DIETARY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

PROJECT SUBMITTED

In partial fulfilment of requirement for the award of the degree of

B. Sc. NUTRITION AND DIETETICS
BY

AABHA JETHU, FATHIMA RUKSANA, FATHIMATHU NAHDA, FINLA BENTON,KEERTHI N

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DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL NUTRITION AND DIETETICS

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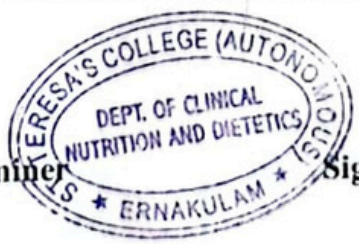
CERTIFIED AS BONAFIDE RESEARCH WORK



Signature of Internal Examiner **Signature of External Examiner**

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the project entitled "DIETARY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE SUDENTS" submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of B. Sc. Nutrition and Dietetics is a record of original work done by Ms.AABHA JETHU, Ms.FATHIMA RUKSANA, Ms.FATHIMATHU NAHDA, Ms.FINLA BENTON, Ms. KEERTHI N during the period of the study under my guidance and supervision.

Signature of HOD

Ms. Surya M Kottaram

Assistant professor

Department of CND

St Teresa college, Ernakulam

Signature of the research guide

Ms. Aneeta Joseph Assistant professor Department of CND

St. Teresas college , Ernakulam

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the project entitled " DIETARY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS" submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of B. Sc. Nutrition and Dietetics is a record of original research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of Ms. ANEETA JOSEPH, Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics, Women's Study Centre, St. Teresa's College(Autonomous), Ernakulam and has not been submitted in part or full of any other Degree/diploma/fellowship or the similar titles to any candidate of any other university.

Place:

Date:

ABHA JETHU

FATHIMARUKSANA

FATHIMATHUNAHDA

FINLA BENTON

KEERTHI N

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First and foremost, we thank God Almighty, for providing us all the strength and courage to complete this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

Dietary habits are the long-term dietary patterns and habits that an individual forms and maintains in their daily life. Dietary behavior is an essential and ongoing activity in daily life, which involves internal, external, and conscious activities related to eating. Exploring the variations in nutrient composition in food contributes to the formation of proper dietary habits. Positive dietary behaviors are important strategies for individuals to ensure their health. Eating regular meals, moderating the intake of fats and sugars, consuming an adequate number of fruits and vegetables, paying attention to nutritional labels and calorie content, practicing good hygiene, and choosing foods based on principles of nutrition and health are all considered behaviors that promote physical well-being. The problems associated with obesity affect not only the adult population but also the youth. An overweight child or teenager is at a higher risk of being overweight/obese as an adult and of developing adult diseases. Although the onset and development of obesity are most apparent during childhood, university students also undergo a critical period when their behaviors are conducive to change often resulting in weight gain. (Yun et al.,2018)

College weight gain is likely during the transition into university life, which is a critical period when young adults' behaviors including dietary habits are conducive to change as they gain independence in making food choices. These groups of individuals are at higher risk of developing unhealthy eating behaviors with inadequate nutrient intake. Some of these behaviors include irregular meals, not eating breakfast, reduced fruit and vegetable intake and increased consumption of fried food. Apart from the change in dietary habits, poor exercising habits, bad time management and the increasing amount of stress from school work also contribute to weight gain.(Awwad et al., 2021)

Sleep is an important aspect of human life and is essential for maintaining one's physical and mental health. However, sleep problems are prevalent throughout the world. The quality of sleep in the college population has been one of the major concerns of scholars. The sleep quality

of university students is generally poor, rendering them susceptible to issues such as sleep deprivation, sleep disorders and sleep irregularities. Poor sleep quality may lead to chronic diseases such as obesity and cardiovascular disease, and it may also trigger depression, mood disorders, and other health problems. These problems not only affect their studies and personal lives, but also jeopardize their physical and mental health .Sleep quality is an important factor in maintaining health and improving well-being. Sleep quality has been defined as an individual's subjective perception of sleep. College students who engage in physical activity more frequently report lower anxiety levels and greater well-being, and those who spend more time on such activities exhibit a higher self-concept. Unfortunately, poor sleep quality has been a common phenomenon among college students, which manifested by inadequate sleep duration, difficulty falling asleep, daytime dysfunction, and persistent sleepiness.(Yun et al.,2018)

Unhealthy habits in adolescence increase the risks of developing non-communicable diseases early in life. Young adults, particularly when transitioning into college, face difficulties in living independently, balancing academic requirements, managing finances, and caring for their health. High-stress levels, lack of knowledge, skills, or motivation, and challenges in managing challenges can significantly impact their physical and mental health and academic performance. Understanding young adults' attitudes and practices toward a healthy lifestyle can help recognize their needs and establish targeted health and well-being initiatives. Healthy lifestyle choices significantly improve health, delay disease onset, and increase productivity. They contribute to weight management and reduce the risk of developing chronic conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. In early adulthood, lifestyle habits significantly influence health outcomes. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle in adulthood is associated with a longer lifespan, improved cognitive function and mood, and reduced stress-related conditions. (Bizzari & Nasar 2024)

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is crucial in understanding the dietary habits, physical activity, and sleep patterns of university students, a group particularly vulnerable to lifestyle changes that may negatively impact their health. Given the growing prevalence of unhealthy dietary behaviors, sedentary

lifestyles, and sleep disturbances among young adults, this research provides valuable insights into how these factors influence their overall well-being.By assessing the nutritional awareness, meal frequency, and physical activity levels of university students, the study contributes to the broader field of public health and preventive nutrition. The findings can inform the development of targeted interventions to promote healthier eating habits, improve sleep quality, and encourage regular physical activity among students.

Additionally, this research is significant in addressing the increasing concerns related to obesity and lifestyle-related diseases in young adults. Understanding the challenges that students face in maintaining a healthy lifestyle—such as stress, time management, and academic pressure—can help universities and health organizations design programs that support better health outcomes.Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of early intervention in promoting lifelong healthy habits, thereby reducing the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular conditions, and obesity.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the present study were envisaged as follows:

- To determine the socio demographic characteristics of the subjects.
- To assess the eating habits and meal frequency among the subjects.
- To assess the nutrition awareness and dietary choices among the subjects.
- To examine the physical activity and sleep pattern among the subjects.

CHAPTER-II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review pertaining to the present study entitled "Dietary Habits and Lifestyle Practices among College Students" is discussed under the following headings

2.1 Dietary Habits

2.2 Lifestyle factors

2.3 Health implications

2.1 DIETARY HABITS

A cross-sectional study was conducted at University Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Self-designed questionnaires comprised questions pertaining to current weight, self-reported height data, information on eating habits, exercise and knowledge of the food pyramid. The collected data were used to compare and contrast eating habits and lifestyle practices among overweight/obese students with those of non-overweight/obese students. Almost all students are aware of balanced nutrition and the food pyramid. Most university students had poor eating habits, although the majority had good nutrition knowledge. By way of recommendation, the university is encouraged to provide a multi-disciplinary team specialising in health promotion that includes nutrition and physical activity programmes to increase the awareness among the university students.

