

Eating Habits Unveiled: Exploring Influential Factors in the Food Choices of Young Adults

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Abstract:

This research explores the nuanced factors influencing food choices, encompassing sensory experiences, nutritional considerations, socio-cultural dynamics, and emotional motivations to the youngsters. The global adoption of health nudges underscores the intricate interplay of physiological, cultural, and environmental dimensions in shaping dietary behaviors. Insights from studies on sensory experiences and nutrient choices, particularly in fruit flies, highlight the interconnected nature of sensory cues, microbiome interactions, and ensuing behaviors. This understanding lays the groundwork for strategies leveraging sensory aspects and microbiome dynamics to promote healthier eating patterns. Applying the Health Belief Model (HBM) to college students yields crucial insights into perceived factors shaping dietary behaviors, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions in dynamic environments. Recognizing diverse influences on college students is pivotal for interventions addressing specific barriers and utilizing effective cues to foster healthy eating habits.

Keywords: Young adult's food, Eating habits, Food choices, Influential factors, Dietary behaviors, Health Belief Model.

Introduction:

Food choice is a multifaceted aspect of human behavior that extends beyond basic nutritional needs. It encompasses what, how, when, where, and with whom individuals eat, reflecting symbolic, economic, and social dimensions. Nutrient intake significantly influences public health, presenting a challenge for nutritional professionals advocating balanced or healthy diets. Factors influencing food choice range from physiological hunger to socio-cultural aspects, including gender, age, and education. Emotional motivations and information sources also shape dietary preferences. The European Food Information Council emphasizes the impact of food-induced emotions, suggesting that mood can influence food choices. The intricate interplay between mood, emotions, and eating behaviors highlights the potential for individuals to regulate their emotional states through intentional changes in food choices. Moreover, there's evidence of a bidirectional link between a healthy diet and mental well-being, with individuals adhering to nutritious diets demonstrating lower rates of depression.

Food choices for creating effective health policies:

Understanding why people choose the food they eat is crucial for creating effective health policies. Governments worldwide are using health nudges to encourage healthier eating habits, but to make these interventions successful, we must comprehend the factors influencing food choices. These factors range from the types of food available (like tasty but less healthy options and alcohol) to cultural and social influences, stress levels, and even genetic and family factors. Physiological signals from our body, such as hunger and satisfaction cues, also play a role in what we choose to eat. Bridging the gaps in our knowledge requires experimental models, translational models connecting lab studies to real-life situations, and formal models combining knowledge from various disciplines. By building this evidence base, we can make informed policy recommendations that truly impact people's food choices and, ultimately, their health.

Food and Palatability:

When we eat, it's not just about how tasty the food is—our senses play a big role in controlling how much we eat. Beyond just enjoying the flavor (palatability), we experience food through sight, smell, taste, and texture. These sensory cues work before, during, and after we eat. In this review, we're focusing on more than just how good something tastes. We're looking at recent findings about how our senses can help us control how much we eat. Visual and odor cues help us identify food in our surroundings and influence our choices and memory of what we eat. Tastes and textures also impact how big our meals are and how satisfied we feel after eating. This means that paying attention to these sensory features could be a key to managing our energy intake better.

Scientists are exploring how enhancing the sensory aspects of food—making it more appealing to our senses—could be combined with reducing calories to help us eat just the right amount. The challenge ahead is to see how these ideas work for long-term weight management. So, in the future, our understanding of how our senses affect our eating habits could help us make healthier food choices without sacrificing enjoyment.

Choosing the right nutrients:

Choosing the right nutrients is crucial for the health and well-being of living organisms, including flies like *Drosophila melanogaster*. However, we don't fully understand what factors influence these choices. In the research with fruit flies, we found that essential amino acids (eAAs) and the teamwork of two types of friendly bacteria, *Acetobacter pomorum* and *Lactobacilli*, play a key role in deciding what to eat. On a diet we carefully controlled, we discovered that just removing one eAA from the food made the flies really want food rich in that particular amino acid. Interestingly, the friendly bacteria help the flies cope when a specific eAA is missing. The presence of these bacteria rescues the flies from having a stronger craving for

yeast (a protein source) and also prevents a drop in their ability to reproduce when an eAA is lacking.

Strangely, it seems the bacteria are not directly changing the amino acid levels, suggesting they use a different method to influence behavior and reproduction. This study highlights how specific nutrients and friendly bacteria can affect what organisms choose to eat and their ability to have offspring, showing that the interaction between nutrients and the microbiome can shape behavior and life-related traits.

Young adults express various opinions about the factors that influence their food intake. Here are some common sentiments:

Taste Preferences:

Many young adults emphasize the importance of taste in their food choices. They often lean towards foods that they find enjoyable and flavorful.

Convenience:

Busy schedules and a fast-paced lifestyle lead young adults to prioritize convenience in their food choices. Quick and easily accessible options are often preferred.

Social Influences:

Peer pressure and social norms play a significant role. Young adults may be influenced by the food choices of their friends, colleagues, or social media connections.

Health Awareness:

Some express concerns about their health and well-being. There's a growing awareness of the impact of food on overall health, leading some young adults to make conscious choices for nutritious options.

Budget Constraints:

Economic factors are crucial. Many young adults consider their budget when making food choices, opting for affordable options that fit within their financial constraints.

Understanding these perspectives is crucial for developing targeted interventions and educational programs to promote healthier eating habits among young adults.

Health Belief Model (HBM):

The Health Belief Model (HBM) is applied to explore factors influencing healthy eating habits among college students. This study investigates how perceived susceptibility to health issues, perceived severity of these issues, perceived benefits of adopting healthy eating habits, perceived barriers to such habits, and cues to action contribute to shaping dietary behaviors. College students often face a dynamic



environment with diverse influences, making their eating habits susceptible to multiple factors. Perceptions of susceptibility and severity of health issues, coupled with an awareness of the benefits of healthy eating, play a significant role. Cues to action, including educational campaigns or peer influence, can further motivate students to adopt and maintain healthy eating habits. By applying the HBM, this research aims to provide insights into effective strategies for promoting healthy dietary behaviors among college students.

Discussion:

Exploring factors influencing food choices reveals a complex interplay of sensory, nutritional, socio-cultural, and emotional influences. Global health nudges underscore the importance of understanding these multifaceted dynamics. Bridging knowledge gaps through interdisciplinary models is crucial for effective interventions. Insights from studies on sensory experiences, like those in fruit flies, highlight the interconnectedness of sensory cues, microbiome interactions, and behavior. This understanding forms the basis for developing strategies that leverage sensory aspects and microbiome dynamics for healthier eating. Applying the Health Belief Model (HBM) to college students provides valuable insights into perceived factors shaping dietary behaviors.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, unraveling the intricate tapestry of factors influencing food choices reveals a dynamic interplay between sensory experiences, emotional motivations, socio-cultural influences, and physiological signals. As observed in the application of models like the Health Belief Model (HBM), understanding psychological dimensions further emphasizes the need for tailored interventions, particularly among college students. Bridging knowledge gaps and recognizing the bidirectional link between diet and mental well-being are crucial for informed policymaking. By embracing a holistic perspective, we pave the way for effective strategies that promote healthier eating habits, contributing to improved public health outcomes. It is through interdisciplinary collaboration, innovative approaches, and a nuanced understanding of diverse influences that we can foster a culture of well-being and empower individuals to make informed and health-conscious food choices.

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