

Assignment

by Heta Jain

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Introduction

There is rising concern about the health and well-being of graduate students at public universities due to their dietary habits. To effectively encourage healthier choices and support their academic performance, it is crucial to understand the variables that impact their eating behavior. This research plans to debate these issues in depth with graduate students at a state institution (El Zein et al., 2019). The specific stresses of graduate study may have a significant impact on how much and how frequently individuals eat. Tight academic schedules, extended study sessions, and a lack of free time may all contribute to bad eating habits and a dependence on fast food and other unhealthy alternatives.

This report contains ¹ focus group interviews to investigate what variables affect eating habits among graduate students at a public institution. An overview of relevant literature serves as the basis for the introduction, followed by sections on research methodology (including study design, participant recruiting, sample size calculation, and data collecting procedures), followed by sections on data analysis, findings, and conclusions.

Literature based background of the study

The below literature review highlights the eating behavior of postgraduate students attending public institutions is impacted by several different variables. Personal attributes such as understanding nutrition and stress levels, social influences such as influence from peers and cultural norms, and environmental variables such as price and accessibility of food on campus are examples of these elements (Marahatta et al., 2020). Gaining an understanding of these elements is essential for the process of formulating interventions and strategies that aim to encourage postgraduate students to adopt better eating habits.

¹ Eating behaviour among postgraduate students in a public university

The National Library of Medicine defines ²⁴ eating behaviour as "normal behaviour related to eating habits, selecting foods that students eat; culinary preparations and quantities of ingestion." Eating improperly, not eating enough, or eating at the incorrect times may cause various health issues and nutritional deficiencies, making eating habits an essential component of life that can impact one's long-term health (Shangguan et al., 2019). University students constitute a sizable demographic that might benefit from nutritional interventions due to their increased understanding of the need for a well-balanced diet. Indeed, research worldwide has demonstrated that college students eating habits and diets shift dramatically during college.

Student weight is affected by more than just their level of exercise and lack of idle time. According to an expert study, college students in the United States eat fewer fruits and vegetables than the general population. Still, their consumption of high-fat food products is comparably higher. Furthermore, Butler and colleagues reported a significant increase in fat and alcohol intake among first-year college students in the United States compared to the previous year (Goh and Jie, 2019). High-calorie foods and excessive alcohol usage may increase weight gain among students. Across Europe, university students exhibit a similar trend of weight growth. In contrast to the American Heart Association's recommendations, Greek university students consumed total saturated fat while consuming less poly and monounsaturated fat, folate, vitamin E, and fibre.

According to a global burden of obesity research done in 2005, around 33.0% of adults globally, or 1.3 billion people, are overweight or obese. If current growth rates continue, the above ratio is expected to reach 57.8 per cent in 2030, equal to a population of 3.33 billion (Deliens et al., 2014). Obesity prevalence in Brunei Darussalam has grown from 12% in 1996 to 27.2% in 2011. Obesity has become a public health problem due to its documented link to various noncommunicable illnesses (NCDs), such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. Overall, 28.8% of the population was overweight or obese, with a 95% confidence range ranging from 24.0% to 34.0% (Bastami, Zamani-Alavijeh and Mostafavi, 2019). Most people eat three meals daily; however, more than half skip breakfast. Individuals consumed fried meals regularly, at least three times per week, regularly snacked, and had a poor intake of fruits and vegetables in their daily dietary patterns. Individuals who are overweight or obese eat at fast food restaurants more often—a quarter of the youngsters participated in physical exercise for at least three hours each week.

The factors that influence eating behaviour among postgraduate students in a public university

Several variables impact individual eating habits, including personal qualities, social expectations, and environmental circumstances. Graduate students at a public academic institution represent a distinct group with expectations and difficulties that may influence their food habits (Abdelghaffar et al., 2019). The current research sought to improve understanding of the variables influencing graduate students' eating habits in a public, academic institution.