Students' Food Choice and Nutritional Intakes It is well known that when young people join university, their eating habits and dietary intakes changes (Dyson and Renk 2006). University students who are not living with their parents were found to have developed unhealthy eating habits as compared to those who stay with their parents (Papadaki et al., 2007). Studies (such as El Ansari, Stock and Mikolajczyk, 2012; Spanos and Hanket, 2010; Jaworowska and Bazylak, 2007; Chourdakis et al., 2007) claimed that university students are accustomed to irregular meals, high-energy fat snacks, and drinks or desserts. In addition, the healthy way of life is hampered by the study hours, which can vary from day to day. The university-age

population, which is primarily between the ages of 18 and 24, is also known as late-adolescents or young adults (Deforche et al., 2015; McDonagh et al., 2018). During this period of time, this population is going through major changes in physical, mental, emotional, and social lifestyles, as well as food habits (Mueller, 2018). Therefore, it is critical to explore how university students choose their meals and to see whether meet it their daily nutritional requirements. This study can provide critical insight on the students' eating patterns as well as the nutritional value of the foods that these students consume on a regular basis. Furthermore, unhealthy eating habits and preferences may have a negative impact on students' overall health.

Nutrient deficiency is a risk factor leading to the global burden of diseases (Al-Rethaiaa, 2010). A diet deficient in nutrients can cause health issues ranging from tiredness, lack of energy to serious issues involving loss of function of vital organs, lack of growth, and development (Swetaa, 2018). Micronutrient deficiency largely goes unnoticed by the general public, by many decision-makers and even by the affected individuals themselves (Patil, 2009). This is why this form of malnutrition is also called ‘hidden hunger’ (Stein, 2006). A study by Bhardwaj (2013) conducted in the state of Himachal Pradesh, India, reported that vitamin B12 deficiency to be prevalent in all enrolled adolescents in their study. Vitamin B2 or Riboflavin is a metabolically a very important vitamin; though there is marked dietary, biochemical and clinical evidence of riboflavin deficiency, it has not received adequate attention because its deficiency is neither a killer nor a cripple

Insufficient and inappropriate daily fluid intake in a long period may have adverse effect on human's health. Therefore, the present study evaluated the amounts and sources of fluids consumed by university students to determine whether these amounts and sources of fluid were enough and appropriate. In this descriptive study was conducted by Balaghi et al., 2011. Food and fluid intake of subjects were assessed by 24-hour recall method of 3. Dietary intake of subjects was analysed by Nutritionist III software program. The mean total fluid intake (drinking fluid values merged with data on the water content of foods) and the rate of metabolic water were figured out. Comparisons of the results with recommended dietary values were made using student's t-test. Data of dietary intakes for two under-reporter female subjects were not included in the statistical analysis. In conclusion it was found that the mean daily fluid intake of subjects, especially water, and milk was lower than recommended

values. Therefore, there is an urgent need for tailored nutrition intervention targeting the young adults to improve their beverage choices.

2.2 LIFESTYLE FACTORS

This study examined the consumption patterns of commercial beverages, lifestyle, dietary habits, and perception of sweet taste. Frequent consumption group tended to have a higher threshold of sweet taste without reaching statistical significance. The results provide information for developing strategies for evidence-based nutrition education program focusing on reducing consumption of unnecessary sugar-sweetened commercial beverages.

.A cross-sectional study was conducted among Indian college students to examine the associations and interactive effects of physical activity and sleep quality on mental health among Indian college students. All participants completed three questionnaires: the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, the International Physical Activity Questionnaire-Short Form, and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index. Questionnaires were evaluated to ascertain the subjects' mental health level, physical activity level, and sleep quality. The prevalence of anxiety was more than that of depression. The poor sleep quality was significantly positively associated with anxiety. The results suggests that mental health problems are common among both male and female college students. Significant associations were found between physical activity levels and sleep quality with mental health.

A study was conducted for assessing Overweight, Obesity, Diet, and Physical Activity in College Students. The authors surveyed college students aged 18 to 27 years to assess overweight, obesity, dietary habits, and physical activity. They used BMI (body mass index) > 25 kg/m2 or BMI > 85th percentile and BMI > 30 kg/m1 or BMI > 95th percentile to estimate overweight and obesity in those aged < 19 years. To define overweight and obesity in those > 20 years, they used BMI > 25 kg/m2 and > 30 kg/m2. Most college students are not meeting dietary and physical activity guidelines, suggesting the need for prevention interventions and increased understanding of overweight in college students

The purpose of this study conducted by Alzamil et al.,2019 was to investigate lifestyle patterns of Saudi college females, including physical activity (PA), SBs, duration of sleep, and dietary habits. A cross-sectional study was conducted among females attending health science colleges of King Saud University, using multistage stratified cluster sample. Weight, height, PA, SB, sleep, and dietary habits were all assessed using a previously validated questionnaire. Nearly half of the college females were physically inactive. Females exercised mostly at home or alone at no specific time of day. Their activity was for health reasons for weight loss, lack of time was the primary reason for inactivity. The majority of females spent more time in sedentary activity ,while 95% of females had insufficient sleep (<8 h/night). Over 40% of the participants consumed breakfast or vegetables 5 days or more per week, whereas the corresponding proportions for fruit and milk/dairy products intake were 19.4% and 58.4%, respectively. Unhealthy lifestyle habit appears prevalent among Saudi college
females. Efforts toward promoting PA, decreasing SB, and insufficient sleep and improving
dietary habits in Saudi females are needed to reduce future risks of NCDs.

2.3 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

This study was aimed to explore the relationship between diet, physical health and gut microbiota in Chinese college students. According to National Standards for Students' Physical Health (2014 revision), physical fitness measurements, dietary intake and health-related data were collected via questionnaires. The associations with the 10 most abundant bacterial genera and physical fitness, dietary factors were investigated. Changes in the gut microbiota abundance can be sometimes reflective of a physical health status. Loss of the balance of gut microbial populations will lead to flora disorders and diseases. Therefore, further studies are needed to reveal the mechanisms behind the gut microbiota in its potential role.

A pro-inflammatory diet may have an adverse influence on stress and inflammatory biomarker levels among college students. The dietary inflammatory index is a tool used to assess the inflammatory potential of a diet. However, evidence for the association between DII and stress is limited. This study examined the association between energy-adjusted, high

sensitivity-C-reactive protein [hs-CRP], and stress among female college students. This cross-sectional study included 401 randomly selected female students, aged 19–35 years. Our findings indicate that pro-inflammatory diets were highly prevalent among Saudi college students and were associated with higher stress levels. Consideration of the role of stress and focusing on anti-inflammatory foods may be key for healthier dietary habits.

A study conducted by Downes, 2015 on the topic “Interplay Between Sociodemographic Variables, Physical Activity, Sleep, Dietary Habits, and Immune Health Status” is a cross-sectional study from Saudi Arabia's Western Province , this study aimed to evaluate the immune health status and investigate its relationship with widely practiced lifestyle behaviours that are thought to affect immunological functioning. According to the data presented here, reduced immune health as measured by ISQ < 6 was prevalent among residents of Saudi Arabia's Western Province and correlated significantly with obesity, sleep duration, and smoking status. Various measures to mitigate the negative impact of an unhealthy lifestyle on public health and to reverse the observed poor immune health and their economic consequences are highly required. This study explored physical activity (PA), dietary habits (DH), and weight status related to motivators and barriers of healthy lifestyle
choices in a cohort of 106 college students. Eating unhealthy snacks were significantly correlated with inhibiting factors such as lack of motivation, health problems, and lack of knowledge.

