A Comparative Study on Socio-Economic, Dietary Habits & Health Status of College Students

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Abstract: Dietary pattern and Health are considered as a general profile of food and nutrient consumption which is characterized using eating habits. Economy and society also have major part in one's health. Taking these things into consideration, this study was framed to evaluate, asses and compare the socio-economic, dietary and health status of Food Science and Other Science Major College students. The method used was survey which consisted of separate sets of questionnaires related to socio- economic, dietary and health status of the students. Results shows that majority of students belong to low-income nuclear families in rural areas. Many preferred non -vegetarian diet with more than three meals per day. Skipping of breakfast and frequency of illness is less among food science students when compared with other major students which may be due to awareness on health & nutrition among them.

Index Terms – **Dietary Habits, College Students, Food Science, Socio-Economic, Morbidity, Health.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Health plays a major role in the well-being of the human society. A good health works as key model for the maintenance of the body. In this covid situations, things are becoming worsens than they were and it is seen mostly among the peers and college youths. Food science has been an eye opener to society in providing and guiding the society and creating awareness about the benefits of good eating habits. Proper eating habits and healthier lifestyle makes the work and life easier especially during adolescence and early ages. College students who are in the adolescence stage showed improper eating habits along with ill status nowadays.

According to Omage, et al (2018) [1], dietary pattern and health is considered as a general profile of food and nutrient consumption which is characterized using eating habits. Taking these things into consideration, the hypothesis of this study was framed to evaluate, asses and compare the socio-economic, dietary habits and health status of Food Science and Other Science Major College students.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study and assess the Socio-Economic characteristics of the College students.
2. To compare and analyse the Dietary & Eating habits of the College students.
3. To assess, compare and result out the Morbidity pattern of the College students.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area and Study Design

For this study, Arul Anandar College, Madurai was chosen as purposive sampling method. The reason for selecting the samples from this college was to understand the dietary and health habits of the rural students who have to travel a long way. This study applied a cross-sectional, comparative and descriptive study design.

3.2 Sample Size

For this study, the targeted size of the sample was 130 students out of which 60 students were from the Food Science Department and 70 students were from the Other Science Majors irrespective of gender, current stay and age.

3.3 Data Collection Method

Separate sets of questionnaires were formulated to collect information on the socio- economic, dietary and health status of the students as similar to the study done by Sogari, et al (2018) [2].

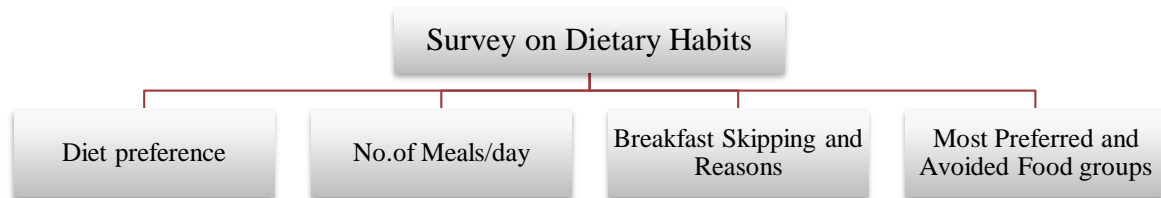**Fig.1: Assessment of Socio-Economic Status**

Fig.2: Survey on Dietary Habits

3.3.1 Conduct of Socio-Economic Survey

This comprises a set of questions relating to the gender, age, family background, economic status of the family, educational qualifications of the parents as well as the number of members of the family as shown in Figure.1. As this information have large impact on the eating and health status of an individuals.

3.3.2 Dietary Habits Assessment

This questionnaire mainly focuses on the eating habits of the students and preferences given to the food groups by the targeted group of students.

3.3.3 Assessment of Morbidity pattern

Questions based on the health status, frequency of illness and description of the diseases if any were added which were noted for each and every student.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Selected Students

Table .1 – Comparative Analysis of Sociodemographic characteristics of Students

Variables	Food Science		Other Science major		Total	
	N=60	%	N=70	%	N=130	%
Age Group (Years)						
17 – 18	14	23.3	19	27.2	33	25.3
19 -20	36	60	42	59.9	78	60.1
21 - 22	10	16.7	9	12.9	19	14.6
Gender						
Male	52	86.7	26	37.1	78	60
Female	8	13.3	44	62.9	52	40
Type of Family						
Joint	16	26.7	9	12.9	25	19
Nuclear	44	73.3	61	87.1	105	81
Number of members in the family						
<4	10	16.7	8	11.4	18	14
>5	50	83.3	62	88.6	112	86
Current Stay						
Hostel	28	46.6	23	32.9	51	39.2
Day Scholar	32	53.3	47	67.1	79	60.8
Type of House						
Own	38	63.3	44	62.9	82	63.1
Rented	22	36.7	26	37.1	48	34.9
Residential Area						

