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Assess The Dietary Habits and Their Associative Factors Among Hostel Nursing Girls

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ABSTRACT

Background: Healthy eating is essential for maintaining overall well-being, yet unhealthy dietary habits are increasingly prevalent among young adults, leading to rising obesity rates and associated health concerns. Hostel students, particularly nursing students, often face challenges in maintaining a balanced diet due to various influencing factors such as peer pressure, media exposure, and personal preferences.

Objectives: This study aimed to assess the dietary habits of hostel nursing girls and examine the associative factors influencing their food choices.

Methodology: A non-experimental survey approach was employed, involving 300 hostel girls from Ladies Hostel-II, Campus II, BBSR, Odisha. Purposive sampling was used for participant selection. Data were collected through structured interviews using rating scales and yes/no questionnaires. The analysis focused on identifying key factors affecting dietary habits and their association with socio-demographic characteristics.

Results: Findings revealed that 53.88% of students' food choices were influenced by personal preferences, 56% by mass media and advertisements, and 27% by artificial food colors and flavors. Peer influence played a major role, affecting 60.5% of students, while psychological (34.66%) and social factors (44%) also impacted dietary habits. Significant associations were observed between dietary patterns and factors such as age, course and year of study, height, BMI, and family income ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant correlation was found with religion, marital status, or weight. **Conclusion:** The study highlights that hostel nursing girls primarily follow an average dietary pattern, with a notable tendency toward unhealthy food choices influenced by peers and media exposure. Awareness programs on the negative effects of unhealthy eating habits are essential to promote healthier dietary practices among students.

Keywords: *Dietary Habits, Associative Factors, Hostel Nursing Girls*

1. INTRODUCTION

The dietary habits of hostel students, particularly female nursing students, play a crucial role in their overall health and academic performance. Hostel life often brings significant lifestyle changes, including shifts in dietary patterns, physical activity, and eating behaviours. Various factors, such as limited food choices, time constraints, financial limitations, and stress, contribute to the modification of eating habits among hostel dwellers[1,2]. Hostel students are typically exposed to communal dining, which can both positively and negatively influence their dietary patterns. Studies have shown that institutionalized adolescent students often have restricted access to fresh, home-cooked meals, leading to reliance on ready-to-eat and processed foods[3]. Furthermore, students residing in hostels may experience irregular meal timings, skipping meals, and consuming calorie-dense fast foods, which can result in nutritional deficiencies or obesity [9]. These dietary patterns are significantly influenced by psychosocial aspects, peer pressure, and academic workload [4,13]. A key concern related to hostel dietary habits is breakfast consumption. Research indicates that skipping breakfast is prevalent among university students and has a direct impact on nutrient intake, metabolic health, and body mass index (BMI) [4,5]. Studies have established a correlation between breakfast skipping and reduced cognitive function, fatigue, and poor academic performance. Additionally, hostel students often exhibit a preference for high-fat and high-sugar foods, which can lead to weight gain and associated health risks such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes [6,8,16].

Nutritional knowledge is another important factor in determining food choices. Many studies highlight that hostel students, particularly those pursuing higher education in nursing and healthcare, lack adequate awareness of balanced diets and proper nutrition [7,10]. This gap in knowledge leads to unhealthy eating patterns, which can affect their overall well-being. Nutrition education programs have been shown to have a positive impact on modifying dietary behaviors and improving the nutritional status of students [11,23]. The availability and quality of hostel food services also play a crucial role in shaping students' eating habits. Research suggests that dissatisfaction with hostel food leads to increased consumption of fast food and packaged snacks, thereby reducing overall nutrient intake [12,13,15]. Furthermore, hostel management's ability to provide a well-balanced, nutritious diet significantly influences students' eating patterns and their long-term health outcomes [16,21]. Apart from dietary intake, the prevalence of obesity and other weight-related disorders is another major concern among hostel students. Various studies have identified a strong association between dietary habits and obesity levels among university students [17,20,22]. Poor eating behaviours, combined with a sedentary lifestyle, contribute to weight gain and associated health complications [18,14,19,]. This highlights the need for dietary interventions and awareness programs to promote healthy eating habits among hostel students[24,25]. Given the importance of dietary habits in determining the health status of hostel students, it is imperative to explore the factors influencing their eating behaviours.

