

Food and Nutrition among Students in Universities in Uganda

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Abstract: *The study was on Food and nutrition among students in universities in Uganda. It was conducted in urban public and private universities in Uganda. Students, of 21st century, were the unit of analysis. Informants were studied for some good period of time. Occurrences - culture, characteristics and dietary behaviors were noted. The study was of Qualitative in nature and used a Positivism philosophy backed with Health Belief Model (HBM) by Rosen stock, supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was proposed in 1975 by Martin Fishbein. Students perform a dietary behavior having reasoned about the positive and negative consequences. Terms like Susceptibility, Perceived benefits, Perceived barriers, Self-efficacy and Clue to barriers were borrowed from HBM. Preventive, Illness and Sick-role behaviors that were pathways to the dietary behavior were borrowed from HBM. These pathways were used in studying related literature, designing research instruments, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting it. The study found out that: The study found out that: Students have created their own dietary ways and health cultures. When in groups, in their privacy, students eat anything they come across not minding the negative health consequences. Students are perceiving poor nutrition as part of normal life. Most of them are not aware that food and nutrition is medication itself. The ideology of “What if heaven is not there! – So, let us enjoy it here!” has created a new world of tasting available edible “thing”. Students’ health is poor. To them, they are maintaining “portable” size. The study recommended that: The government and the concerned bodies should invest in food and nutrition awareness among students in universities. The concerned people like parents, guardians, institutions and churches should come in to offer balanced diet. Charitable organizations, inside and outside the country, should give a hand in providing different kinds of food that can bring out good health to university students. Where possible, there should be a committee to always check food joints in and around universities to see if they provide foods that brings out balanced diet to students.*

Keyword: Food, nutrition, dietary, students, university, 21st Century

Definition of food and nutrition: Food and nutrition are the way that we get fuel, providing energy for our bodies. We need to replace nutrients in our bodies with a new supply every day (Health line).

Background: All over around the world, as far as dietetics are concerned, individuals and institutions are trying to find the food they need to live healthy, balanced lives. There are many factors that contribute to the demise of this becoming a reality for them. Food deserts, low income, food insecurity and the mental health issues contribute to this demise (Anderson, 2020). There are ways to overcome these issues. When students do not have the food they need to fuel their minds and bodies, including academic performance and course completion in universities are affected. Kowalcze, (2016) found out that: 44% of students assessed themselves to follow abnormal diets; 58% declared they ate whole grains frequently whereas 58% and 65% respectively consumed fruit and vegetables daily. Dietary irregularities were identified, particularly in how often fish was eaten, where 46% either never ate fish or did so only occasionally. Subjects preferred lean cuts of poultry meat (65%), and the most common cooking practice was frying (52%). In Ugandan Universities, it is a different case. Such dietaries are so expensive for students. Therefore, the researcher came in to find out the case of food and nutrition among students in universities in Uganda.

Methodology: The study was conducted in urban public and private universities. Students were the unit of analysis. Informants were studied for some good period of time. Occurrences - culture, characteristics and dietary behaviors were noted. The study was of Qualitative in nature and used a Positivism philosophy backed with Health Belief Model (HBM) by Rosen stock, supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was proposed in 1975 by Martin Fishbein. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) suggests that a person's behavior is determined by their intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of their attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Students perform a dietary behavior having reasoned about the positive and negative consequences. Terms like Susceptibility, Perceived benefits, Perceived barriers, Self-efficacy and Clue to barriers were borrowed from HBM. Preventive, Illness and Sick-role behaviors that were pathways to the substance use behavior were borrowed from HBM. These pathways were used in studying related literature, designing research instruments, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting it.

Findings: The study found out that: Students have created their own dietary ways and health cultures. When in groups, in their privacy, students eat anything they come across not minding the negative health consequences. Students are perceiving poor nutrition as part of normal life. Most of them are not aware that food and nutrition is medication itself. The ideology of “What if heaven is not there! – So, let us enjoy it here!” has created a new world of tasting available edible “thing”. Students’ health is poor. To them, they are maintaining “portable” size.

Recommendations: The government and the concerned bodies should invest in food and nutrition awareness among students in universities. The concerned people like parents, guardians, institutions and churches should come in to offer balanced diet. Charitable organizations, inside and outside the country, should give a hand in providing different kinds of food that can bring out good health to university students. Where possible, there should be a committee to always check food joints in and around universities to see if they provide foods that brings out balanced diet to students.

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