

Eating Habits of Fourth-Year Teacher Education Students: Their Effects on Physical and Emotional Health

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Abstract— Eating habits are the intentional and repeated ways in which a person eats, including the types of food eaten, the quantities consumed, and the time of intake in response to cultural and societal factors. Students' emotional health influences their eating patterns in such a manner that they feel compelled to eat when they are lonely, frustrated, or bored. The goal of researching and analyzing eating habits is to determine how food intake patterns affect health, well-being, and illness prevention. This understanding aids in the development of measures to encourage healthier eating choices, improve nutritional status, and lower the prevalence of diet-related diseases. This study examined the state and familiarity of eating habits among Teacher Education students at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology- San Isidro Campus during the academic year 2023-2024. The responders were chosen at random from a group of fourth-year college students studying education. The study followed a descriptive correlational research approach. The following measures are used: frequency, weighted mean, percentage, Pearson correlation, and standard deviation. The results revealed that the students' eating habits consist of three meals each day and a range of foods. The results also suggest that the students' eating habits were more informal, including junk foods, fruits, and vegetables, than a normal meal. The study found no significant variations in respondents' learning results based on their eating habits.

Keywords— eating habits, physical health, emotional health

I. INTRODUCTION

The dietary habits of university student teachers have a significant impact on their general well-being and academic success. As educators, these students' food choices have an influence not just on their health but also on their ability to effectively connect with students and negotiate the demands of their jobs (Hanawi et al., 2020).

Mahmood (2021) defines eating habits as "the conscious and repetitive way a person eats, including what types of food are eaten, their quantities, and timing of consumption in response to cultural and social influences." However, "eating behaviors" have been defined as a collection of actions ranging from simple food chewing to food purchasing, food preparation, and food policy decision-making. Food patterns, also known as dietary patterns, refer to the quantity, quality, and variety of foods and beverages consumed, as well as the frequency with which they are consumed. They apply to the complete diet. A well-balanced diet contains a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fiber, and polyunsaturated fatty acids (Varela et al., 2023).

According to Lopez et al. (2020), eating habits are a person's regular routines for caring for their food; good or bad eating habits are created depending on a range of factors, including the person's environment, economic availability, and comprehension of the nutritional value of food. Poor eating habits have been directly related to an increased risk of acquiring a variety of chronic diseases, including several oral ailments. A considerable quantity of bacterial plaque, improper eating habits, nutritional levels in the diet, and poor oral hygiene practices can all contribute to the development of caries (Martinon et al., 2021).

Adequate eating skills, or the capacity to plan, choose, prepare, and consume food, have been proposed as a preventative measure for obesity and nutrition-related chronic illnesses (Philippou and Andreou, 2022). While this is still a relatively new concept, multiple studies have demonstrated that having more culinary abilities is associated with improved diet quality, which may aid certain food-insecure individuals. More study, however, is required to objectively demonstrate the relationships between food skills and diet quality. The constant and rapid increase in the consumption of highly processed foods in recent decades, along with higher rates of obesity and chronic disease, indicates that this is an

important topic that requires further investigation (Popkin and Ng, 2022). According to Scott et al. (2018), the World Health Organization says that health risk behaviors (e.g., poor eating habits) that begin in adolescence are the leading source of adult illness burden. For example, the majority of Americans do not consume the recommended daily intake of fruits, vegetables, and seeds. In contrast, consumption of trans fats, processed meats, and added sugars surpasses the daily recommended limit. According to Stock et al. (2018), when young adults gain independence throughout adolescence and into early adulthood, they have persistent obstacles in selecting a nutritious diet. This study aims to determine the eating habits of teacher education students and their effects on physical and emotional health in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus.

II. METHODOLOGY

Study Design and Sample Size

A descriptive-correlational design was utilized to analyze the eating habits and their effects among the respondents. Respondents were selected via random sampling. A total of 140 education students agreed to take part in the study.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The researchers used three-part questionnaires. The first part consists of items that gather the demographic

profile of respondents such as sex, program, and weekly allowance. The second part determines their eating habits, and the last part identifies the effects of their eating habits based on the study made by Tabassum, et. al., (2022). The study was carried out at Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology San Isidro Campus in the province of Nueva Ecija. It began in January 2024 and ends in June 2024.

Data and Statistical Analysis.

All completed questionnaires were double-checked and verified for completeness and consistency. The data was then entered in Microsoft Excel and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The responses to the eating habits questions and their effect were coded with four (4) for strongly agree, three (3) for agree, two (2) for disagree and one (1) for strongly disagree. For the socio-demographic profile, frequency and percentage were computed. Pearson Correlation was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between their profile, eating habits, and effects of their eating habits.

