

## **A Sociological study on Female graduate college students' Nutrition awareness and Dietary habits: Special reference to South Karnataka**

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### **Abstract**

The health and academic success of students are impacted by inadequate nutrition. Although students may have a better understanding of nutritional requirements, college life allows them to choose the type and quantity of food they consume. This is a chance to improve nutritional status and correct poor dietary practices. Nourishment, the fundamental need of a living being is not only to satisfy hunger, but also to provide physical and mental well-being. In order to maintain health standards, proper nutrition, which is the presence of nutrients in the required amounts, is necessary from the daily diet. Eating any kind of food does not meet the nutritional requirements of the body. To understand nutrition and eating habits in female college students using qualitative research methods. The purpose of this article is to analyze the discourses produced during 34 semi-structured interviews conducted by female graduate students in the Davanagere district of Karnataka with undergraduates in 2021. The interviewees ranged in age from 19 to 22. Having a high level of education did not prevent female graduate students from eating unhealthy foods. Emerging themes were identified regarding knowledge and behavior. Qualitative research gives a comprehensive picture of issues that are difficult to comprehend. Even though graduate students have an idea of nutrition, there are gaps. The development of wrong attitudes in students can be prevented by a more informative school curriculum.

### **Introduction**

Beyond being an action, whose only purpose is to satisfy one of the most primitive needs of human beings, feeding should be understood as a social practice that is socially constructed and reconstructed over time. Socialization and personality formation begin in the family home as the initial environment. The family home is the primary social space where individuals begin to develop their practices, customs, gender identity, roles, and social habits, especially their eating habits. These habits are defined as a set of social customs related to feeding that have an impact on the way people prepare, consume, or even select food. Preparing and eating food is cultural actions that give individuals a sense of identity.

Complex biological, social, and cultural factors that are highly interrelated have a significant impact on health status. Men and women are affected differently by these factors. The greater burden from unsafe sex, which includes both infections and complications of unwanted

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pregnancy, is borne by women due to their reproductive biology and lower socioeconomic status (Preker, 1999). Biological and social factors influence a woman's health throughout her lifetime and have cumulative effects. When examining the causes and consequences of women's poor health, it is crucial to take into account the entire life cycle. Girls who are not fed enough during childhood can experience stunted growth, which can increase the risk of complications during and after childbirth. The likelihood of mental depression in later years is increased by sexual abuse during childhood, and repeated reproductive tract infections can result in infertility.

### **The significance of the study**

The study ' Nutritional status and dietary pattern of girl students in graduate colleges' was undertaken in the Davanagere district as a chosen field of research. Food can be properly described as a source of life, because we all draw our energy from what we eat. The process of metabolism, which involves the meticulous synthesis of food that initiates the entire body and keeps it slogging for hours, is influenced by what we consume throughout the day. In fact the overall performance of the body, no matter what the chosen field of activity is, is a fair consequence of what we eat, how much we eat, the frequency with which we eat and how sustainable the diet is in terms of nutritive value and its long term impact on the health of the subjects.

### **Contributions to the study**

The study has contributed a lot in terms of generating an awakening regarding the crucial role food plays in the life of female graduate students in colleges and how the gathered data. Analysis can serve as a valuable tool in bringing to light the specific nutritional needs that these adolescents are missing and the ways in which these shortfalls can be compensated. Although the research has properly demonstrated the impact of poor nutrition on the daily lives of young college graduates. He was also instrumental in clarifying students' particular dietary needs. The nutrients they often neglect in the food they eat and how they can compensate for these shortcomings. Certain important details regarding the thought process have been overlooked by the data generated during the study process. The process of choosing a particular food is undertaken by these female graduate students. The priorities in terms of taste and nutrition and does it really matter to them that they are consuming something, which might actually land them in a big pool of physical ailments which can severely hamper their mental growth as well.

