

Nutritional behavior and motives of college students for the food choice



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Introduction

The choice of food is not determined only by its sensory characteristics. The choice of food is influenced by several factors which can be personal (e.g. knowledge, health status, specific habits and body weight), interpersonal and social determinants (e.g. religion, cultural norms) and ethical determinants (e.g. food produced/packaged according to ethical and environmental principles).

Material and methods

This research was conducted using anonymous online questionnaires. This research is a part of a broader study titled "Attitudes and behavior of students in relation to food and nutrition" conducted among students of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Belgrade, on the subject of "Food Biochemistry". The study sample included 200 students between the age of 20 and 23 (the average age was 21.18 ± 1.3) and all were of Serbian nationality. The sample was composed of 136 females (68.0%) and 64 males (32.0%).

Results

The majority of surveyed students are physically active and live with their families, which can have a positive impact on their diet and a lower level of consumption of "fast food". Respondents have bad habits in terms of consuming cigarettes, alcohol and energy drinks. Most students consume all regular meals. Based on the Body Mass Index (BMI) of respondents, they belong to the following categories: underweight, normal weight, pre-weight, obese; however, 55.0% believed to have "ideal weight". The reasons why they choose particular food are: it is not genetically modified, it tastes good, it is nutritious, it makes them happy, it was produced/packaged in an environmentally friendly way, while the price of food is not important to them. When buying food, respondents (59%) generally do not check the declaration on the product.

The aim

The aim of this study was to investigate the motives behind food choices of Serbian college students.

Since most students leave their family homes during their studies, there is the question of what are the motives for their diet?

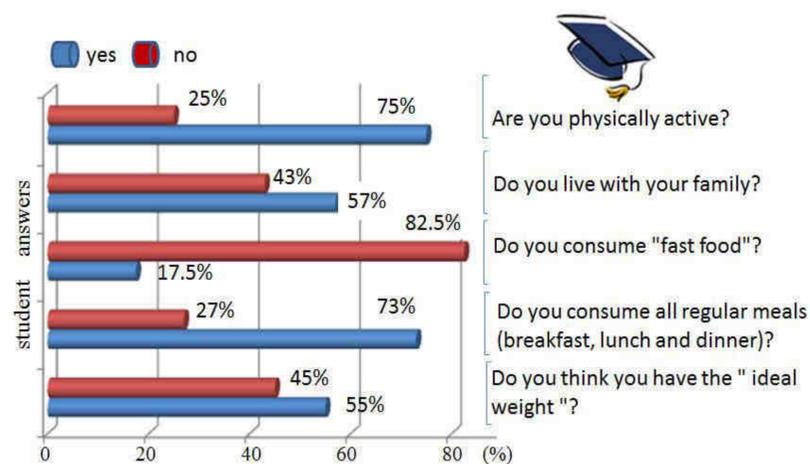


Figure 1. Habits and thinking of students related to nutrition.

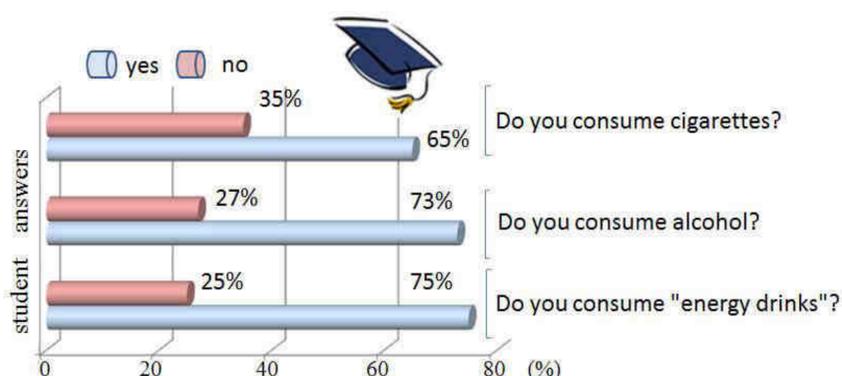


Figure 2. Do the surveyed students have bad habits?

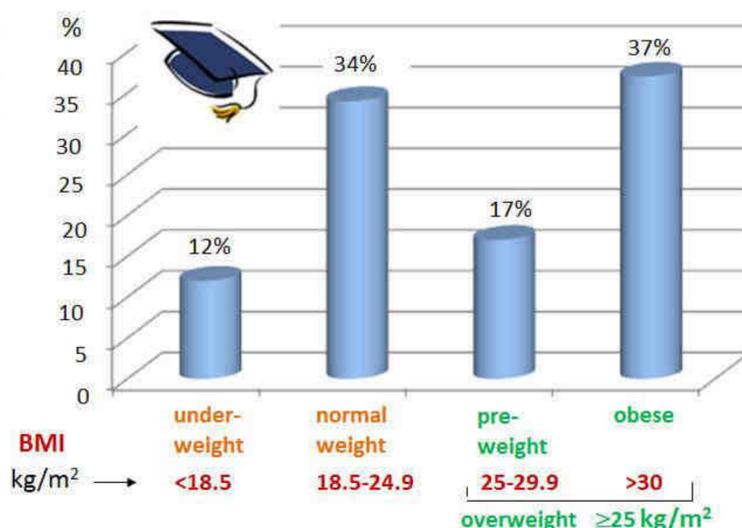


Figure 3. Distribution of the Body Mass Index (BMI) among participants.

The reasons why students choose particular food are:

- 3.92 → it is not genetically modified
- 3.77 → it tastes good
- 3.65 → it is nutritious
- 3.51 → it makes them happy
- 3.51 → it was produced/packaged in an environmentally friendly way
- 3.50 → it was produced/packaged in an ethical way

Importance assessment 1-1.99-not at all important; 2-2.99-little important; 3-3.99- moderately important and 4-very important

Conclusions

These results indicate the need to educate students about the harmfulness of cigarettes, alcoholic and energy drinks, the importance of BMI and declaration on the product.



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