The current study aims to assess the dietary habits and associated factors among hostel-based nursing students, identifying key determinants that affect their nutritional status. By analyzing food consumption patterns, meal preferences, and the impact of socio-environmental factors, this research seeks to provide insights into developing effective nutritional interventions and improving hostel food services for better student health outcomes. The findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on hostel students' nutrition and help formulate policies for enhancing dietary habits in institutional settings. The study will also offer recommendations for nutrition education programs tailored to hostel students, ensuring their overall well-being and academic success.

2. METHODOLOGY

Study Design and Period: A descriptive survey research design will be adopted to assess the dietary habits and associated factors among hostel girls. The study will be conducted over a specified period, ensuring comprehensive data collection within the given timeframe.

Setting: The study was conducted at SOA Campus-II, Bhubaneswar, specifically targeting hostel girls residing in the campus hostel. This location has been chosen to provide a focused assessment of dietary habits among nursing students living away from home.

Study Population: The population of this study consists of hostel girls residing at SOA Campus-II, Bhubaneswar. The accessible population includes students currently staying in the hostel and enrolled in various nursing programs, such as BSc Nursing, Basic BSc Nursing, MSc Nursing, and General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), during the study period.

Sample Size Determination: The sample size for this study is determined to be 300 hostel girls. This number has been chosen to ensure adequate representation of the target population, allowing for meaningful statistical analysis.

Sampling Procedure:A stratified random sampling technique will be used to select participants. This method ensures representation from different academic programs and study years within the hostel population. The inclusion criteria focus on nursing students residing in the hostel who are willing to participate, while students who do not reside in the hostel or are unavailable during data collection will be excluded.

Data Collection Tools and Procedure: A structured tool will be developed specifically for this study to assess dietary patterns and influencing factors. The tool will include three sections: socio-demographic data collection, a rating scale related to dietary patterns, and a questionnaire exploring dietary habits and associated factors. To ensure the validity of the tool, it will be reviewed by five nursing experts. Reliability testing will involve a pilot study with 30 students to assess

feasibility and clarity. Data collection will be conducted online using Google Forms, with informed consent obtained before participation. The investigator will distribute the questionnaire and provide instructions for completion.

Data Processing and Analysis: The collected data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, will be used to analyze demographic variables and levels of dietary habits. Chi-square analysis will be employed as an inferential statistical method to examine the association between dietary patterns and selected socio-demographic variables. Ethical considerations will be strictly maintained, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, with participants having the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time.

The population of the study consists of hostel girls, specifically those residing in SOA Campus-II, Bhubaneswar. The accessible population includes hostel girls who are currently staying in the campus hostel at the time of the study. Stratified random sampling technique will be used to ensure representation from different groups within the population, with a sample size of 300 participants. The inclusion criteria for this study will focus on hostel girls who are studying in various nursing programs, including BSc Nursing, Basic BSc Nursing, MSc Nursing, and General Nursing and Midwifery (GNM), and who are present at the time of data collection and willing to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria will include individuals who do not meet these academic program requirements or are unavailable or unwilling to participate during the study period. This approach ensures that the study captures a diverse and representative sample of the hostel girls while adhering to ethical guidelines and providing relevant data on the topic.

The exclusion criteria for this study will include adult girls who are studying at SOA University but are not residing in the hostel, as they do not represent the target population of hostel residents. Additionally, individuals who are not present at the time of data collection or those who are unwilling to participate in the study will be excluded. The primary research variable for this study is the knowledge regarding dietary patterns and their associated factors among hostel girls, which will be assessed to understand the key influences on food choices. The demographic variables will include factors such as age, sex, religion, height, weight, body mass index (BMI), and food habits, which will provide a comprehensive overview of the participants' backgrounds and health profiles. To gather relevant data, a tool will be developed specifically for this study to assess the dietary patterns and the factors influencing them among hostel girls at SOA Campus-II. This tool will include structured questions designed to evaluate both the knowledge and behaviors related to diet, ensuring that the study captures all the relevant dimensions necessary for an in-depth analysis of the participants' eating habits and the underlying factors contributing to those habits.

The tool for data collection consists of three sections: Gathers socio-demographic data, a rating scale related to dietary patterns, and a questionnaire exploring dietary patterns and their associated factors. To ensure the validity of the tool, it will be sent to five experts in the field of nursing for validation. For reliability, the tool will be administered to 30 students to assess the feasibility of answering and any challenges with understanding certain terms. A pilot study will be conducted at the Institute of Higher Secondary Education, SOA DTU Bhubaneswar, with a sample size of 30 students aged between 18 and 35 years. The data collection procedure will involve obtaining permission from the concerned authority, followed by the investigator conveniently selecting participants. The entire process will be carried out online via Google Forms, with informed consent obtained from all participants. The investigator will distribute the questionnaire and provide instructions on how to complete it.

