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IMPROPER NUTRITION DESTRUCTS HEALTH OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF NADIA, WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Improper nutrition is harmful for the health of the students, especially the ones in college and universities. These students mostly live alone, and lack homely cooked food, which is less risky in terms of health. Consistent fast foods are consumed by these students like fried foods cooked in stale oils. Consistency in consuming these foods degrades health of the students, which is not at all desired for their academic performance. This is because they feel low at energy, due to which they do not feel like performing physical activities. Colleges and universities need to take initiatives of offering healthy snacks and foods at campus canteens. Prices of these snacks need to be in budgets so that students from rural areas like Nadia, West Bengal can also afford healthier alternatives in terms of nutrition.

Key words: improper, nutrition, destruction, undergraduate students, Nadia, West Bengal

1. INTRODUCTION

Dieticians recommend individuals to consume healthy diets for being physically fit and healthy. However, this is not always maintained as lady of the house is now working, and she is left with no energy to cook, after coming from a hard-working day. As a result of this, readymade foods are ordered, which is not always healthy. But mothers are always concerned about offering healthy cooked foods to their children. So, no matter how tired they are, they cook food for husband and children. For the ones who live in hostels, mess, miss this home cooked food, and consume outside food, which is unhealthy (Saha & Biswas, 2024). For these people, improper nutrition becomes consistent, causing poor health outcomes. The list also includes students living alone, and are studying in colleges and universities. Most of the times, they, along with their friends, and roommates consume fast foods, which yields difficulties in health. For this, they miss college lectures, degrading their performance in academics. In this context, affordability becomes one of the main issues. Students in rural areas like Nadia, West Bengal lack affordability towards nutritious foods like salads, plant proteins, among others. As the area is besides lakes and ponds, therefore, fish and rice are the staple food, which consumes high animal protein. However, the amount of physical labor, for these students is more as compared to the ones living in urban areas (Basu, 2025). Therefore, the diet is apt according to their bodily needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Almoraie et al., (2024) argued that proper nutrition is foundational for ensuring physical and mental well-being of young adults in the level of higher education. Undergraduate students experience challenges like academic pressure, irregular schedules, limited budgets, and changing lifestyles, with which they are not habituated. Therefore, they are incapable of dealing with these challenges. This incapability affects food choices and nutritional behaviors, as during these experiences, students do not feel like eating. Scholarly reviews on improper nutrition affecting health of undergraduate students in Nadia, West Bengal, is sketched from observations, patterns, student experiences, and broader nutritional insights.

Nadia is a district of West Bengal, comprising of diversified student population attending classes in colleges and universities. Shah et al., (2025) stated that most of these undergraduate students come from rural and semi-urban backgrounds, in search of a transition to an academic environment, where there are high demands for the courses which they have selected for career enhancement. The shift causes changes in eating habits, which influence accessibility, affordability, time constraints, and peer culture. Taking a cue from the accessibility, problem of not being able to access the nutritious foods can be stated. This problem arises when most of the students are denied access to the nutritious foods. Here, affordability is also an issue, as, in spite of advertisements making the people aware of healthy diets, most of the people in the rural areas cannot afford them. As most of the students in these areas

have working parents, therefore, they are left with no time to collect the food items. Limone and Toto, (2022) were of the view that when they are free from work, and sit to eat, peers influence them on eating, which, ultimately, denies basic nutrition to them.

Problems stated in the previous paragraph causes nutritional inadequacies among the undergraduate students. Due to these inadequacies, physical health, emotional well-being, and academic performance of the students degrade. Commonly behavior towards diets is striking which is reflected in skipping meals or replacing them with high-calorie, low-nutrient foods. Most of the students depend on fast foods, packaged snacks, and sugary beverages, which make them obese. Alam et al., (2022) stated that it is these students, who show neglect towards dietary diversities. When asked, they reply that they are facing lack of fruits, vegetables, and protein sources. A striking fact is limited knowledge among students about balanced nutrition. This limitation compels them to eat whatever is available to them, which is not at all a healthy choice for ensuring health and wellbeing.