Chronic diseases among University students: Prevalence, patterns and impact on health-related quality of life a study conducted by Tatjana et al., 2018. The aims of this study were to estimate the prevalence and patterns of chronic diseases in the university student population and to assess their health-related quality of life. Data on chronic diseases were self-reported and thereafter validated in medical records. The impact of chronic diseases was evaluated through series of linear regression models. Results. The prevalence of chronic diseases was 16.5%. The most common chronic diseases were asthma and chronic bronchitis (4.2% and 3.1%, respectively). In conclusion it was found that to meet the needs of university students, the health care service should provide support in prevention and treatment of chronic diseases.

The study was aimed to compare perceived stress levels with declared gastrointestinal habits changes in a small cohort of college students during academic acquisition and evaluation periods. College students were recruited and divided into two groups: the control group evaluated during the acquisition period of the academic year and the stressed group evaluated during the examination period. The students' psychological and gastrointestinal status was evaluated using a common stress questionnaire and a gastrointestinal habits survey. The results showed increased perceived stress in college students during stressful conditions, as compared to lesser demanding periods. Similarly, more than 40%of the participants declared that gastrointestinal habits changes occurred during stressful periods. We observed significant correlations between the perceived stress levels and gastrointestinal habits changes. This small-sized survey study showed that the occurrence of the stressful event in young adults recorded higher perceived stress scores and frequent functional gastrointestinal symptoms, as
compared to the lower stressful periods. Also, we showed that functional gastrointestinal symptoms are rather common and could be regarded as a negative response to stress.

CHAPTER- III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the present study entitled "Dietary Habits and Lifestyle Practices among college students" is discussed under the following headings:

3.1 SELECTION OF AREA

The present study was carried out in colleges located in Kochi and Kozhikode. Kochi was selected as it is a metropolitan city with greater exposure to fast food culture and lifestyle changes, which may lead to dietary pattern changes among college students. Kozhikode, on the

other hand, was chosen to provide a comparative perspective from a non-metropolitan urban area, allowing for a broader understanding of consumption patterns across different urban settings in Kerala.

3.2 SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

The changes in dietary habits and lifestyle practice where higher among college students .Therefore, a sample size of 200 college students aged between 18-25 years, were selected for the study from various educational institution through simple random sampling method.

Simple random sampling is a basic sampling technique in which each item or individual in the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected. It is often used in research to ensure that the sample is representative of the population, thereby minimizing bias.(Kumar, R. (2019).

3.3 SELECTION OF TOOL

The tool selected for the study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent. A research questionnaire is typically a mix of close-ended questions and open-ended questions (Bhat, A. (2023) Therefore, in the present study, a well-structured questionnaire in google form were formulated with details including general profile, anthropometric measurements, meal frequency, eating habits ,nutrition awareness, diet choices and lifestyle practices including physical activity and sleep.

The questionnaire used for the present study is given in appendix-I.

3.4 COLLECTION OF DATA

The data was collected of 200 college students studying in various colleges in Kochi and Kozhikode through a structured questionnaire shared via Google Forms. The details collected from the subjects were:

3.4.1 General Profile

The general profile included basic information about the subjects like name, age, gender and current academic status.

3.4.2 Anthropometry Measurements

Anthropometric measurements were taken to assess the nutritional status of the subjects. Anthropometric measurements like height and weight of subjects were recorded and used to calculate BMI.

3.4.2.1 Measurement of Height

Height of the respondents were measured using a measuring tape and ruler. The subjects were asked to remove their shoes and was made to stand against a wall with the head, shoulders and buttocks touching the wall and feet flat on the floor. A ruler was placed little above the head and was lowered till it touches the head of the subjects and a point is marked with a pencil. Now, using the measuring tape, the length is measured and recorded. The height was recorded in cm. The questionnaire shared in the format of a google form the respondents were asked to write their height.

3.4.2.2 Measurement of Weight

Weight of the respondents were measured using weighing machine. The respondents were instructed remove their shoes and any heavy clothing to ensure precise measurement. Respondents were then asked stand still on the weighing machine. The weight was recorded in kg. The questionnaire shared in the format of a google form the respondents were asked to write their weight.

3.4.2.3 Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body mass index is the method of utilizing an adult's height and weight to broadly place them into underweight, normal weight, overweight and obese categories (Zierle-Ghosh & Jan, 2023). The BMI was calculated from the recorded height and weight of the subjects using the formula: BMI = Weight (kgs)/ Height (m2)

3.4.3 Meal frequency and eating habits among College Students

This section recorded information on frequency of meal consumption and eating habits among college students.

3.4.4 Nutrition awareness and diet choices among students

This section gathered information regarding the nutrition awareness and diet choices among the study sample.

3.4.5 Lifestyle practices - physical activity and stress

The last section asked about the respondent's lifestyle practices like physical activity and stress. This section helps to get a better understanding of the individual's overall health, physical activity level and sleep.

3.5 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data collected from the subjects were analyzed, tabulated and interpreted. Percentage analysis, mean and standard deviation was used to analyze the data.

CHAPTER-IV
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results pertaining to the present study entitled "Dietary Habits and Lifestyle Practices Among College Students" are presented under the following headings:

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Subjects

4.2 Anthropometric Measurements of the Subjects

4.3 Meal frequency and Eating habits among college students

4.4 Nutrition Awareness and diet choices among students

4.5 Lifestyle Practices – Physical activity and Sleep

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

The socio-demographic characteristics give basic information on the age, gender and residential information of the selected subjects. The socio-demographic characteristics of the selected subjects are presented in table-1.

Table-1: Socio-demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage(%)
Age		
18-20	81	41.8
21-23	97	48.3
24-26	20	10
Gender		
Male	49	25.1
Female	151	74.9

College students between the age group of 18-26 years were selected for the study. Out of 200 students, majority (48.3%) of them were in the age group of 21-23 whereas 41.8% of students were in the age group of 18-20 and (10%) students were in the age group 24-26. It was found that majority (74.9%) of the subjects selected were females and 25.1% were males.

4.2 ANTHROPOMETRIC MEASUREMENTS OF THE SUBJECTS

Anthropometry studies the measurements of the human body totally or partially. The anthropometric measures are useful to understand the nutritional status of the subjects. The anthropometric measurements like height and weight of the subjects were recorded and was then used to calculate the Body Mass Index. The anthropometric measurements of the subjects are presented in table-2.

Table-2: Anthropometric Measurements of the College students

Anthropometricparameter	Mean	SD
Height(cm) Weight(kg)	158.80	12.42
BMI(kg/m2)	59.62	14.48
	21.58	4.30

From the above table, it is clear that the mean height of the subjects was 158.80 cm with a standard deviation of 12.42 cm. The mean and standard deviation calculated for weight was 59.62 kg and 14.48 kg respectively. This indicates that the mean height and weight of the college students were within the normal range which is typical for young adults between the ages of 18 to 26 years. The calculated mean BMI of the subjects were 21.58 kg/m^2 which indicates that the college students have a healthy nutritional status, according to the World Health Organization's BMI classification. However, it is important to note that the standard deviation of 4.30 kg/m^2 reveals variation in BMI within the subjects and indicates that some subjects may fall outside the normal range.