Rural	30	50	52	74.4	82	63.1
Sub-urban	24	40	9	12.8	33	25.3
Urban/city	6	10	9	12.8	15	11.6
Mode of travel to college						
Vehicle	44	73.3	52	74.3	96	73.8
Walking	16	26.7	18	25.7	34	26.2
Number of Students going for Part time Job						
Yes	24	40	19	27.2	43	33
No	36	60	51	72.8	87	67
Educational background of the Parents						
School	46	76.7	54	77.2	100	76.9
High school	8	13.3	10	14.2	18	13.8
College	6	10	6	8.6	12	9.3

Table 1 depicts the sociodemographic data of the selected student population. This study includes 130 respondents out of which 60 from Food science major and the rest 70 students were from other science majors. Nearly 60.3% of students were 19-20 years as seen in the study done by Abdull Hakim, et al (2012) [3] and 25.3% of students were 17-18 years. Out of the total students chosen 60% were male and 40% were female and 81% belongs to nuclear families and only 19% from joint families in relevant to the study done by Pavitra, et al (2022) [4]. It is also noted that nearly 60.8% students were day scholars while the rest of them were (39.2%) hostellers. Majority of the students were from rural background (63.1%) as the students are from the remote rural areas 73.8% travel to college as any mode of vehicle and only few (26.3%) come by walking. Only 33% of the students go for part time job after college hours.

4.2 Economic Status of the Selected Students

Table.2 - Monthly Income of the Family (Student)

Income Group*	Income Category*	Total	
		Number	**Percent**
<25,000	LIG	102	78.8
25,000-50,000	MIG	28	21.2
>50,000	HIG	-	-
Total		**130**	**100**

*(HUDCO, 2010; LIG- Low Income Group, MIG- Middle Income Group HIG- High Income Group)

According to Income Classification by HUDCO (2010) [5], Out of 130 students, nearly 78.8 % belonged to low-income group (<25,000 Rs.) and only 21.2% were under the middle-income groups (25,000-50,000 Rs.). While none belonged to the high-income group from both food science and other science. Figure.3 clearly visualize that there is no significant difference in the economic status of both the Food science and Other Science Major students.
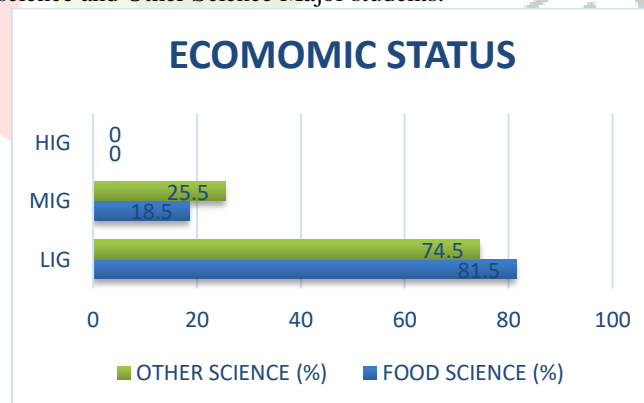

Fig.3: Comparison of Economic Status of Food Science & Other Science Students

4.3 Dietary Pattern of the Selected Students

Table.3 – Comparison of Dietary Pattern of Students

Variables	Food Science Students (n=60)	%	Other students (n=70)	%
Type of diet				
Non-Vegetarian	42	70	51	72.8
Eggetarian	4	6.6	3	4.2
Vegetarian	14	23.4	16	22.8
Number of Meals per day				
<3	28	46.6	31	44.2
3	4	6.8	2	3
>3	28	46.6	37	52.8
Breakfast skipping				
Yes	22	36.6	29	41.4
No	38	63.4	41	58.6
Reasons for Breakfast skipping				
Lack of hunger	6	10	15	21.4
Lack of time	50	83.3	47	67.2
Unavailability of food	4	6.7	8	11.4
Meal at which stomach filled				
Breakfast	8	13.3	8	11.4
Lunch	26	43.4	39	55.7
Evening meal	8	13.3	6	8.6
Dinner	18	30	17	24.3