Ethical Consideration

Permission was sought from the Director of the Campus. Informed consent was given first before the respondent answer the questionnaire. Sufficient time was given to ask questions, and the anonymity of the subjects, and confidentiality of information were maintained.

III. RESULT

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents.

Socio-Demographic Profile	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	29	21
Female	111	79
Program		
Secondary Education	66	47
Industrial Education	29	21
Elementary Education	17	12
Physical Education	28	20
Weekly Allowance		
Less than P500	36	26
P500 – P1,000	44	31
More than P,1000	60	43

In the present study, a total of 140 respondents participates in the study consisting of 111 (79%) females and 29 (21%) males. In terms of the program where the respondents belong, the majority, or 66 (47%) were secondary education, 29 or 21% were industrial education, 28 or 20%

were physical education and 17 or 12% were elementary education. Last, for their weekly allowance, most, or 60 (43%) of them have more than P1,000, 44 or 31% have P500 to P1,000, and, 36, or 26% have less than P500 weekly allowance [Table 1].

Table 2. Status of Eating Habits of the Respondents in terms of the Number of Meals They Consumed.

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. I have a variety of food every day.	2.96 ± 0.68	Agree
2. I have three times meals regularly.	2.08 ± 0.94	Disagree
3. I avoid carbohydrates in the food I eat (i.e. Rice, Bread, Corn, etc.)	2.14 ± 0.80	Disagree
4. I like to eat fried foods.	2.97 ± 0.71	Agree
5. I take balanced diet.	2.47 ± 0.80	Disagree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 – 3.24 = agree; 1.75 – 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 – 1.74 = strongly disagree.

In terms of the status of eating habits of the respondents based on the number of meals they consume, the result showed that item statement number 2 states, “I have three times meals regularly”, received the lowest weighted mean equivalent to 2.8 with verbal interpretation as “Agree”. On the other hand, item statement number 4 states, “I like to eat fried foods.” received the highest weighted mean of 2.97 and was

verbally interpreted as Agree. Meanwhile, item statement number 1 states, “I have a variety of food every day”, item statement number 3 states “I avoid carbohydrates in the food I eat” and item statement number 5 states, “I take a balanced diet” obtained a weighted mean of 2.96, 2.14 and 2.47 with verbal interpretation “Agree” and “Disagree”, respectively.

Table 3. Eating Habits of the Respondents in terms of the Amounts of Fruits and Vegetables they Consumed.

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. I always eat fruits and vegetables regularly.	2.73 ± 0.66	Agree
2. I eat only vegetables I want.	2.76 ± 0.86	Agree
3. Someone encourage you to eat fruits and vegetables (i.e. family, friends, etc.)	3.11 ± 0.72	Strongly Agree
4. I am loyal to my preferred fruits and vegetable store.	2.85 ± 0.68	Agree
5. I always like to shop in many fruit and vegetable stores.	2.69 ± 0.68	Agree
6. I prefer to avoid fruits and vegetables without additives such as artificial color etc.	2.67 ± 0.67	Agree
7. I find the taste of fruits and vegetables important while purchasing	3.02 ± 0.69	Strongly Agree
8. Shopping for fruits and vegetables does not interest me at all.	2.07 ± 0.79	Disagree
9. I do not see any reason to shop in selective fruit and vegetable stores.	2.64 ± 0.75	Agree
10. I prefer fresh fruits and vegetables to canned or frozen fruits and vegetables.	3.08 ± 0.82	Strongly Agree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 – 3.24 = agree; 1.75 – 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 – 1.74 = strongly disagree.

Table 3 shows the eating habits of the respondents in terms of the fruits and vegetables they consume. Based on the result, item statement number which states that “Shopping for fruits and vegetables does not interest me at all” obtained the lowest mean equivalent to 2.07 with the verbal interpretation “Disagree”. On the other hand, item statement number 3 which states that “Someone encourages you to eat fruits and vegetables (i.e. family, friends, etc.)” obtained the highest mean equivalent to 3.11 with verbal interpretation “Strongly agree”. Meanwhile, item statements number 7 and 10 which states “I find the taste of fruits and vegetables important while purchasing” and “I prefer fresh fruits and

vegetables to canned or frozen fruits and vegetables” obtained a weighted mean of 3.02 and 3.08 with verbal interpretation “Strongly agree”, respectively. Next, item statements number 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 9 state, “I always eat fruits and vegetables regularly”, “I eat only vegetables I want”, “I am loyal to my preferred fruits and vegetable store”, “I always like to shop in many fruit and vegetable stores”, “I prefer to avoid fruits and vegetables without additives such as artificial color etc.” and “I do not see any reason to shop in selective fruit and vegetable stores” obtained a weighted mean equivalent to 2.73, 2.76, 2.85, 2.69, 2.67 and 2.64 with verbal interpretations “Agree”, respectively.