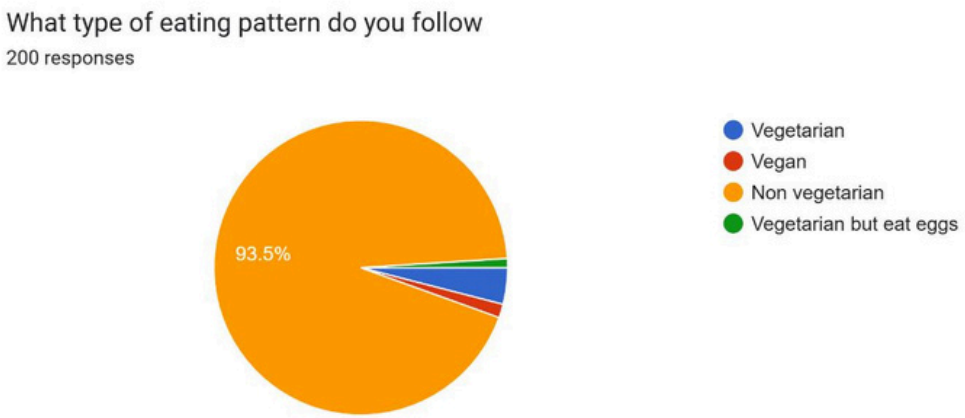
BMI	Frequency(n)	Percentage(%)
Under weight	25	12.5
Normal	138	69
Over weight	33	16.5
Obese	4	2

The Body mass index was calculated by using height and weight measurements of the

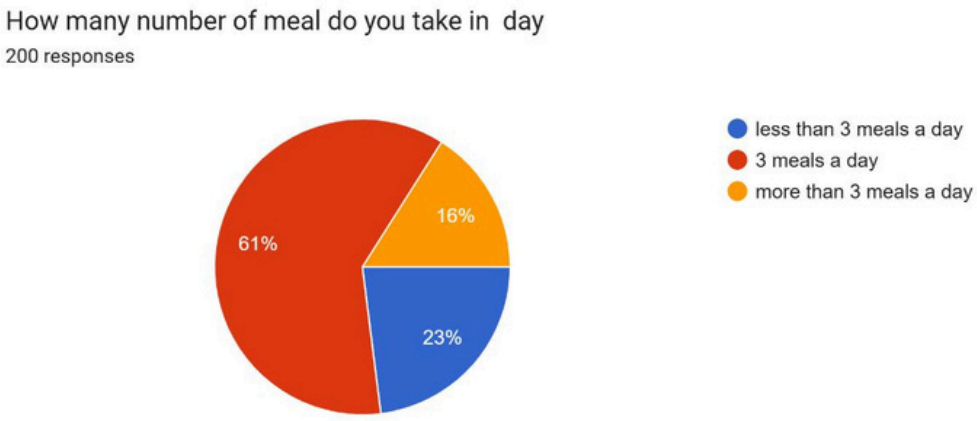
respondents. It was found that majority (69%) of the subjects belong normal category. About 12.5% of the subjects were underweight which can be due to various factors like excessive stress, poor dietary habits and limited access to nutrient dense meals. It was also noted that 16.5% of the subjects were overweight and 2% of them were obese which highlights the prevalence of overweight and obesity among college students .

4.3 MEAL FREQUENCY AND EATING HABITS AMONG STUDENTS

College students often exhibit irregular meal patterns, including skipping breakfast and eating fewer fruits and vegetables, and frequently snacking, especially on energy-dense and processed foods. Factors like stress, social influences, and accessibility of fast food can contribute to these unhealthy habits.



From the above figure, it was clear that 93.5% of respondents were non vegetarians, while 4% of them were vegetarians. It was also found that 1.5% of the respondents consumed vegan and only 1% were vegetarians but eat eggs.



From the above figure, it was observed that majority (61%) of the respondents consumed 3 meals a day because they felt good and refreshed after having it. About 23% of the respondents consumed less than 3 meals a day. For 16% of the respondents consumed more than 3 meals a day.

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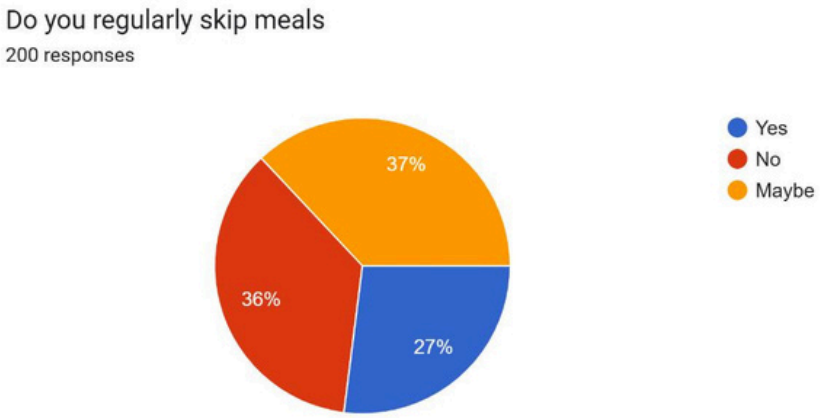
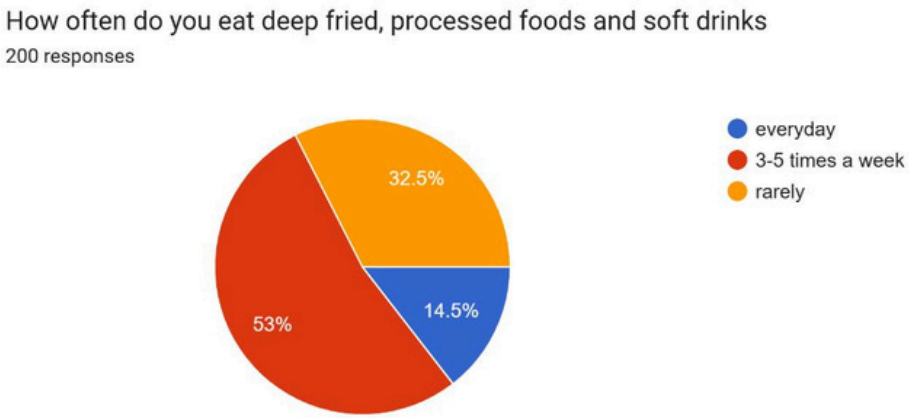
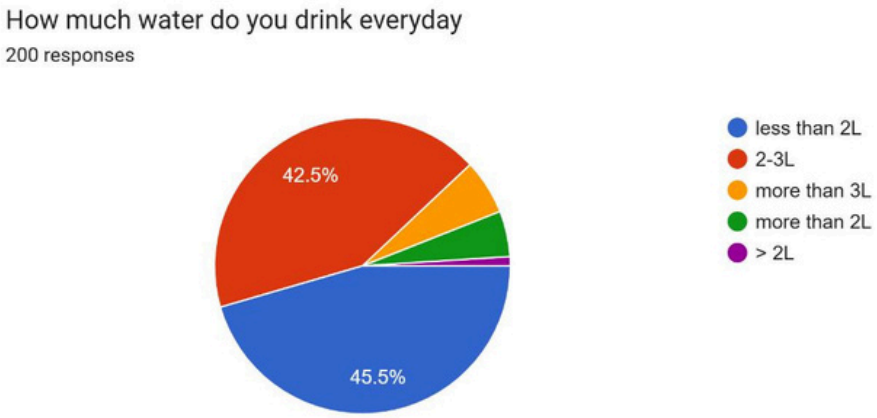


From the above figure, it was observed that majority (37%) of the respondents sometimes skip their meal. About 36% of the respondents does not skip their meals. For 27% of the respondents skip their meals regularly.

