

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Nutritional Habits of High School Students in Al-Nasiryia City

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ABSTRACT

Objective(s): The purpose of this study is to ascertain high school students' nutritional habits.

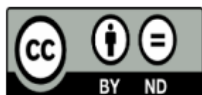
Methodology: The design is carried out cross-sectionally. The study began on November 3rd, 2021 and will conclude on March 10th, 2022. The study is being conducted in Al-Nasiryia City's male and female high schools. We select a random sample of (60) middle school students. All students who agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form. The study will use a self-report questionnaire that is divided into two sections: part I will examine the sociodemographic characteristics of high school students and part II will examine the nutritional habits of high school students. A pilot study is used to determine the content validity and internal consistency reliability. The study instrument is used to collect data. The descriptive statistical data analysis approach is used to analyze the data, while the inferential statistical data analysis approach is used to analyze the data.

Results show that the majority of the female and male students have fair dietary habits (75.0%).

Conclusion: High school students' dietary habits are unaffected by sociodemographic characteristics, with explanations suggesting that dietary habits are not affected by their age. This finding underscores the fact that the dietary habits of these students cannot improve as they get older.

Recommendations: It is recommended to provide the Ministry of Education with a booklet outlining the importance of adhering to a healthy diet for female intermediate school students.

Keywords: Nutritional Habits, High School Students



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INTRODUCTION

The quality of children's and adolescents' diets has deteriorated globally in recent years. Adolescents, according to current nutritional data, do not meet dietary requirements, particularly when it comes to fruit and vegetable consumption. Additionally, processed foods, oil, and sugar-sweetened beverages have increased in popularity (Tallon et al., 2020)

Adolescent development is as complex as child development, as it is characterized by a complex interaction of puberty, neurocognitive maturity, and social role transitions (Sawyer et al., 2012).

In addition to the influence of living conditions and surroundings, particularly at home, nutrition is critical for normal development. Consumption of a nutritious diet is necessary for normal puberty growth and development, which require an adequate supply of macro- and micronutrients. In recent years, the epidemiology of malnutrition and growth stunting has shifted toward obesity, and more people in low- and middle-income countries are becoming overweight or obese. This means that many LMICs now face a dual nutritional challenge, as they already suffer from high rates of stunting and other micronutrient deficiencies. The nutrition of adolescent girls has received considerable attention as a means of improving the health of both women and their children, as maternal preconception nutritional deficiencies have a significant impact on fetal and infant development, as well as neonatal and early childhood development and death (Salam et al., 2016).

There are two parts to good health: good nutrition and good living. In this case, it's a diet that meets one's energy and nutrient needs for proper body functions. It also meets one's caloric needs well enough to keep one healthy. Thus, it takes into account both the quality and quantity of food that a person eats when it comes to their health (National Nutrition Council, 2017) . " A recent review of national and international dietary guidelines, as well as epidemiologic research on the role of diets in global disease burden, reveals widespread agreement on the following key characteristics of healthy diets: Numerous diverse plant foods (fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, and seeds); low or no consumption of ultra-processed foods; and consumption of other foods as culturally appropriate and desired to meet energy and nutrient requirements (Herforth, 2016) .

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a healthy diet includes a variety of foods from various food groups; it meets individual calorie and nutrient

requirements; it is safe, free of toxins, bacteria, mold, or chemicals; it is enjoyable and culturally acceptable; and it is available and sufficient on a daily and seasonal basis (FAO, 2013) .

The healthiest foods are the least consumed. In many countries, trend data indicates that unhealthy components of diets are expanding at a faster rate than healthy components (Imamura et al., 2015).

METHOD

A cross-sectional design is carried out. The study was conducted on male and female high schools in Al-Nasiryia City. A random sample of 60 high school students is chosen at random. All students who agreed to participate in the study signed a consent form.

The study will use a self-reported questionnaire that is divided into two sections: Part I will examine the sociodemographic characteristics of high school students, and Part II will examine the nutritional habits of high school students. The content validity is determined by an expert panel, and the internal consistency reliability is determined using the split-half technique and the Cronbach alpha correlation coefficient in a pilot study.