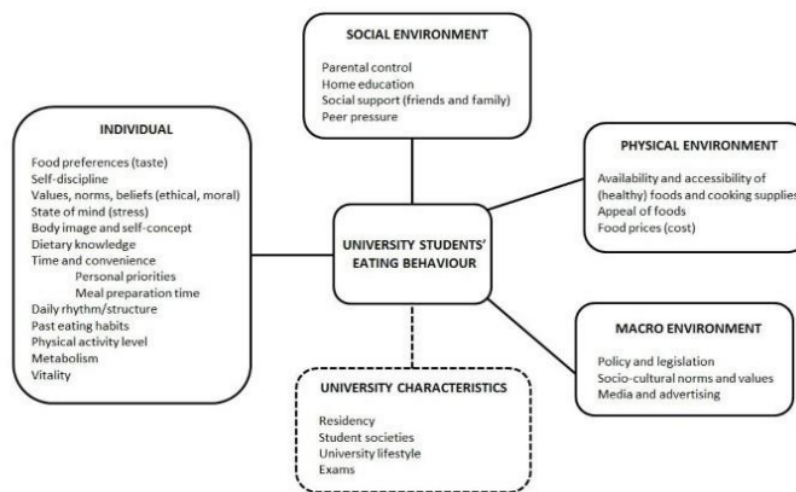


Figure 1 Factors influencing the eating behaviour in universities

Source-(Deliens et al., 2014)

Individual Factors: Individual circumstances have a significant influence on graduate students' food habits. Personal preferences, nutritional understanding, and attitude are all elements that might impact a person's food choices and eating habits. The outcomes of Adams et al.'s (2019) analysis demonstrated that graduate students with higher nutrition knowledge tended to make more optimum food choices (Froome et al., 2020). Personal issues such as stress, time limits, and self-regulation may all impact a person's food habits. Smith et al. (2020) did research that found graduate students who are stressed out are more likely to adopt poor eating behaviours.

Social Influences: Postgraduate students' food habits may be significantly influenced by their social circumstances, including peer influence, social conventions, and cultural heritage. Chen and colleagues (2018) discovered that peer influence significantly impacts determining graduate students' food habits. Individuals were more likely to imitate unhealthy eating habits when they were in the presence of peers who did so (Martínez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Cultural norms and conventions may impact eating habits and food preferences. Li et al. (2019) performed research that discovered that postgraduate students from various ethnic backgrounds had distinct food trends.

Environmental Factors: Environmental variables like as food affordability, accessibility, and availability may have an impact on postgraduate students' eating patterns. The availability and placement of campus food businesses may influence students' dietary habits. According to research by Johnson and Smith (2021), graduate students who had difficulty accessing healthful meals on campus tended to eat more fast food or unhealthy snacks (Su et al., 2019).

The expense of purchasing food high in nutrients should be taken into account. Williams et al. (2022) found that when graduate students were on a restricted budget, they opted for cheaper, less healthy food selections.

Rationale

Given the vital importance that appropriate nutrition plays in maintaining both one's physical and mental health, the purpose of this research is to investigate the variables that impact the dietary habits of graduate students attending a public institution. According to Avgerinou et al. (2019), the problems that postgraduate students typically face, such as intense academic duties, strict deadlines, and increased stress levels, might considerably affect their food habits. It is necessary to get a complete understanding of the variables that impact eating behaviour to establish effective treatments and support systems for this group.

The possibility of a connection between eating habits and levels of academic accomplishment is what prompted this line of inquiry. According to research conducted by El Zein et al. (2019), insufficient nutrition and poor dietary practises may hurt cognitive capacities, including focus and retention, all essential for attaining academic achievement at the graduate level. It is possible to get valuable insights into how academic performance and general well-being may be improved by optimising nutrition by investigating the aspects that affect the dietary practices of graduate students.

Research Question

Aim

Purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that impact eating behaviour among postgraduate students.

Research question

- What are the most critical factors influencing the food selections and eating routines of postgraduate students attending public universities?
- How does the university environment, particularly the availability of healthy food alternatives and social factors, affect postgraduate students' eating habits?
- What are the perceived obstacles and facilitators to sustaining healthy eating habits among public university postgraduate students?