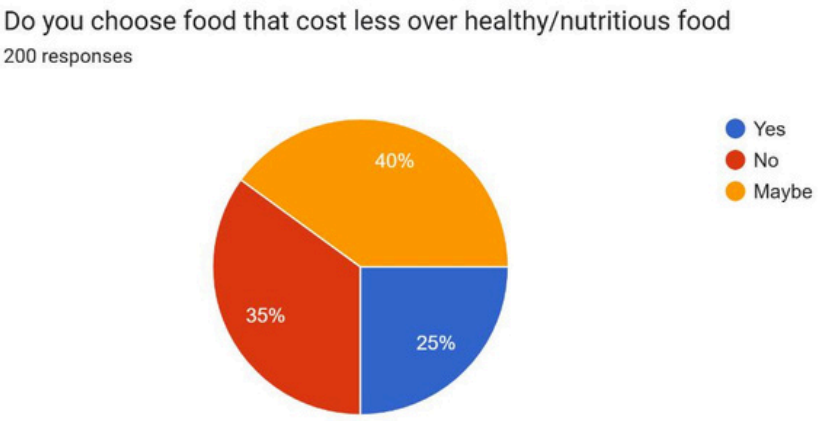
Among these 40.3% respondents skip their breakfast, 19.4% skip their lunch and 8.9% respondents skip their dinner.



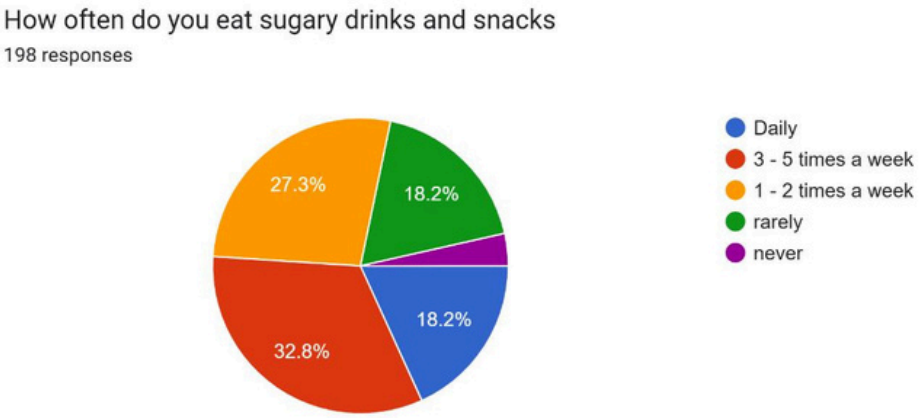
From the above figure, it was observed that majority (53%) of the respondents Consumed deep fried and processed foods and soft drinks 3-5 times a week. About 32.5% of the respondents consumed rarely and 14.5% of the respondents consumed every day. Among college students most of them consume these foods at least 3-5 times a week.



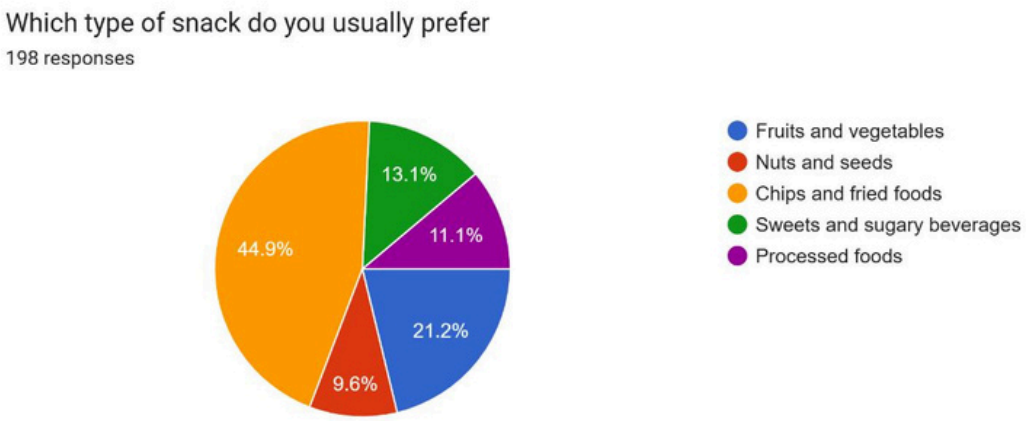
From the above figure, it was observed that majority (45.5%) of the respondents Consumed less than 2 litres of water every day. About 42.5% of the respondents consumed 2- 3 litres of water every day. For 6% of the respondents consumed more than 3 litres of water every day, 5% of the college students consumed more than 2 litres of water every day. So, we can conclude that there is an increased risk of dehydration among the college students.



From this graph we can say that majority (40%) of the college students may choose healthy food that depends on the situation. About 35% respondents chose nutritious food over less cost food and 25% respondents chose food that cost less over nutritious food.



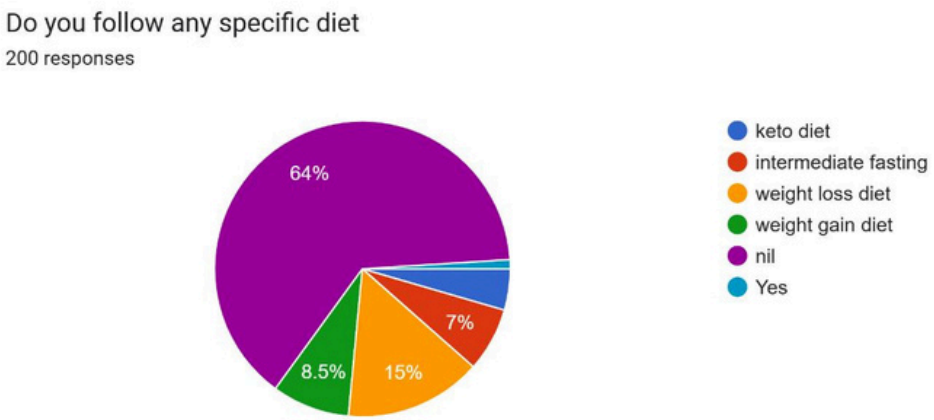
From this graph we can say that majority (32.8%) of the college students consumes sugary drinks and snacks 3-5 times a week. About 27.3% respondents consumed 1-2 times a week and 18.2% respondents consume sugary drinks and snacks daily and another 18.2% of the respondents rarely consumed these. And the last 3.5% never consumes sugary drinks and snacks. From this graph we can assume the eating pattern among the college students.