The data will be analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage, will be used to analyze the demographic variables and the level of coping. In terms of inferential statistics, chi-square analysis will be employed to examine the association between dietary patterns and selected socio-demographic variables. Ethical considerations will be carefully followed throughout the study. Participants will be fully informed about the purpose of the study, ensuring transparency. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained, and informed consent will be obtained from the hostel girls involved in the study. Additionally, participants will be assured of their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions.

3. RESULT

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Hostel Girls N=300

Variable	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Age in years		
18-21	100	33.3
22-26	169	56.3
27-30	31	10.3
Religion		
Hindu	278	92.6

Christian	17	5.6
Muslim	5	1.6
Household income		
GNM	110	36.6
BSc Nursing	116	38.6
PBBSc Nursing	52	17.3
MSc Nursing	22	7.3
Year of the Study		
1st Year	110	36.6
2nd Year	115	38.3
3rd year	66	22
4th year	9	3
Marital status		
Married	70	23
Unmarried	230	77
Height (in Foot)		
4-4.8	101	33.6
4.9-5.5	172	57.3
5.6-6	27	9
Number of children		
30-45	21	7
46-65	236	78.6
66-80	43	14.3
BMI		
Under Weight	19	6.3
Normal Weight	242	80.6
Over Weight	37	12.3
Obesity	2	0.6
Income of the Family		
Below Rs.50,000	184	61.3
Between Rs.50,000-1,00,000	103	34.3
Above Rs.1,00,000	13	4.3
Food Habit		
Vegetarian	60	20
Non-Vegetarian	240	80

Table-1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. The majority (56.3%) were aged 22-26 years, while 33.3% were 18-21 years and 10.3% were 27-30 years. Most were Hindu (92.6%), followed by Christians (5.6%) and Muslims (1.6%). Regarding education, 38.6% were BSc Nursing students, 36.6% GNM, 17.3% PBBSc, and 7.3% MSc Nursing students. In terms of academic year, 38.3% were in the 2nd year, 36.6% in the 1st year, 22% in the 3rd year, and 3% in the 4th year. A majority (77%) were unmarried, while 23% were married. Height-wise, 57.3% ranged between 4'9"-5'5", 33.6% between 4'-4'8", and 9% were 5'6"-6". Most (78.6%) weighed 46-65kg, 14.3% weighed 66-80kg, and 7% weighed 30-45kg. In BMI classification, 80.6% were normal weight, 12.3% overweight, 6.3% underweight, and 0.6%

obese. Income-wise, 61.3% earned <₹50,000, 34.3% between ₹50,000-₹1,00,000, and 4.3% above ₹1,00,000. Dietary habits showed that less than 20% were vegetarian, while over 80% were non-vegetarian.

Table-2: Frequency and Percentage according to the dietary pattern of hostel girls N=300

Food Habit	Frequency	Percentage
Poor Food Habit	19	63.3
Average Food Habit	225	75
Good Food Habit	56	18.66

Table 2 represents 18.66% had a good dietary pattern, 75% had an average dietary pattern, and 63.3% had a poor dietary pattern.

Table-3: Frequency and Percentage of Factors Associative with Unhealthy Dietary Habits N=300

Associative Factors	Frequency		Percentage (%)
Personal Choice	Influenced	165	53.88
	Not Influenced	135	46.11
Mass Media and Advertisement	Influenced	170	56.66
	Not Influenced	130	43.33
Due to food color and flavor	Influenced	82	27.33
	Not Influenced	218	72.66
Psychological Factor	Influenced	104	34.66
	Not Influenced	196	65.33
Peer Influence	Influenced	181	60.5
	Not Influenced	119	39.5
Social Factor	Influenced	132	44
	Not Influenced	168	66

Table 3 shows that 53.88% of students' food patterns were influenced by personal choice, 56.66% by mass media and advertisements, 27.33% by artificial food color and flavor, and 60.5% by their friend circle. Additionally, 34.66% were affected by psychological factors, while 44% were influenced by social factors.