Methodological approaches of interviews are the initiatives to gather insights from students on their lifestyle choices, food habits, and daily routines. Observations reveal compelling campus canteens and local food stalls to analyze, modify and change their typical diets. Delving deeper, Landry et al., (2024) stated that most of the students are irregular in terms of their eating schedules. Major drivers behind this are long gaps between the early morning classes, late dinners after evening classes and preference for affordable snacks (samosas, instant noodles) as compared to balanced meals like chapati, pulses, and mixed vegetables among others. Due to this, they spark with energies sometimes, and sometimes their energies crash. Other problems are seen in low intake of eggs, pulses, dairy, which causes protein deficiencies. Inadequate consumption of fruits and vegetables gives rise to micronutrient problems. Excessive refined carbohydrates and sugars is not at all good for students. This is because of issues like gastrointestinal symptoms of bloating, acidity, and irregular bowel habits. These issues adversely affect concentration and academic works of students, arising from chronic fatigue and low energy levels. Weight fluctuations are also observed among the students in the form of weight loss for some and unhealthy weight gain among others. It is also striking to note that some students are frequently suffering from minor illnesses. This frequent suffering indicates weak immunity. Cleveland, (2022) also detected about the psychological effects, which are seen among the students. Evidences of these effects are stress, mood swings, and anxiety on confronting something new. These effects come from dietary patterns. For example, some students show tantrums when they are made to eat vegetables. But when they are served pastries, pizzas, these tantrums reduce.

Influencing factors are also to be discussed for nutrition among the students in undergraduate level. One of the factors is budget constraints. Limited finance compels students from poorer backgrounds to go for cheaper, unhealthy options like kachoris cooked in stale oils. During exams, students prioritize

study and skip meals. According to Liu et al., (2024), the students doing this, have insufficient knowledge and awareness about nutritional requirements of the body. Moreover, in canteens of colleges and universities, fast foods are more easily available as compared to healthy options. In this context, cycle of inadequate nutrition and declining health, among undergraduates in Nadia, is related. On a broader note, the linkage comes from lack of concentration, focus and energy, due to which students perform poorly in academics. Here, risks generate when dietary habits are not healthy. Imbalance between nutrition and stress aggravates the issue in the form of mental health concerns. Most of the students know nutritional basics but struggle to implement them in their daily dietary habits. This is because of environmental and economic constraints, especially for the students in rural areas. Therefore, individual choices exist independently, which are supported by the systems.

For addressing the nutritional issues, Levy et al., (2024) opined that nutrition workshops are to be conducted in colleges and universities of Nadia, west Bengal. Teachers, trainers and instructors are to ensure that students get easy-to-access educational materials which enhance their awareness on balanced diets and meal planning. Campuses of colleges and universities should include affordable, wholesome meal options for students. These options could be fresh fruits, salads, protein-rich snacks. Selling these at student-friendly prices could ensure proper nutrition for the students. Colleges and universities are also to ensure proper interventions to manage stress and the time schedule of the students. Programs are to be such, which help students manage schedules and maintain regularity in meals.

Peer support and health clubs can be constructed by colleges and universities. These health clubs could strive for reducing challenges. Example could be “Eat Healthy Week, where students are to be challenged for deviating from the goals. Saha and Biswas, (2024) stated that peers and mentors will have an important role in encouraging people to select good and healthier choices for nutrition. Partnership with local vendors will motivate colleges, universities and nearby shops to refill healthier alternatives in their products. Leveraging discounts on nutritious food for students will also be an effective move.

3. METHODOLOGY

Deductive approach is beneficial in this context for deducing the extent to which improper nutrition degrades health of the undergraduate students in Nadia, West Bengal. This deduction is done from previous literature, where scholarly reviews on nutrition, impact on health of the students are critiqued. Essential data is collected through surveys on such students, who are conscious of their health. Analysis through tables, charts and graphs is effective for alarming the situation, that is, improper nutrition, devaluing health and wellbeing of undergraduate students in Nadia, West Bengal.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the reviewed aspects, improper nutrition, among undergraduate students in Nadia, is a cause of concern, as it brings with it, multifaceted issues. These issues and troubles undermine immediate health and academic success. Discussions enhance awareness that targeted interventions in the domain of education, institution, and communities promote healthier lifestyles among students. By addressing the root causes, symptoms of poor nutrition, colleges and universities can create supportive environments, for local stakeholders. These environments could help students to include sustainable nutrition habits, which strive to protect their health and wellbeing in terms of enriching academic potentials.

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