### **The objectives of the study**

The research approach has been simplified by undertaking certain planned objectives, which seem to be the driving factors behind it. The objectives were chosen with a fair degree of premeditation, as far as they are concerned. The focus of the study is on female graduate

students in graduate colleges in Davanagere district of Karnataka. To gain insight into eating behavior and practices by studying diet perceptions, attitude towards food, eating habits, family meals, and food preferences. To study a relationship between dietary pattern and family background of girl students in graduate colleges and To assess the level of knowledge girls have about nutrition and nutritional needs for maintaining good health. Overall, the health status was improving. Hence, the present study was conducted to assess the nutritional status and academic performance of randomly selected college girls belonging to middle and lower socioeconomic status in Davanagere district of Karnataka.

### **Research Methodology**

Research undertaken is a comprehensive study that involves groups of students from various sectors of society. Although these students may have the same socioeconomic status and educational backgrounds, their interests, tastes, and responses to given circumstances are starkly different. Davanagere, a city in Karnataka, has been chosen to be the research domain, as it is a rich hub of educational institutes which host students from across the country arriving the city for quality education. The economic backgrounds of the majority of girls coming to the city are almost identical, with little or no difference in their socio-cultural values. These girls have proved to be an unmatched source of data as they have contributed rich insights into their eating habits, the change they normally crave for, afflictions they have to suffer and how it all affects their overall quality of life. Since the whole research is in fact a study of young girl students in graduate colleges of Davanagere, the sample to be chosen to act as subjects have to be girls only. The study has majorly focused on the dietary habits of these girls staying away from their parents and as such beyond a semblance of control, the characteristics they exhibit while choosing what to eat and the turmoil they go through because of lack of proper nutrition. . The sample selected for the research is a random group of 300 girls between the ages of 18 and 25 living in Davanagere hostels. Out of 5,000 girls who have visited Davanagere, this random sample was chosen. Data collection through long form surveys. . Tools like calculating the means, variance, standard deviation seem to be the best ways available for reaching a conclusion; further the means of the scores were subjected to the t-test to test the significance of the differences. Though these tools in themselves are not truly indicative of what we anticipated, but to a large extent their results could be relied upon and these results validate the hypothesis to a great degree. To fully understand their relevance and effectiveness before applying them to the given scores, it would be best if all of these statistical tools were briefly described.

### **The relationship between food intake and anthropometric parameters**

The study proved to be a bit complex as the figures collected had to be thoroughly searched with the right perspectives keeping in mind the individuality of each girl and scope of error that

could creep in as a result of oversight. A 24-hour recall method was used to record the subjects' food consumption for seven consecutive days. Their regular meals, including breakfast, lunch, and supper, and their preference for skipping meals and how they compensate for it. What determines their eating habits, whether it's the taste, nutrition, or simply for the purpose of satisfying hunger? What really is of utmost importance is an analytical observation of their height, weight, mid upper arm circumference (MUAC) and triceps skin fold thickness (TSFT) as these parameters are crucial in the calculation of their body mass index (BMI). These parameters, gave us a virtual insight into the kind of meals these girls are being offered, the dietary pattern they have evolved over a stretch of time and their preferences and compulsions that lead them to live a life that might not be as fulfilling as it so seems.

### **Result and Discussion**

The age groups of more female students in graduate colleges living in hostels in Davanagere are effectively summarized by the data posted above. Between 18 and 25 years old are in the age range for the girls. It is this age group that is experiencing the greatest amount of physiological change and therefore deserves our full attention.