Table-4: Association Between selected Demographic Variables and Knowledge of Dietary Patterns N=300

Demographic Variables	Chi-Square Value	Degree of Freedom	P-Value
Age	46.073	2	0.00001
Religion	3.376	2	0.18480
Course of the Study	19.833	3	0.0001
Year of the Study	12.128	3	0.0069
Marital Status	0.020	1	0.8853
Height	30.774	2	0.00001

Weight	4.039	2	0.1326
BMI	18.487	3	0.0003
Monthly income of Family	18.936	2	0.0000
Food Habit	19.737	1	0.0000

Table 4. Presents the association between demographic variables and knowledge of dietary patterns. Age ($\chi2$=46.0733), course of study ($\chi2$=19.8339), year of study ($\chi2$=12.128), height ($\chi2$=30.774), BMI ($\chi2$=18.487), monthly income of family ($\chi2$=18.936), and food habits ($\chi2$=19.737) were statistically significant at the 0.05 level. However, religion ($\chi2$=3.376), marital status ($\chi2$=0.020), and weight ($\chi2$=4.039) were not statistically significant. The null hypothesis was accepted for all variables.

4. DISCUSSION

The current study was done on 18 to 30 years of hostel girls to assess of dietary patterns and its associative factors. Total of 300 hostel girls from selected ladies' hostel of Bhubaneswar were taken as sample.

This study aligns with previous research highlighting the factors influencing dietary habits among hostel students. A study by Kumar R, Singh MC, and colleagues, which included 423 students, found that peer and media influence played a more significant role in unhealthy eating patterns than parental guidance[25]. These findings reinforce the present study's observation that 60.5% of students were influenced by their peers and 56.66% by mass media and advertisements.

Similarly, Monika Sehrawat's study on fast food consumption among university hostel girls indicated that snacks and soft drinks were an integral part of students' diets, especially in the evenings. This is comparable to the current study, which found that unhealthy dietary choices were widespread among hostel girls, influenced by personal choice (53.88%) and psychological factors (34.66%)[26]. Another study by Rathi, Riddell, and Worsley on Indian adolescents' dietary behaviors revealed that socioeconomic factors significantly impact food choices, with students from lower-income families more prone to unhealthy diets due to limited access to healthy food options. This aligns with the current study, which found a significant association between monthly family income and dietary patterns ($p < 0.05$)[27].

Research conducted by Musaiger et al. on university students in the Middle East found that students living away from home consumed more fast food and had poorer dietary habits than those living with their families. This supports the present study's finding that hostel girls tend to have an average dietary pattern, with a notable inclination toward unhealthy food choices [28].

Lastly, a study by Sogari, Velez-Argumedo, Gómez, and Mora on university students' eating behaviours in Europe concluded that social and psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping dietary patterns. The current study similarly highlights the impact of social factors (44%) and psychological factors (34.66%) on students' food habits[29].

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Given these findings, it is imperative to implement nutrition education programs and encourage healthier meal choices within hostel settings. Awareness campaigns targeting peer influence and media consumption could be effective in mitigating the adverse effects of unhealthy eating habits.

The study indicates that most hostel nursing girls maintain an average dietary pattern, with a predominant inclination toward unhealthy food choices influenced by peer groups (60.5%), media exposure (56.66%), and personal preferences (53.88%). Additionally, significant relationships were found between dietary habits and socio-demographic factors such as age, course of study, year of study, height, BMI, and family income. However, no significant correlation was observed with religion, marital status, or weight.

5. LIMITATIONS

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, there are certain limitations. First, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias. Second, the sample was limited to a specific geographic location (Bhubaneswar), making it challenging to generalize the findings to a broader population. Third, factors such as genetic predisposition, cultural influences, and accessibility to healthy food options were not extensively examined. Fourth, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships. Future research should consider a larger, more diverse sample and incorporate objective dietary assessments to enhance the reliability of findings.

6. CONCLUSION

The study indicates that most hostel nursing girls maintain an average dietary pattern, with a predominant inclination toward unhealthy food choices influenced by peer groups (60.5%), media exposure (56.66%), and personal preferences

(53.88%). Additionally, significant relationships were found between dietary habits and socio-demographic factors such as age, course of study, year of study, height, BMI, and family income. However, no significant correlation was observed with religion, marital status, or weight. To address these issues, it is crucial to organize group awareness programs on the adverse effects of unhealthy food habits and encourage healthier dietary practices among students.

Ethical considerations – The Institutional Ethical Committee of SIKSHA O ANUSANDHAN University granted ethical approval for this study after the required investigation and board meeting discussions. The administration of the selected hostels permitted the study to be conducted within their premises. Hostel residents provided informed consent prior to data collection. Throughout the study, all data was documented and safeguarded, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST: There is no conflict among authors.

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