Table 4. Status of Eating Habits of the Respondents in terms of the Number of Snacks they Consumed.

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Do you find yourself eating more junk food than a regular meal?	2.51 ± 0.76	Agree
2. Do you constantly eat midnight snacks?	2.49 ± 0.79	Disagree
3. Do you make eating fruits part of your snacks?	2.77 ± 0.67	Agree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 - 3.24 = agree; 1.75 - 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 - 1.74 = strongly disagree.

In terms of the status of eating habits of the respondents based on the number of snacks they consume, the result showed that item statement number 2 states “Do you constantly eat midnight snacks” received the lowest weighted mean equal to 2.8 with verbal interpretation as “Disagree”. On the other hand, item statements number

1 and 3 state, “Do you find yourself eating more junk food than a regular meal?” and “Do you make eating fruits part of your snacks?” obtained a weighted mean of 2.51 and 2.77 with verbal interpretation “Agree”, respectively.

Table 5. Effects of Eating Habits in terms of Emotional Health as perceived by the Respondents

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. Do you have the desire to eat when you are irritated?	2.88 ± 0.79	Agree
2. Do you have the desire to eat when you have nothing to do?	3.00 ± 0.73	Agree
3. Do you have a desire to eat when you are depressed or discouraged?	2.96 ± 0.78	Agree
4. Do you have the desire to eat when you are feeling lonely?	2.92 ± 0.69	Agree
5. Do you have the desire to eat when somebody lets you down?	2.95 ± 0.7	Agree
6. Do you have the desire to eat when you are bored or restless??	2.63 ± 0.70	Agree
7. Do you have a desire to eat when you are disappointed?	2.99 ± 0.77	Agree
8. Do you have a desire to eat when you are frightened?	2.53 ± 0.84	Agree
9. Do you have the desire to eat when you are anxious, worried, or tense?	2.56 ± 0.81	Agree
10. Do you have a desire to eat when things are going against you or when things have gone wrong?	2.50 ± 0.82	Agree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 - 3.24 = agree; 1.75 - 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 - 1.74 = strongly disagree.

Table 5 shows the effects of eating habits in terms of emotional health as perceived by the respondents. The result showed that item statement number 2 which states “Do you have the desire to eat when you have nothing to do?” obtain the highest weighted mean equivalent to 3.00 with verbal interpretation “Agree”. On the other hand, item statement number 10 which states “Do you have a desire to eat when things are going against you or when things have gone wrong?” obtain the lowest weighted mean equal to 2.50 with verbal interpretation “Agree”. Meanwhile, item statements number 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 which states “Do you have the desire to eat

when you are irritated?”, “Do you have a desire to eat when you are depressed or discouraged?”, “Do you have the desire to eat when you are feeling lonely?”, “Do you have the desire to eat when somebody lets you down?”, “Do you have the desire to eat when you are bored or restless?”, “Do you have a desire to eat when you are disappointed?”, “Do you have a desire to eat when you are frightened?” and “Do you have the desire to eat when you are anxious, worried, or tense?” garnered a weighted mean equal to 2.88, 2.96, 2.92, 2.95, 2.63, 2.99, 2.53 and 2.56 with verbal interpretation “Agree”, respectively.

Table 6. Effects of Eating Habits in terms of Physical Health as perceived by the Respondents

Item Statements	Weighted Mean/S.D.	Verbal Interpretation
1. I go for a walk after having dinner.	2.35 ± 0.74	Disagree
2. I am strict on my meal timing.	2.30 ± 0.71	Disagree

3. Do you deliberately eat foods that are slimming?	2.25 ± 0.68	Disagree
4. During your physical education classes, how often were you very active (playing hard, running, jumping, throwing.)	2.76 ± 0.73	Agree
5. How often have you suffered from an upset stomach (indigestion)?	2.55 ± 0.64	Agree
6. How often did you have to watch that you ate carefully to avoid stomach upsets?	2.52 ± 0.69	Agree
7. How often did you feel nauseated ("sick to your stomach")?	2.45 ± 0.71	Disagree
8. I am more informed than others about healthy eating.	2.65 ± 0.63	Agree
9. I feel in control when I eat healthily.	2.79 ± 0.70	Agree
10. I only eat what my diet allows.	2.33 ± 0.75	Disagree

Legend: S.D. = standard deviation; 3.25 - 4.00 = strongly agree; 2.50 – 3.24 = agree; 1.75 – 2.49 = disagree; 1.00 – 1.74 = strongly disagree.