Assessing the girl students living in the hostels of Davanagere for their dietary intake was a tedious job as it entailed a judicious use of research tools in the right measure which in itself was a challenge to cope up with. The hurdles were multifold as finding the subjects, interviewing them, getting them to reveal the patterns they employ while consuming their meals, their preferences, their special whims that characterize their eating habits and the factors that affect their food choices. These adolescent girls were found to be moody to a large extent as they normally preferred eating more outside as compared to a routine meal usually offered at their mess as they are more experimenting in their behavior as compared to adults. The adventurous attitude of adolescents when eating meals can result in digestive disorders and chronic ailments that may linger for a lifetime. These young people find eating at a single location to be uninteresting and are always seeking a change whenever possible. Whatever their taste, they go for it regardless of how beneficial or how much it turns out to be harmful. The primary focus of the research was on collecting data through questionnaires and interview schedules that were determined beforehand. The data was processed using research tools that appeared to be the most effective in terms of achieving the desired results. Though utmost caution was exercised while collecting data, an almost miniscule margin of error was always anticipated as all the respondents were adolescents and expecting them to be true and perfect in their responses was a bit too much.

The collection of data was not just difficult in terms of respondents' attitude while answering questions; it even posed a great difficulty while searching for the right set of adolescents who readily answered the questions with an ease and aplomb. Of course, we had to meet a lot of

these teenagers who were the most insensitive and showed no inclination to answer our questions. The data were tested using tools to reveal certain facts that were quite indicative of what was expected. The data was carefully processed and the special conclusions being sought were taken into account, resulting in these facts. Staying away from parents doesn't just come with a sense of independence but brings also the ease of eating what they wish to without any parental interference or guidance that seems unwanted. When parents meddle, they do it with a purpose and ensure that a child gets to eat the best in terms of nutrition that could help in the overall physical as well as mental growth. But for the girl staying alone, this sense of compulsion seems missing and she exercises her free will in choosing what suits her taste the best even though it might be a bit compromising in terms of nutrition but qualifies on the issue of taste. They seem driven more by friends and their immediate whims that dictate what they eat rather than the concept of nutrition that should actually be the factor that plays a decisive role. The study has sprung up a lot and now the data needs to be put through an analysis to get to a result that could be genuinely called the findings of the study.

As it was clearly justified in the analysis section that the assumption with which we started proved to be true. Food preferences and eating behaviours of girls have been found to be very different. The t-test suggests that the intervention did not significantly alter girls' preferences.

The data demonstrated that nutrition knowledge can help maintain and improve the health of girls living in hostels without any doubt. Though the process of intervention wasn't able to bring about a significant change in the eating habits of girls as the small t-test has suggested, still it was successful in mildly changing how they ate. Different hours of the day, the girls consume meals that contain macro and micronutrients in different proportions. The analysis revealed that a balanced diet at the right house is crucial for achieving the right energy levels. A t-test revealed that the intervention did not significantly alter the nutrient intake of girls, although a slight change was observed.

## **Conclusion**

Though getting to decide the exact impact of lack of proper nutrition on the overall quality of life they live or they aspire to live was not that easy as the sample chosen had varied choices in terms of food and belonged to backgrounds as diverse as India is known to be, still efforts were made to decide upon the best possible methods to get to know what life is all about for the girls in hostels, what they prefer eating, what they are actually offered at hostels and paying guest facilities and do what they eat really matters in shaping their lives as they wish it to be. There were numerous complex variables in the study that were difficult to comprehend. Despite many compromises, we were able to reach an acceptable conclusion with the help of a detailed analysis of this data. Of course, the girls were found to be floundering badly when it

came to making smart healthy choices while eating, but being adolescents, such behaviour towards eating could be discounted and attributed to immaturity. Such a detailed study gave us a useful insight into the psyche such adolescents possess towards eating and also enriched us knowledgeably enough to come up with certain suggestions that could be inculcated as a habit by the youngsters and could ensure a healthy lifestyle for days to come

The study was very effective in finding some facts that otherwise would never have caught our eye. To the best of our knowledge, the hypothesis we started with was validated. The assumption that most of the hostel living adolescent girls get to eat substandard food, they lack knowledge of nutritive meals and as a result they have to suffer ailments of many kinds proved to be true as the data mirrored very well.

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