The study instrument is used to collect data. The descriptive statistical data analysis approach is used to analyze the data, while the inferential statistical data analysis approach is used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Table (1): Distribution of High School Students' Socio-demographic Characteristics. The results of this table indicate that female students in the current study are evenly distributed by age and class into three groups of (20) (33.3%) each. The majority of them earn less than (300) thousand dinar per month and are considered the poorest (38.33 percent). Table (2): Overall Evaluation of High School Students' Nutritional Habits The results of this table indicate that the majority of students have reasonable nutritional habits (75 percent). Table (3): Mean of Scores on Items of Nutritional Habits. Low: Mean of Scores = 1-1.66, Moderate: Mean of Scores =1.67- 2.33, High: Mean of Scores = 2.34-3. The results of this table indicate that the mean of students' nutritional habits scores is high for (17) items, moderate for (23) items, and low for (4) items.

Table 1: Distribution of High School Students' Socio-demographic Characteristics.

List	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
1	Age (Years)		
	16	20	33.3
	17	20	33.3
	18	20	33.3
2	Class		
	Fourth Class	20	33.3
	Fifth Class	20	33.3
	Sixth Class	20	33.3
3	Monthly Income		
	300,000 dinar<	23	38.33
	300,000-600,000 dinar	16	26.66
	601,000-900,000 dinar	8	13.33
	901,000-1,200,000 dinar	5	8.33
	1,201,000-1,500,000 dinar	5	8.33
> 1,500,000 dinar	3	5.0	

The results of this table indicate that female students in the current study are evenly distributed by age and class into three groups of (20) (33.3%) each. The majority of them earn less than (300) thousand dinar per month and are considered the poorest (38.33 percent).

Table 2: Overall Evaluation of High School Students' Nutritional Habits

Poor (44-73.33)	Fair (73.34-102.66)	Good (102.67-132)
5 (8.33%)	45 (75%)	10 (16.67%)

The results of this table indicate that the majority of students have reasonable nutritional habits (75 percent).

Table 3: Mean of Scores on Items of Nutritional Habits

Item	Always	Sometimes	Never	MS	Evaluation
1. I plan my meals to be healthy.	22	31	7	2.25	Moderate
2. I read books about nutrition.	22	10	14	1.66	Low
3. I read articles in magazines or newspapers about the nutritious foods I eat.	9	22	29	1.66	Low
4. I examine food labels in order to determine the nutrients contained in foods.	13	23	24	1.81	Moderate
5. I get information about healthy food from TV.	19	29	11	2.1	Moderate
6. I get information about nutrition from the Internet.	29	22	9	2.33	Moderate
7. I read general ads about nutritious foods.	17	23	20	1.95	Moderate
8. I inquire of my mother about nutritious foods.	34	18	8	2.43	High

9	.I inquire of my teacher about the healthiest foods to consume.	12	17	31	1.68	Moderate
10.	I study nutrition in school.	10	22	28	1.7	Moderate
11.	I educate my friends about the importance of eating healthy foods.	11	26	23	1.8	Moderate
12.	I think if what I am eating is healthy.	31	23	6	2.41	High
13.	I eat the same foods every day.	8	33	19	1.81	Moderate
14.	I am trying new foods.	40	15	5	2.58	High
15.	I eat foods that contain minerals and iron.	28	25	7	2.35	High
16 .	I consume foods that are high in vitamin A, B, and C.	42	16	2	2.66	High
17.	I eat foods that contain vitamins that contain iron.	31	23	6	2.41	High
18.	Wash the fruit before eating it.	53	5	2	2.85	High
19.	I ensure that the meat I consume is sufficiently cooked.	54	4	2	2.86	High
20.	I eat meat, poultry, eggs at every meal.	23	33	4	2.31	Moderate
21.	I am thinking if my meals have enough protein.	21	31	8	2.21	Moderate
22.	I make an effort to consume calcium-rich foods and beverages.	27	26	7	2.33	Moderate
23.	I choose low-fat foods.	23	30	7	2.26	Moderate
24.	I season my food liberally with salt.	17	28	15	2.03	Moderate
25.	I eat high calorie snacks.	20	32	8	2.2	Moderate
26.	If I believe I've gained too much weight, I reduce my intake of sweets.	24	21	15	2.15	Moderate
27 .	I would rather eat sweets than a piece of fruit.	14	21	25	1.58	Moderate
28	.I prefer chips and other snacks to fruit.	18	20	22	1.93	Moderate
29.	I drink coffee with meals.	8	20	32	1.6	Low
30	When I purchase a snack, I opt for soda over soft drinks.	10	24	26	1.73	Moderate
31.	Rather than fruit juices, I drink soda.	9	17	34	1.58	Moderate