Table 3 shows that 70% Food science students prefer non-vegetarian diet comparatively equal to the other science students which is around 72.8% and it gets tuned with the study done by Pavitra, et al (2022) [4]. While 23.4% food science students & 22.8% had vegetarian diet and rarely 6.6% food science & 4.2% other science students are eggetarian. It is seen that 52.8% other science students and 46.6% food science students had more than three meals a day.
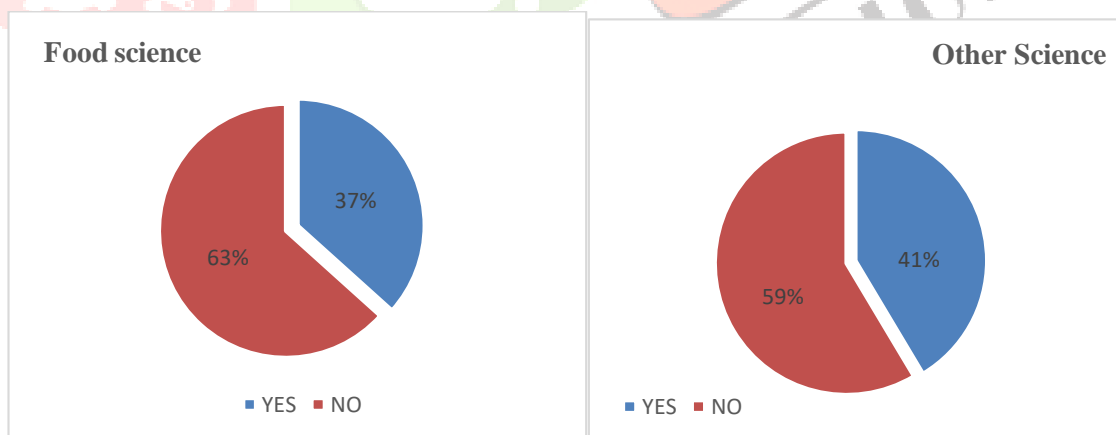

Fig.4 Skipping of Breakfast

As Figure.4 shows that 41% of other science students skip their breakfast on the daily basis while only 37% food science students do the same as in study done by Fala Bede, et al (2020) [6]. This difference is may be due to awareness on health & nutrition among Food science major students. It is noted that 83.3% food science students and 67.2% said lack of time as the reason for skiping the breakfast. It is seen that majority of the students Food science (43.4%), other science (55.7%) has full-filled meal at the afternoon i.e., Lunch.

4.4 Morbidity Pattern of the Selected Students
4.4.1 Type of Illness

Table 4 – Personal Medical History the Students

Details*	Food Science Students		Other Major Students	
	N=60	%	N=70	%
Fever	10	16.7	13	18.5
Headache	14	23.3	20	28.6
Respiratory Disorders	02	3.4	2	2.9
Indigestion	06	10	2	2.9
Others	28	46.6	33	47.1

Multiple responses

From the table 4 is it easily understandable that most of students i.e., 46.6% food science & 47.1% other science students showed up other types of illnesses which varies accordingly. While nearly 28.6 other science suffer from headache which is equally same as for food science i.e., 23.3%. Nearly 20% students from both groups suffer from fever and rarely 5% students from both groups suffer from respiratory disorders & digestion.

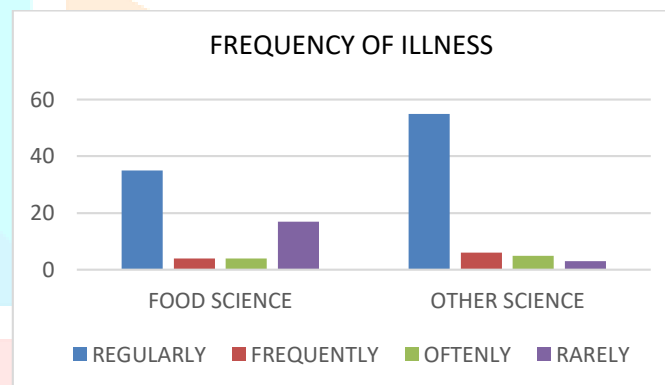**4.4.2 Frequency of Illness**

Fig.5 Comparison of Frequency of Illness of Students

From the Figure 5, it is clear that a greater number of other science students show symptoms of illness regularly and frequently when compared with food science students. Even though equal number of students from both the majors suffer from illness the frequency is more among the other major students may be due to consumption of nutritious foods.

V. CONCLUSION

In this study, 60% were male while the remaining 40% were female students. Majority (60%) been from rural areas, lived in a nuclear family (80%) is clear indication that the rural society is moving towards the modern culture. Most of the students fell under the low-income groups which showcases the economic status of the rural society. Many of them preferred non-vegetarian diet with more than three meals per day. Skipping of breakfast is less and so the frequency of illness is also less among food science students when compared with other major students may be due to awareness on health & nutrition is more among Food science students.

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