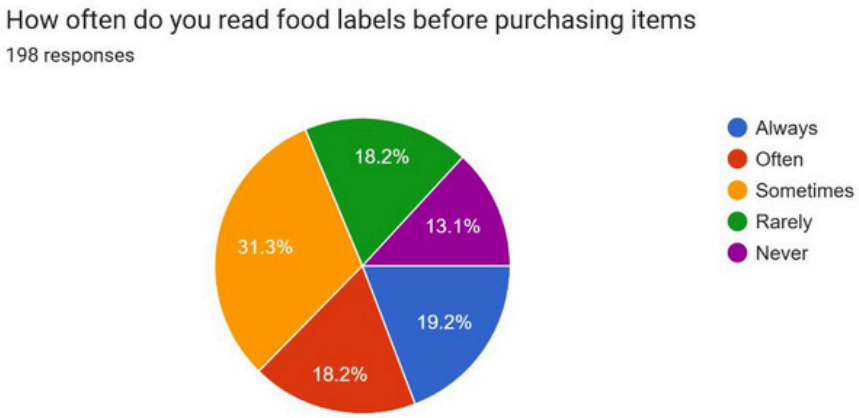
From the above figure, it was observed that majority (44.9%) of the respondents Preferred chips and fried foods for snack . About 21.2% of the respondents preferred fruits and vegetables for snack and 13.1% of the respondents preferred sweet and sugary beverages for snacks, 11.1% preferred processed foods as their snacking option and the last 9.6% preferred nuts and seeds for snacking. From this graph we can conclude about the snacking pattern of college students

4.4 NUTRITION AWARENESS AND DIET CHOICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

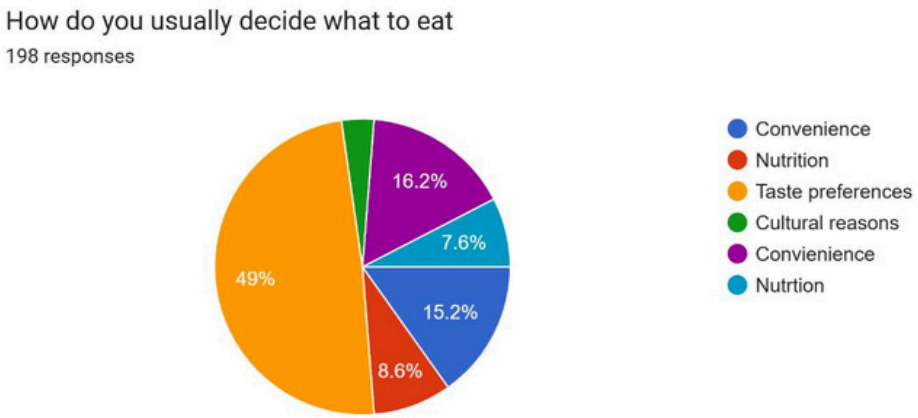
Nutrition awareness is positively correlated with healthier diet choices among college students, but practical factors like time, cost, and convenience often influence their food choices. While students may understand the benefits of healthy eating, they may still struggle to implement it consistently due to various constraints.



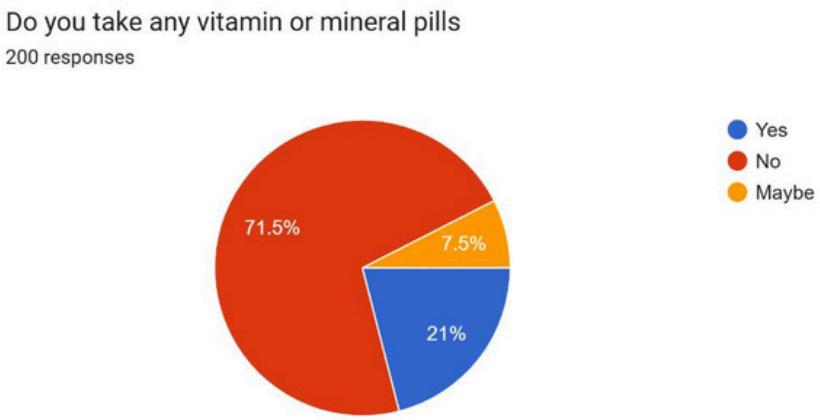
From the above figure, it was clear that 64% of respondents does not follow any specific diet, while 15% of them followed weight loss diet. It was also found that 8.5% of the respondents followed weight gain diet, 7% followed intermediate fasting, 4.5% followed keto diet and only 1% follow some other diet plans.



From the above figure, it was clear that 31.3% of respondents sometimes read food labels before purchasing items, while 19.2% of them always read the food labels. It was also found that 18.2% of the respondents often read food labels before buying products and another 18.2% rarely read the food labels, and only 13.1% never read any food labels.



From the above figure, it was clear that 49% of respondents decide what to eat on the basis of taste preferences, while 16.2% of them made decisions on the basis of convenience. It was also found that 16.2% of the respondents decides on what to eat on the basis of nutrition, and only 3.5%respondents made decision of food on the basis of cultural reasons.

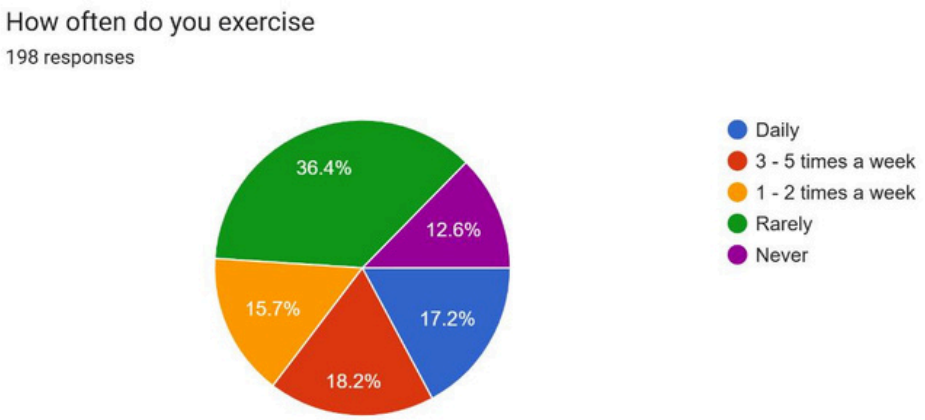


From the above figure, it was observed that majority 71.5% of the respondents does not take any vitamin or mineral pill. About 21% of the respondents takes vitamins or mineral pills. For 7.5% of the respondents may sometimes take vitamin or mineral supplement.

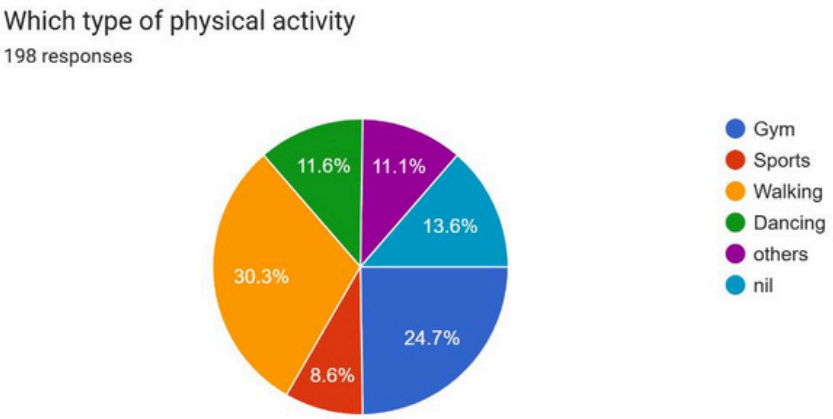
Among these 18% respondents took vitamin D pills, 4.9% took vitamin C pills and 3.3% respondents took iron supplements.