Table 6 shows the effects of eating habits in terms of physical health as perceived by the respondents. The result showed that item statement number 9 state, “I feel in control when I eat healthily” obtained the highest weighted mean equivalent to 2.79 with the verbal interpretation “Agree”.

On the other hand, item statement number 3 states, “Do you deliberately eat foods that are slimming” obtained the lowest weighted mean equal to 2.25 with the verbal interpretation “Disagree”. Meanwhile, item statements number 1, 2, 7, and 10 states “I go for a walk after having dinner”, “I am strict on my meal timing”, “How often

did you feel nauseated?” and “I only eat what my diet allows” obtain weighted mean equivalent to 2.35, 2.40, 2.45 and 2.33 with verbal interpretation “Disagree”, respectively. In addition, item statements number 4, 5, 6, and 8 states, “During your physical education classes, how often were you very active (playing hard, running, jumping, throwing.)”, “How often have you suffered from an upset stomach (indigestion)?”, “How often did you have to watch that you ate carefully to avoid stomach upsets?” and “I am more informed than others about healthy eating” obtained weighted mean equivalent to 2.76, 2.55, 2.52, and 2.65 with verbal interpretation “Agree”, respectively.

Table 7. Relationship between the Respondents' Profile and their Eating Habits

Profile of the Respondents	Eating Habits	Pearson Correlation	p-value
Sex	Number of meals	-0.1174	0.1671
	Number of snacks	-0.0990	0.2447
	Fruits and vegetables	0.0271	0.7504
Program	Number of meals	0.1747	0.0389*
	Number of snacks	0.0806	0.3429
	Fruits and vegetables	0.0242	0.7762
Weekly Allowance	Number of meals	-0.1278	0.1323
	Number of snacks	0.0431	0.6135
	Fruits and vegetables	0.0488	0.5667

Legend: *significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 7 shows the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their eating habits. The result revealed that the relationship existed between the program where the respondents belong to their eating habits in terms of the number of meals they consume was significant since the p-value obtained was below 0.05.

However, the relationship existed between the program where the respondents belong to their eating habits in

terms of the number of snacks and fruits and vegetables, they consume was not significant since the p-value obtained was greater than 0.05.

Meanwhile, the relationship between their eating habits in terms of the number of meals, snacks, fruit, and vegetables they consume and the other variables such as their sex and weekly allowance was not significant [Table 7].

Table 8. Relationship between the Respondents' Profile and their Perceived Effects on Eating Habits

Profile of the Respondents	Eating Habits	Pearson Correlation	p-value
Sex	Emotional Health	-0.0333	0.6960
	Physical Health	-0.1625	0.0551
Program	Emotional Health	-0.0945	0.2667
	Physical Health	0.1890	0.0253*
Weekly Allowance	Emotional Health	0.0013	0.9880
	Physical Health	-0.1646	0.0519

Legend: *significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 8 shows the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their perceived effects on eating habits. The result revealed that the relationship existed between the program where the respondents belong to their perceived effects on eating habits in terms of their physical health was significant since the p-value obtained was below 0.05 while not significant in terms of their emotional health since the p-value obtained was greater than 0.05. Meanwhile, the relationship between their perceived effects on eating habits in terms of their emotional and physical health and the other variables such as their sex and weekly allowance was not significant [Table 8].

IV. DISCUSSION

The study aimed to assess the eating habits and its effects among the respondents. In terms of the status of eating habits of the respondents based on the number of meals they consume, the result showed that all the item statements received a weighted mean with verbal interpretation as "Agree". Similar to the study of Tabassum (2021), the study revealed that most of the participants agreed to have a variety of food every day and consume three times of meals regularly.

In terms of the status of eating habits of the respondents based on the number of snacks they consume, the result showed that some item statements received a weighted mean with verbal interpretation as "Disagree" while some item statements received a weighted mean with verbal interpretation as "Agree". The variation in the result obtained was supported by the study of Stanojevic (2022). In his studies, respondents showed a division in consuming snacks during the day. About half of their respondents ate snacks in mid-morning and mid-afternoon, whereas only a few ate snacks late at night.

In terms of the eating habits of the respondents regarding the fruits and vegetables they consume, the result revealed that some item statements obtained a weighted mean with the verbal interpretation "Disagree" while some received a weighted mean with the verbal

interpretation of "Agree". The variation in the result garnered was supported by the study of Wallace et al., (2015). They stated that intake of fruits and vegetables is recommended for adults to consume at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day excluding starchy vegetables. The responses made by the respondents are the usual responses of someone who wants to stay healthy. The outcome reflects the Filipinos' positive attitude toward the COVID-19 vaccine, as they feel vaccinations will help them resume their normal life (Santiago and Santos, 2022). Thus, one's eating habits can help someone to gain a positive mindset which will make them healthier.