Research methodology

An initiative to study the factors that affect the eating habits of graduate students at a public university will include focus group discussions. Scholars may investigate people's cognitive and emotional experiences with their dietary practices using a qualitative technique (Hill et al., 2021). The participative aspect of the focus group format promotes the discovery of similarities and differences in the variables that influence the dietary practises of its members.

Research Design:

The research approach used in this study will be qualitative, with a focus group discussion serving as the primary means of data collection. Because of its capacity to provide a complete study of participants' viewpoints and experiences, this approach is well-suited for researching the factors that influence eating behaviour among graduate students. The study tries to acquire varied perspectives and create involvement among respondents by gathering them in a small group for a moderated dialogue (Kamenidou et al., 2019). This participatory technique yields a wealth of qualitative data that provides insight into the different aspects that influence an individual's food habits.

Recruitment, Sampling & Study Participants:

Participants for the focus groups will be selected from among graduate students at a public institution using a purposive selection strategy. Age, gender, academic programme, and nutritional preferences will all be considered throughout the selection process. Numerous communication channels, such as university bulletin boards, email distribution lists, and social media, will be used during recruiting. A quick screening questionnaire will be completed to determine a student's eligibility for the study (Meza et al., 2019). The survey will collect basic demographic information and questions about respondents' availability and willingness to participate.

Prospective volunteers will be given a thorough explanation of the study's goals and objectives and the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the target recruitment is set at 8-12 people. The acquisition of informed permission will guarantee the preservation of participants' rights, privacy, and the secrecy of their replies. Each will be allocated an exclusive identification or pseudonym to protect the subjects' confidence.

Materials/Data Collection Method(s)/Procedure:

Data Collection Method

Focus group discussions (FGDs) will be used as a qualitative research strategy to examine how different variables affect eating habits among graduate students at a public institution

(Rinninella et al., 2019). Using this approach, researchers may delve deeply into individuals' personal histories, perspectives, and beliefs to better understand the driving forces behind their eating habits.

Data Collection Procedure:

Before beginning the study, the researchers will submit an ethics application to the appropriate institution's ethics review board. ³³ Purposive sampling will then be used to recruit individuals (Reddy and van Dam, 2020). The FGD will include graduate students from various disciplines, ages, sexes, and cultural backgrounds. Each participant's identity will be concealed, and their permission will be requested to maintain confidentiality and fair representation.

Preparation of the Questionnaire/Guide:

The research team will create a semi-structured interview guide with topic-related open-ended questions and guiding statements. This guide aims to investigate the effect of college life on eating behaviour, including food preferences, dietary habits, sociocultural impacts, stress, and other issues.

Conducting the Focus Group Discussions:

The focus groups will be held in a neutral, stress-free college campus space. A knowledgeable moderator with a background in qualitative research will facilitate discussions. The moderator's job is to ensure everyone has a say and that the conversation stays on track with the study's goals.

Audio Recording and Encouraging Participation:

To guarantee complete response collection and to make data analysis more accessible, they will record each FGD with the participants' permission (Meza et al., 2019). To maximise participation, the moderator's job is to provide an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking freely and without fear of reprisal. Responses will be elicited by active listening and subsequent, in-depth questioning.

Data analysis technique

To analyse the factors that impact the eating patterns of graduate students ²³ enrolled in a state university, a thematic analysis will be utilised as a method for conducting data analysis. The process of locating, classifying, and providing meaning to recurrent themes in a body of data is referred to as thematic analysis. To get an in-depth understanding of the data (Mete et al., 2019), the recordings of the conversations during the focus group sessions will be transcribed and evaluated. After that, the investigator will apply a coding framework to the collected data by first extracting essential components (such as words, phrases, or sentences) that are

connected to the problem being investigated. The labels mentioned above need to be appropriately categorised into a variety of categories that comprehensively cover the significant environmental factors that have a significant impact on the food choices that individuals make.

By analysing how the codes and the themes interact with one another, the analyst is working towards the goal of locating patterns, outliers, and connections hidden within the data. By consistently enhancing and reworking the codes and themes, the researcher is working towards the goal of producing a depiction of the data that is consistent and accurate. The current discussion outlines the various factors, backed by appropriate quotations (Nguyen et al., 2019), that affect the eating behaviours of graduate students. An in-depth assessment of people's perspectives and experiences, which may be supported by theme analysis, is necessary for gaining an understanding of the factors that are responsible for shaping people's eating behaviours. The findings of the topic analysis will contribute to the expansion of the existing body of material. They may serve to direct efforts and initiatives aimed at enhancing the dietary practices of postgraduate students.

