovered that the students neglect meals and that the most neglected meal is breakfast (61.8%). 22.3% of the students stated that they took education concerning nutrition, and 18.8% stated that they participated in such meetings as conferences and panels.

The foods mainly attracting the students' attention are meat dishes, vegetable dishes and meat pasty. The foods attracting the students' attention least are frozen food, canned food, eggs, fast-food and pizza, and we can say that the reason for this is that they consume these foods more.

What is important is that necessary precautions should be taken before the students' consumption habits become permanent. Of these precautions, making up healthy nutrition habits and enabling healthy food to be reached come first.

Therefore, individuals should be made to adopt the habit of consuming main meals regularly from their infancy and childhood age. It is thought that the fact that the students adopt the right consumption habits is important in terms of protecting their health in their following periods of their lives (Rampersaud et al., 2005). For this reason solving the incompetence in nutrition information and habits with the nutrition education given permanently and effectively, organizing short-term conferences, panels and conversations on nutrition issues at universities at regular intervals will be useful in solving the problems concerning nutrition of the students.

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