Meanwhile, for the effects of eating habits based on emotional health as perceived by the respondents, the result showed that all item statements obtain a weighted mean with verbal interpretation "Agree". The result was supported by the study of Firth (2020). In their study, poor nutrition may be a causal factor in the experience of low mood, and improving diet may also help to protect the mental health of the population. In recent years, the relationships between nutrition and mental health have gained considerable interest. For example, alterations in food choices or preferences in response to our temporary psychological state—such as "comfort foods" in times of low mood, or changes in appetite from stress—are common human experiences.

In addition, for the effects of eating habits based on physical health as perceived by the respondents, the result revealed, that some item statements obtained a weighted mean with verbal interpretation "Disagree" while some received a weighted mean with verbal interpretation of "Agree". The variation in the result obtained was similar to the study of Tabassum, et. al. (2021). In the study, their respondents stated that they limit their fat consumption to less than 10% (for example, butter, cheese, and fatty meats) and have experimented with fad diets. Just like in the study made by Santiago et al. (2023), the most prevalent reason their respondents wanted to get vaccinated by the COVID-19

vaccine was to protect themselves and others. Thus, to stay healthy, they ensure they are eating the right diet they need.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their eating habits, the result revealed that the relationship existed between the program where the respondents their eating habits in terms of the number of meals they consume was significant, while the relationship existed between the program where the respondents belong to their eating habits in terms to the number of snacks and fruits and vegetables, they consume were not significant. Also, the relationship between their eating habits, in terms of the number of meals, snacks, fruit, and vegetables they consume, and the other variables like sex and weekly allowance was insignificant. According to Concepcion (2015), female students were found to engage in more healthful eating habits compared with male students. Although more healthful eating habits can be translated to preferable nutrient intakes, female students still consumed less fiber and fewer servings of fruits and vegetables than males. Female students were less active than male students and more stressed, which had more impact on their dietary choices. Also, females had higher health awareness than males (Santiago and Santos, 2021). Sogari (2018), states that substantial life-changing transitions happen when young adults finish high school to start college or a working life. Some studies have shown that college students tend to gain more weight than those who do not attend university. Last, the result suggests that spending money on college students, as an economic indicator, is relevant to the intake of processed foods, Su-Jin (2015).

In terms of the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their perceived effects on eating habits, the result revealed that the relationship existed between the program where the respondents belong to their perceived effects on eating habits in terms of their physical health was significant, while insignificant in terms of their emotional health. Meanwhile, the relationship between their perceived effects on eating habits in terms of their emotional and physical health and the other variables which include their sex and weekly allowance was not significant. The result was supported by numerous studies. First, Feraco (2024), states that men prefer red and processed meat, with significantly higher consumption rates than women. Women, on the other hand, show a greater inclination towards vegetables, whole grains, and high-cocoa-content dark chocolate, aligning with healthier food

choices. The study also found differences in eating behaviors, including the frequency of meals, snacking habits, and hunger patterns: women tend to eat more frequently and report higher levels of hunger in the morning, while men tend to skip snacks. However, Su-Jin (2015) concludes the reason for consuming processed foods is because they are easy to prepare. The factor considered the most when buying processed foods was price. However, these results showed no significant difference according to the level of spending money. As spending money increased preference for retort, convenience, canned, and bottled foods significantly increased. This study found that a higher level of monthly allowance in college students, was associated with a higher rate of skipping meals, eating out, and an unbalanced diet, and the preference and intake frequency of processed foods were also high. These results suggest that spending money on college students, as an economic indicator, is relevant to the intake of processed. (McArthur et al., 2018).

V. CONCLUSION

The study aimed to assess the eating habits and the perceived effects of eating habits among the respondents. The available information indicates that a significant proportion of the students are female and the majority belong to secondary education and have a weekly allowance range of more than 1,000. The result found that the respondents have three times of meals regularly and have a variety of food every day. They want to eat more junk foods than regular meals and, \ the students always eat vegetables and fruits regularly. The respondents also agreed with the effects of eating habits on their emotional health. Their emotional health affects their eating habits because they want to eat if they feel lonely, disappointed, or bored. In terms of their physical health, the respondents agreed with the effects of eating habits and they have prior knowledge about the effects of eating habits on their physical health. The findings revealed that the profile of the respondents doesn't affect their eating habits. Last, in terms of the profile of the respondents and the effects of eating habits, there is no significant relationship.

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