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Assessment of nursing student's beliefs about healthy dieting

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Abstract:

BACKGROUND: A balanced diet can prevent the development of long-term health issues such as diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer. The study's goal was to assess the nursing students' attitudes toward sensible dieting.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: The current study was conducted using a descriptive study design. The study ran from December 15, 2022, to April 15, 2023. The probability sampling method simple random was used to select (288) males and females. The sample was collected by direct interviews with students, face to face. The data were collected by developing a questionnaire based on the previous study and the collected data was arranged, analyzed, and presented in descriptive statistics by using "Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program version 26".

RESULTS: The research indicates that there are noteworthy obstacles to adopting a healthy diet among students, with a standard deviation of 0.611 and a mean of 3.1462. With a standard deviation of 0.569, the perceived benefits of healthy dieting were 4.110.

CONCLUSION: The researchers concluded that maintaining a healthy state through adherence to a healthy diet is significantly hampered by personal, social, and organizational factors.

Keywords:

Assessment, beliefs, healthy dieting, nursing student's

Introduction

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, and cancer can be delayed or avoided by following a healthy diet.^[1] Anyone who prioritizes eating lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds while consuming little to no processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages, or added sugar-containing foods is considered a healthy diet.^[2] This is supported by a wealth of research. However, most people find it difficult to eat healthily; studies consistently demonstrate that a small portion of people adhere to the recommended dietary guidelines.^[1] Most Arab countries' local health authorities have been very concerned over the past 10 years about unhealthy lifestyles and poor

eating habits. This is mainly because these factors are major contributors to chronic non-communicable diseases like obesity.^[3] Obesity in Arab countries is an epidemic in both adults and children. Among teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18, the percentage of overweight and obese youth varied from 25% to 60% in seven Arab countries.^[1] Part of the reason for the current childhood obesity epidemic is a culture that encourages inactive lifestyles and binge eating.^[2] As a result, weight control strategies like pushing teenagers to exercise and eat well help to improve children's health and most likely prevent obesity and a host of chronic diseases in adults.^[4] Obesity is a multifactorial disease that may be caused by a sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, an excessive intake of nutrient-poor, energy-dense foods, and genetics. Interventions aimed at altering one's lifestyle can target three of these four key factors. Research demonstrates that

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a variety of health benefits, such as long-term weight loss, a decline in coronary heart disease, the prevention of type 2 diabetes, lowered blood pressure, and a decrease in depression, are causally related to lifestyle interventions.^[5] The problem of overweight and obesity in Iraq was a major issue that the government had to resolve to improve well-being.^[6] In Basrah, Iraq, a recent study found that the prevalence of overweight alone was 31.3% (50.2% men and 30.9% women) and the prevalence of obesity was 23.8% (61.1% women and 18.6% men).^[7] Obesity rate in women more than man. Another study conducted in the northern Iraqi city of Erbil found that 74.3% of people were overweight or obese (33.4% were overweight and 40.9% were obese).^[4] Self-awareness and beliefs about issues related to weight status, as well as ideas about the causes of obesity, have been proven to influence people's weight-loss actions.^[8] Healthy behavior will be achieved when the individual realizes its benefit in reducing the risk of obesity and overweight. When it is realized that weight loss, healthy eating, and physical activity have great benefits in reducing the severity of the disease and its complications related to obesity,^[9] The study aims to assess the nursing student's beliefs about healthy dieting.

Materials and Methods

Study design and setting

The current study used a descriptive study design. The study extended from 15 December 2022 to 15 April 2023. Students at the University of Mosul's College of Nursing in Iraq provided the sample. The Institutional Review Board of Mosul University's Faculty of Nursing approved the research protocol (Nu 321/201).

Studying participants and sampling

To select (288) male and female students from different stages at the College of Nursing at the University of Mosul. The probability sampling method simple random was used.

Data collection tools and technique

A questionnaire was developed based on the previous study related to the research problem. The instrument consists of three parts, part one included the demographic variables for students consisting of age, gender, educational level, and marital status. The second part included 15 items to assess the perceived barriers to healthy dieting, and the third part consisted of nine items to assess the perceived benefits of healthy dieting. A Likert 5 was used to answer the questions of perceived barriers and perceived benefits of healthy dieting, and these items had responses ranging from (1) "strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree". The data were collected by interviewing the students and explaining the questionnaire's vocabulary accurately.

Statistical analysis

Using SPSS version 26, the gathered data were organized, examined, and displayed in tables utilizing "frequency, percentage, mean, mean of score, and standard deviation".

Ethics consideration

The Medical Professional Ethical Committee at the University of Mosul agreed to conduct the research on a group of students in nursing colleges under No: 89452/4EN.