Ethical considerations

The academics will pay close attention to ethical concerns throughout the inquiry. All student's involvement will be voluntary, and their rights will be protected since they gave informed permission. During the data collecting and analysis stages, participants' privacy and anonymity will be protected by giving them pseudonyms or other identifying information. The data will be kept securely, and only the research team members can access it. The information acquired throughout the study will be kept private and utilised strictly for analytical reasons (Sanyaolu et al., 2019). The inquiry will follow all ethical research standards established by the institution and the country. The university's research ethics committee will evaluate and approve the proposed study to protect participants' rights and welfare.

Results

The study that investigates the elements that affect the eating routines of graduate students at a public university will look at the factors that influence the eating routines of graduate students at a public university. The findings will be based on an examination of focus group discussions. According to Su et al. (2019), the purpose of thematic analysis is to identify and investigate the key themes and patterns within the data. The study will provide detailed and meticulous data, focusing on the aspects that are thought to have the most significant influence on the nutritional decisions made by graduate students. The results consider cultural influences, dietary preferences, time constraints, psychological strain, environmental factors,

and individual motivations. The outcomes of this research will shed light on the interplay of several different factors and their effect on the dietary practices of graduate students attending a public institution.

Discussions

In part devoted to the discussion, a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the results will be provided, all of which will be situated within the framework of significant research and theoretical perspectives. The results will be compared to findings from other research, with an emphasis placed on similarities, contrasts, and other distinguishing features of postgraduate scholars attending institutions financed by the state. ²⁵ The purpose of this study is to investigate ³² the potential implications that the factors stated above may have on an individual's physical and mental health, as well as their overall well-being and academic performance. In addition, the study will investigate the implications and significance of these aspects (Bastami, Zamani-Alavijeh, and Mostafavi, 2019). This forum provides a venue for discussing discoveries that have been made that are unexpected or conflicting, as well as probable causes for these findings and prospective future research areas. We will investigate the constraints of the research, such as the small sample size and the potential for biases, as well as the influence ²⁷ these limitations have on the results. This study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of the ³⁴ multiple factors that affect the eating habits of graduate students. As a result, it will contribute to the existing body of literature on the subject.

Conclusion

The conclusion section will give a summary of the study's results, emphasizing the discovered factors that impact postgraduate students' eating habits at a public, academic institution. The finding is significant because it elucidates the intricate interplay of variables that determine the food habits of this specific community. The conclusion will underline the need to develop particular interventions and support systems that encourage healthy eating habits among graduate students by, university administrations, health professionals, and legislators. Furthermore, it can recommend future study directions, highlighting areas of knowledge that may benefit from greater exploration. The study's conclusion will emphasize its addition to the current body of information and its potential to improve the quality of students' lives. A concise description of the study's findings and their broader importance will also be given.

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Appendix

A blank copy of the guide will utilize in the focus groups' talks can be included as an appendix. This appendix lays bare the data-gathering procedure and lets readers in on the specific questions and instructions used. Some questions for students that might be included in a discussion guide for this research are as follows:

- As a graduate student, how would you characterize your eating right now?
- In what ways do your circumstances influence the way you eat?
- In what ways do you find it challenging to stick to a balanced diet? How do these obstacles influence the foods you choose to eat?
- Is there anything that helps you stick to good eating habits despite your difficulties?
- How does the food culture of a university affect your diet?
- Do you have any particular recommendations or suggestions for interventions that you might make to encourage healthy eating behaviours among postgraduate students?

The purpose of the discussion guide is to encourage participants to share their views, experiences, and insights on the variables that influence their eating behaviour, therefore giving valuable data for analysis and interpretation. The guide will be developed to enable participants to contribute their perspectives, experiences, and insights on the factors that influence their eating behaviour.

Assignment

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