LIFESTYLE PRACTICES- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SLEEP

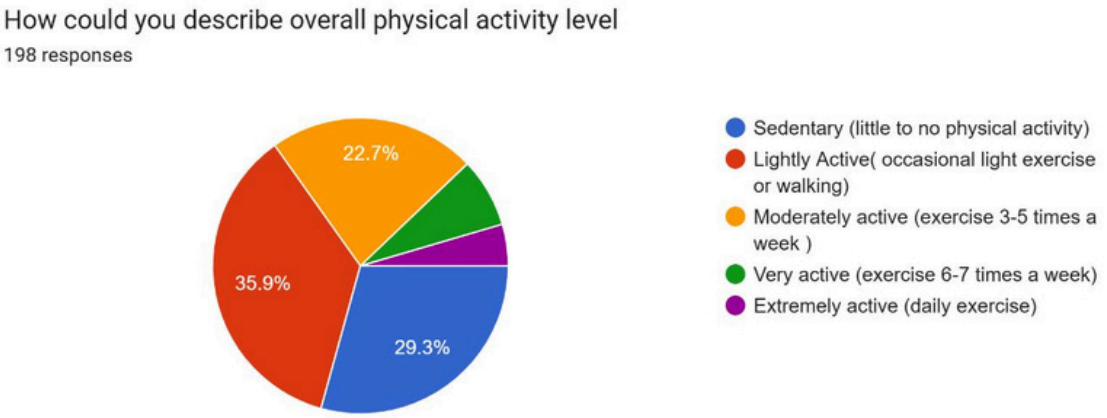
Regular physical activity and adequate sleep are crucial lifestyle practices that significantly impact overall health and well-being. Physical activity, especially moderate exercise, can improve sleep quality, reduce stress, and boost mood, leading to better sleep. Conversely, good sleep enhances physical activity levels by improving energy and reducing daytime fatigue.



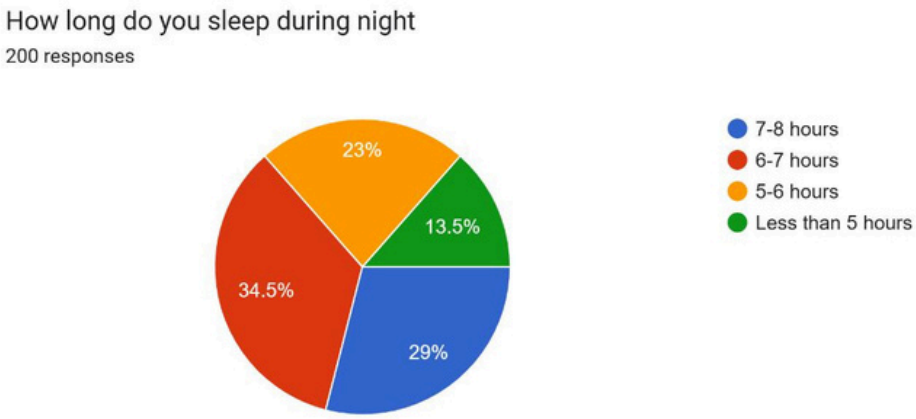
From the above figure, it was clear that 36.4% of respondents exercised rarely, while 18.2% of them exercised 3-5 times a week. It was also found that 17.2% of the respondents exercises daily, 15.7% respondents exercise 1-2 times a week and only 12.6%respondents never exercises.



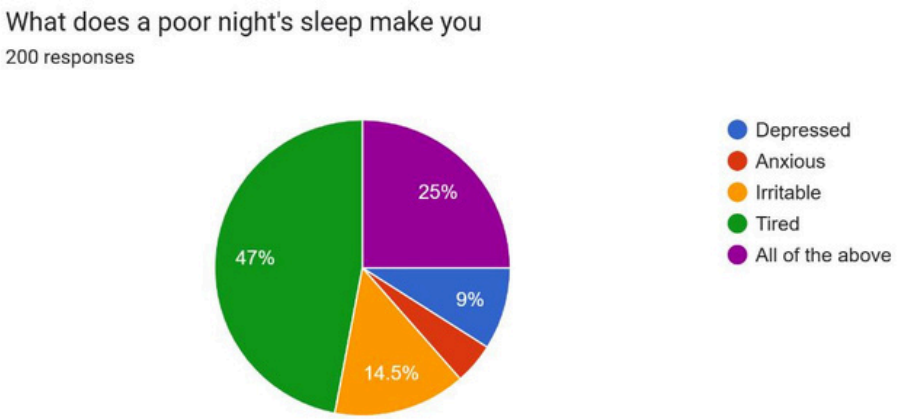
From the above figure, it was clear that 30.3% of respondents do walking as an exercise, while 24.7% of them went to gym for physical activity, 13.6% respondents did not do any kind of physical activity . It was also found that11.6 % of the respondents did dancing as their physical activity, 11.1% respondents do different activities as physical activity, and 8.6%respondents did sports as their physical activity.



From the above figure, it was clear that 35.9% of respondents described themselves as lightly active while 29.3% of them were living a sedentary lifestyle, 22.7% respondents were moderately active. It was also found that 7.6% of the respondents were very active, and 4.5 %respondents were extremely active.



From the above figure, it was clear that 34.5% of respondents got 6-7 hours of sleep, while 29% of them got 7-8 hours of sleep, 23% respondents got 5-6 hours of sleep and only 13.5%respondents got less than 5 hours of sleep.



From the above figure, it was clear that 47% of respondents get tired when they don't get enough sleep, while 25% of them get several symptoms at once when they don't get enough sleep, 14.5% respondents get irritable when they don't get enough sleep ,9%respondents get depressed by poor sleep and the last 4.5% get anxious by poor sleep.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The present study entitled 'Dietary Habits and Lifestyle Practices Among College Students' was conducted to assess the socio-demographic profile, anthropometric measurements, dietary habits, nutrition awareness, and lifestyle practices among college students aged between 18 and 26 years. The study involved 200 participants and was conducted using a questionnaire.

The important points of study are summarized below:

➢The socio-demographic profile indicated that,

- Majority(48.3%)belongedtothe21–23agegroup,followedby41.8%inthe18–20 years category, and a smaller proportion (10%) in the 24–26 years category.

- The gender distribution revealed that 74.9% were females and 25.1% were males. These figures suggest a higher representation of female students in the selected sample. Understanding this distribution is crucial as gender and age differences often influence dietary habits and lifestyle behaviors.

➢Anthropometric measurements are essential indicators of the nutritional status of individuals. In this study, height, weight, and BMI were recorded.

- The mean height of the students was found to be 158.80 cm with standard deviations of 12.42.
- The mean and standard deviation calculated for weight was 59.62 and 14.48 respectively.
- Finally, the mean value obtained for BMI was 21.58 with a standard deviation of 4.30.

➢The study observed varied patterns in meal frequency and eating behaviors among the students.

- The majority (61%) consumed three meals a day, which is considered healthy and balanced.
- However, irregular meal patterns were also common; 37% of students sometimes skipped meals, and 27% skipped meals regularly, highlighting a concerning trend.
- Among those who skipped meals, breakfast was the most frequently missed meal (40.3%), which can negatively affect metabolic health and concentration levels.
- Consumption of deep-fried and processed foods was notably high, with 53% of students consuming such foods 3–5 times a week
- 14.5% consuming them daily.
- Water intake patterns also showed that 45.5% of students consumed less than 2 liters of water per day, posing a risk for dehydration.
- Snacking habits revealed a preference for less nutritious options like chips and fried foods (44.9%), while only 21.2% preferred fruits and vegetables, indicating a need for better awareness and availability of healthy snacks.

 The consumption of sugary drinks and snacks was also high, with about one-third consuming them 3–5 times a week, further contributing to poor diet quality among students.

➢While nutrition awareness and diet choices among college students indicated that :

 Amajority(64%)ofstudentsdidnotfollowanyspecificdietplan.

 Amongthosewhodid,weightlossdiets(15%)andweightgaindiets(8.5%)weremore commonly followed.

 Reading food labels, an important behavior for informed food choices, was inconsistently practiced; only 19.2% always read labels, while others either read them occasionally or rarely.