Discussion

One of the main goals of public health is to improve the population's diet. A poor diet has been linked to an increased risk of noncommunicable diseases, which have significant negative effects on both health and the economy. These diseases include cancer, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.^[10] The majority of the students who took part in the study, or 68.4%, were between the ages of 20 and 23. The sample's average age was 20.81 years. The gender of the majority of the participants was female (72.9%), and most of them were from the last stage (30.31%). The vast majority of them were unmarried (86.8%) [Table 1]. The study also showed

Table 1: The study sample was distributed based on the demographic variables provided

Demographic variables	No.	%	Mean	SD
Age				
<20 years	58	20.1	1.951 (20.81±years)	0.655
20–23 Y	197	68.4		
24–26 Y	22	7.6		
27 Y and more	11	3.8		
Total	288	100%		
Gender				
Male	78	27.1	1.729	0.445
Female	210	72.9		
Total	288	100%		
Educational level				
Freshman	64	22.2	2.6285	1.14345
Sophomore	69	24.0		
Junior	65	22.6		
Senior	90	31.3		
Total	288	100		
Marital status				
Single	250	86.8	1.138	0.375
Married	38	13.2		
Total	288	100%		
Body mass index				
Underweight	24	8.33	17.31	0.914
Normal weight	194	67.37	21.73	1.746
Overweight	56	19.44	26.92	1.427
Obesity stage I	12	4.17	32.58	1.543
Obesity stage II	2	0.69	36.06	32.586
Total	288	100	100	0.374

that the body mass index (18.5–24.9) was within the normal weight of the majority of students (67.37%). The study's findings demonstrated that, on average, personal barriers (3.391), social barriers (3.431), and organizational barriers (2.291) were the most significant perceived obstacles to adhering to a healthy diet [Table 2]. Perceived obstacles are frequently reported as lacking knowledge, abilities, friends', partners', and family's support, as well as accessibility. Comparable to the pressure of not having enough time for school. One possible explanation is that people who regularly shop for and purchase healthy food are more aware of the higher price of these products as well as the limited selection of healthy food options in restaurants and grocery stores. For these individuals, these purported barriers to eating healthily might keep them from improving their diets any further. Lower adherence to the majority of dietary guidelines was linked, according to López-Azpiazu *et al.*^[11], to perceived obstacles relating to daily routines, taste, lack of time, and lack of willpower.^[10] "Irregular working hours" (29.73%), "willpower" (24.72%), "unattractive food" (21.32%), "busy lifestyle" (17.81%), "the price of healthy foods" (15.53%), "giving up foods" (14.33%), and "no difficulty" (20.66%) were the most frequently mentioned barriers to healthy dieting, according to a 1999 study. When respondents responded with statements like "I don't want to change my eating habits" (12.60%) or "Not enough knowledge about healthy eating" (8.55%), another group of people demonstrated their resistance to change.^[11] The study's findings demonstrated that students have a high level of awareness regarding the alleged advantages of a healthy diet at the individual (4.22), social (4.199), and organizational (4.107) levels [Table 3]. Lowering the chance of developing a serious chronic illness later in life is one advantage of eating a healthy diet. Our target audience, young adults, find it difficult to recognize their long-term vulnerability, though.^[12] In a previous study, discovered that specific strategies to get past the most prevalent obstacles to leading a healthy lifestyle may be beneficial for vulnerable groups within the Mexican population. Participants who are overweight or obese. They were more likely to mention obstacles to eating a balanced diet and engaging in physical activity.^[13] The study's findings highlight the significance of putting in place health promotion programs that provide students with greater inspiration, knowledge, and abilities to prepare and prepare quick, simple, and inexpensive meals. It is especially important to develop additional strategies that take into account the perceived obstacles that students face when it comes to eating well and exercising.^[14,15] The researchers concluded that maintaining a healthy state through adherence to a healthy diet is significantly hampered by personal, social, and organizational factors. It also demonstrated the significant advantages of eating healthily for students.

Table 2: Distribution of the study sample according to their perceived barriers towards healthy dieting

Perceived barriers	No.	Mean	SD
Personal barriers			
Not a barrier	70	2.157	0.260
Important barrier	218	3.391	0.581
Total	288	2.774	
Social barriers			
Not a barrier	90	2.008	0.434
Important barrier	198	3.431	0.556
Total	288	2.71	0.489
Organizational barriers			
Not a barrier	46	2.290	0.290
Important barrier	242	2.951	0.422
Total	288	3.613	0.594
Total perceived barriers	288	3.1462	0.611

Table 3: Distribution of the study sample according to their perceived benefits towards healthy dieting

Perceived benefits	No.	Mean	SD
Personal benefits			
Important benefit	280	4.20	0.528
Not a benefit	8	2.00	0.550
Total	288	3.10	0.532
Social benefits			
Important benefit	277	4.199	0.538
Not a benefit	11	2.333	0.394
Total	288	3.266	0.466
Organizational benefits			
Important benefit	274	4.107	0.615
Not a benefit	14	2.392	0.219
Total	288	3.249	0.486
Total perceived benefits	288	4.110	0.569

Limitations and recommendation

One of the most important obstacles that researchers faced was the difficulty of continuous communication with nursing students since most of the academic stages have practical practices in hospitals. The recommendation of this study is how important it is to implement health promotion initiatives that give students more motivation, encouragement, and skills so they can shop for and cook quick, easy, and affordable meals.

Conclusion

According to the researchers' findings, maintaining a healthy state through adherence to a nutritious diet is hampered by substantial organizational, social, and personal obstacles.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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