32. I ensure that the water I drink is pure.	54	3	3	2.85	High
33. Every day, I consume eight glasses of water.	42	9	9	2.55	High
34 . I prefer water to soda.	43	12	5	158	Low
35 I consume a variety of foods.	44	14	2	2.7	High
36. I suggest my family to buy healthy food.	30	18	12	2.3	Moderate
37. Ask other adults questions about healthy eating.	22	26	12	2.16	Moderate
38. I eat fruits.	44	14	2	2.7	High
39. I eat green vegetables.	32	23	5	2.45	High
40. I eat other vegetables.	32	22	6	2.43	High
41 . I consume foods that I am aware are beneficial to my health, even if I dislike them.	22	22	16	2.1	Moderate
42. I drink milk.	32	19	9	2.38	High
43. I eat sweets.	28	27	5	2.38	High
44. I eat cereal, bread, and tortillas as a snack.	36	18	6	2.5	High

Low: Mean of Scores = 1-1.66, Moderate: Mean of Scores =1.67- 2.33, High: Mean of Scores = 2.34-3

The results of this table indicate that the mean of students' nutritional habits scores is high for (17) items, moderate for (23) items, and low for (4) items.

DISCUSSION

Part I: Discussion of High School Students' Socio-demographic Characteristics

According to the data in this table, the mean of students' nutritional habits scores is high for (17) items, moderate for (23) items, and low for (4) items. A second study was conducted. Students in high school are asked how frequently they skip breakfast, how this affects their nutritional status and sociodemographic characteristics, and whether there is a correlation with other unhealthy eating habits. This is how it transpired: A random sample of 513 high school students was drawn from three socioeconomic groups: urban/high, middle, and low. There was a great deal of snobbery surrounding breakfast. Breakfast skippers were more likely to be older teenagers, fathers with low educational levels, and residents of cities or low-income areas(Gikas et al., 2003).

Another study is being conducted to determine the effect of certain socioeconomic factors on elementary school children's nutrition knowledge. A sample of 39222 students from various stages is drawn using the stratified cluster sampling method. Students with the least educated parents scored the lowest on nutrition awareness tests in the study, which explains why (Qian et al., 2017).

Part II: Discussion of the Nutritional Habits of High School Students

During the analysis of the data, it was shown that these students have a fair level of knowledge of nutritional habits (Table 2). This result indicates that these students are directed and aware of their own nutrition, which is very evident in the pilot episode, and this level of nutritional knowledge appears in a fair level of scores on the elements of nutritional knowledge: knowledge about nutrition, knowledge of diet and the elements needed by the body, knowledge about vegetarianism, micro and macronutrients, knowledge of the benefits of healthy nutrition, knowledge of nutrition-related diseases, nutritional problems, balanced diet, and prevention of nutritional diseases. These results reveal that these students had an average ability to know nutritional habits. Such findings are evidenced by the moderate mean of scores on items related to such phenomena of interest (Table 3).

This study of the dietary habits of adolescents is necessary because changes in the body affect the nutritional and nutritional requirements of an individual. Adolescents become increasingly self-reliant and make many of their food choices themselves(JHM, 2021). Another study found that adolescents experience a rapid period of growth and development, during

which their nutritional and micronutrient requirements are quite high. While the prevalence of malnutrition among adolescents is decreasing, the current rate of malnutrition is still quite high (41.9 percent). Adolescents who have a strong understanding of nutrition are more likely to eat healthfully (Raikar et al., 2020).

The purpose of this descriptive study is to aid in the comprehension of high school seniors' dietary knowledge. The study's findings confirm that high school seniors lack an adequate understanding of nutrition (Heymsfield and Moore, 2014).

Not only is food the most basic human need, but proper nutrition is also critical for development. Teenagers require a balanced diet and adequate physical activity in order to maintain muscle growth and bone strength. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the diets of high school pupils.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the dietary habits of female students and their sociodemographic characteristics. The findings indicate that students' age, grade level, and monthly income have no effect on their nutritional habits, implying that their nutritional habits remain constant.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL GUIDELINES

All secondary school students who participated in the study signed a permission form indicating their acceptance of the study's terms. The goal of the study is described to subjects prior to their involvement, and they are informed that their participation is optional and that they may withdraw at any moment. The security of the data is likewise protected, and it will be securely stored throughout and after the study's conduct.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Study concept; original draft writing; data collection; data analysis; and final edition review by all authors.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:

There are no conflicts of interest reported by the authors.

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