 Tastewastheprimaryfactorinfluencingfoodchoicesfor49%ofstudents,followedby convenience (16.2%) and nutrition (16.2%).

 Cultural reasons influenced a minimal number (3.5%) of students. Supplement use was generally low, with 71.5% not taking any vitamin or mineral supplements, although a small portion reported occasional or regular intake of Vitamin D, C, and iron supplements.

- This suggests that despite having basic knowledge, students often prioritized convenience and taste over nutrition in their dietary decisions.

➢Lifestyle practices among college students reflected a mixed pattern of physical activity and sleep habits, it reveal that:

- Physicalactivitywasinsufficientforasignificantnumberofstudents;36.4%exercised rarely, and 12.6% never engaged in any form of exercise.
- Among those who were physically active, walking (30.3%) and gym workouts (24.7%) were the most preferred activities, with fewer students participating in sports or dance.
- Assessmentofoverallactivitylevelsshowedthat35.9%werelightlyactive,while29.3% led sedentary lifestyles. Only a small proportion (7.6%) were categorized as very active.
- Sleeppatternswerealsoconcerning.About34.5%ofstudentsreportedgettingonly6–7 hours of sleep per night, while 23% got less than 6 hours, which is inadequate for young adults.
- Sleepdeprivationsymptomswerecommon,with47%feelingtiredand25%experiencing multiple symptoms such as irritability, anxiety, and depression due to insufficient sleep.

These findings highlight the urgent need for improving lifestyle habits among college students to promote better health and academic performance.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides an insightful overview of the dietary habits, nutritional awareness, lifestyle behaviors, and physical health status of college students. Despite having a fair knowledge about nutrition, many students struggled to translate this awareness into healthier food choices and lifestyle habits. The socio-demographic analysis showed that most of the respondents were young female students. Anthropometric measurements indicated a generally healthy population; however, individual variations called attention to the need for personalized nutritional guidance. Meal patterns were irregular for a considerable portion of students, with breakfast being the most commonly skipped meal. Frequent consumption of processed foods, sugary snacks, and insufficient water intake reflected poor dietary habits, while the preference for taste over nutrition demonstrated a critical gap between knowledge and practice. Low levels of regular physical activity combined with inadequate sleep emphasized unhealthy lifestyle patterns, which if continued, could lead to long-term health complications. Tiredness, irritability,
and mood disturbances were common consequences of poor sleep hygiene.
In conclusion, the study underscores the need for targeted interventions to promote healthier dietary habits, encourage regular physical activity, and improve sleep hygiene among college students. Workshops, health campaigns, and college-based wellness programs should be implemented to support students in adopting and maintaining a healthier lifestyle. A coordinated effort involving educational institutions, parents, and health professionals is essential to foster positive behavior changes and ensure a healthier, more productive future generation.

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APPENDIX-I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO ELICIT INFORMATION ON "DIETARY HABITS AND LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS"

I)Sociodemographic features

1.Name:

2.Age

a) 18-20
b) 21-23
c) 24-26

3.Gender

II) Anthropometric measurements

1.Height

2.Weight

III) Meal frequency and eating habits among College Students

1.Eating pattern:

a) Vegetarian
b) Vegan
c) Nonvegetarian
d) Vegetarianbuteateggs

2.No of meals in a day

a) Lessthan3meals
b) 3meals
c) Morethan3meals

3.Do you skip meals

a) Yes

b)No

c) Maybe

4.How often do you eat fruits and vegetables?

a) Everyday

b) 3-5timesaweek

c) Rarely

5.How often do you eat deep fried, processed foods and soft drinks?

a) Everyday

b) 3-5timesaweek

c) Rarely

6.How much water do you drink every day?

a) Lessthan2L

b) 2-3L

c) Morethan3L

7.Do you prepare your own meal?

a) Always

b) Sometimes

c) Rarely

d) Never

8. What do you eat when you prepare your own meals?

a) Ricemeatvegetablesandfruits

b) Meatvegetablesandfruitsonly

c) Instantorreadymadefooditems

d) Instantnoodles

e) nothing

9. What are the challenges do you face in maintaining healthy diet?

a) Lackoftime

b) Costofhealthyfood

c) Limitedavailabilityofhealthyfood

d) Lackofknowledgeabouthealthyfood

10. How often do you order foods?

a) Lessthan3timesaweek
b) 3-5timesaweek
c) Morethan5timesaweek

11.Do you choose food that cost less over healthy/nutritious food?

a) Yes
b)No
c) Maybe

12.Do you eat more when you are stressed?

a) Yes
b)No
c) Maybe

13.How often do you eat sugary drinks and snacks?

a) Daily
b) 3-5timesaweek
c) 1-2timesaweek
d) Rarely
e) Never

14.Which type of snacks do you usually prefer

a) Fruitsandvegetables
b) Nutsandseeds
c) Chipsandfriedfoods
d) Sweetsandsugarybeverages
e) Processedfoods

IV) Nutrition awareness and diet choices among students

1.Do you know about food pyramid?

a) Yes

b)No

c) Maybe

2.What is your opinion about balanced diet?

a) Adietconsistingofmainlymeat

b) Adietconsumingmainlyfruitsandvegetables

c) Adietconsistingofmeatvegetablesandvarietyoffoods

d) others

3.Do you follow any special diet?

a) Ketodiet

b) Intermediatefasting

c) Weightlossdiet

d) Weightgaindiet

e) nil

4.Any vitamin or protein supplements

a) yes

b) no

5.How often do you read food labels before purchasing them?

a) Always

b) Often

c) Sometimes

d) Rarely

e) Never

6.How do you usually decide what to eat?

a) Convenience

b) Nutrition

c) Tastepreferences

d) Culturalreasons

7.Do you have food allergy?

a) Yes

b)No

V) Lifestyle practices – Physical activity and sleep

1.How often do you exercise?

a) Daily

b) 3-5timesaweek

c) 1-2timesaweek

d) Rarely

e) Never

2.Which type of physical activity

a) Gym

b) Sports

c) Walking

d) Dancing

e) Others

f) Nil

3. Do you have any recreational activity?

a) Sports

b) Dance

c) Yoga

d) Athleticactivities

e) nil

4.Primary reason for physical activity

a) Weightmanagement

b) Stressrelief

c) Generalfitness

d) Musclefitness

e) Sportsperformance

5.How could you describe overall physical activity level?

a) Sedentarylifestyle
b) Lightlyactive
c) Moderatelyactive
d) Veryactive
e) Extremelyactive

6.Do you have uninterrupted sleep?

a) Yes
b)No
c) Maybe

7. How often do you have trouble getting off to sleep?

a) Never
b) Occasionally
c) Sometimes
d) Often
e) Always

8. How long does it usually take it to fall asleep?

a) Fewminutes
b) Uptohalfanhour
c) Uptoonehour
d) One–twohours
e) Morethantwohours

9.What does a poor night's sleep make you?

a) Depressed
b) Anxious
c) Irritable
d) Tired
e) Alloftheabove

10.How long do you sleep during night?

a) 7-8hours b) 6-7hours c) 5-6hours
d) Lessthan5hours

11. What time do you go to sleep?

a) Before10pm
b) Between10pm-12am
c) After12am

12. Do you take naps during the day?

a) Yes
b)No
c) Maybe

13. Do you usually wake up in a good mood?

a) Yes
b)No
c) Maybe