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A STUDY OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PRACTICES AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BASED ON GENDER DIFFERENCES

This study analyzes the conditions of maintaining a healthy lifestyle among university students, taking into account gender differences. Based on the results of studies conducted in various countries, the paper examines differences in students' health habits, nutrition, physical activity, stress management, and overall well-being. The research findings highlight the importance of implementing programs and policies that consider gender-specific characteristics to improve student health in higher education institutions. This scientific article also emphasizes the concept of "Kazakhstan's Sustainable Development Goals" as a key term, which serves as an indicator of progress toward sustainable development.

***Key words**: University students, quality of life, good health and well-being, gender equality, nutrition culture, youth health.*

Introduction

University students represent not only a key demographic within the higher education system, but also a critical stage in the formation of health-related habits and lifestyles. The behaviors and routines established during this period often become foundational factors influencing long-term health outcomes. Therefore, promoting a healthy lifestyle among students is a crucial component in improving the overall public health of society [1, p. 2-4].

A healthy lifestyle is a crucial factor in maintaining and strengthening a person's health, as well as improving their quality of life. This issue is especially relevant for university students, as this period is when essential life habits are formed and a person's outlook and behavior for the future are shaped. However, the current lifestyle of students — including physical activity, nutrition, and attitudes toward harmful habits — raises serious concerns.

Nowadays, various factors influence young people's commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Among them, gender differences play a significant role. Males and females tend to approach a healthy lifestyle differently; their levels of physical activity, dietary habits, and susceptibility to harmful behaviors can vary. Therefore, considering these differences in research helps improve the effectiveness of preventive and educational work with youth.

In this regard, studying the adherence to a healthy lifestyle among university students from a gender-based perspective is not only of theoretical interest but also of practical significance. Such research can contribute to the development and improvement of health promotion programs tailored to the specific needs of students, thereby enhancing their overall well-being.

Various studies have shown that there are gender-based differences in students' health habits. For instance, a study conducted in Almaty revealed that the main barriers to leading a healthy lifestyle among students include low motivation, lack of time, and laziness. In this study, 32 % of the 1,080 respondents cited lack of motivation and laziness as the primary reasons for not maintaining a healthy lifestyle [2].

In today's society, the health and lifestyle of young people — especially students in higher education institutions — have become pressing social and medical issues. Globalization, the rapid development of information technologies, and the increasing pace of life are all having a significant impact on the physical and mental health of youth. In such a context, maintaining a healthy lifestyle plays an essential role as one of the main ways to preserve and strengthen health.

Determining the level of adherence to a healthy lifestyle among university students and identifying the factors that influence it not only helps to improve the quality of life of future professionals, but also ensures their active participation in society and their ability to work productively. In this regard, taking gender differences into account is important for understanding the variations in lifestyle between male and female students, as well as the reasons and consequences behind these differences.

These findings emphasize the importance of implementing gender-sensitive programs and policies aimed at improving student health within higher education institutions. The lack of targeted state policy on health promotion, the decline in students' own health during their academic years, and the misunderstanding of healthy lifestyle principles are among the key societal contradictions that have been identified [3].

Thus, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive approach to student health promotion in universities. Such an approach should include integrating health education into the academic curriculum, providing psychological and social support services, organizing sports and cultural activities, and improving access to healthcare services. Gender-specific programs and strategies that address the distinct needs of male and female students should be developed accordingly [4, p. 73-74].

This study aims to identify and implement effective measures to improve adherence to a healthy lifestyle among university students. The results are expected to serve as a foundation for developing effective strategies to enhance student health within higher education settings.

In modern times, people's attitudes toward health have shifted, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle has become one of the key values. This issue is particularly relevant among young people. The student

years represent a critical period of personal development, self-awareness, and the formation of lifelong habits. Therefore, it is during this stage that the foundations of a healthy lifestyle should be firmly established.

However, negative trends such as a tendency toward harmful habits, poor nutrition, and low physical activity are still prevalent among young people. To prevent such issues, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of students' attitudes toward a healthy lifestyle.

This research examines the level and characteristics of healthy lifestyle adherence among students from a gender perspective. This is because the differences in lifestyle between male and female students are shaped by their physiological, psychological, and social characteristics. Taking these differences into account makes it possible to identify more effective approaches to working with youth.

The significance of this study lies in obtaining scientific data that can serve as a basis for strengthening students' health, improving their quality of life in accordance with gender-specific needs, and contributing to the development of a healthy society.

Methods

This study**,** using the systematic literature review method, analyzes research related to healthy lifestyle practices among university students, with a focus on gender differences. The findings are presented based on articles obtained from scientific databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and others.

Results and Discussion

Studies conducted in various countries demonstrate that there are significant gender-related differences in maintaining a healthy lifestyle among university students. The main findings from selected research are presented below:

1. Study in Sweden

At a university in southwestern Sweden, it was found that female students had healthier habits in terms of alcohol consumption and dietary behavior. However, they were more prone to stress. Despite having higher rates of overweight and obesity, male students showed less interest in nutrition counseling and participated less in health-promoting activities.

2. Study in Thailand

At a university in northeastern Thailand, female students demonstrated better eating habits and preventive behaviors related to heart disease compared to males. In contrast, male students showed higher levels of physical activity and more frequent use of seatbelts.

3. Study in Cambodia

Involving 1,359 students from two public universities, this study found that women outperformed men in dietary behavior and health-related practices. Females consumed more fruits, whereas males engaged more in physical activity. Additionally, women reported lower levels of smoking and alcohol consumption.

4. Study in Kuwait

At Kuwait University, it was found that males had a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) than females. Women consumed more vegetables and fruits, while men consumed more animal-based protein. Nevertheless, both genders exhibited poor nutritional habits, as reflected by low Healthy Eating Scores.

5. Another study in Cambodia

This study again confirmed that women reported lower levels of smoking and alcohol use compared to men. Females consumed more fruits, while males were more physically active. Women also demonstrated better outcomes in overall health-related behaviors.

6. International study

A large-scale study conducted across 26 countries revealed that men are more likely to engage in risky health behaviors than women. Men reported higher rates of smoking, alcohol use, and behaviors associated with a greater risk of injury. Conversely, women were less involved in physical activity [5].

These findings collectively show substantial gender-based differences in the adoption of healthy lifestyles among university students. These differences are particularly evident in areas such as nutrition, physical activity, health awareness, and psychological well-being [6, p. 49].

For example, the research shows that women tend to perform better in terms of dietary habits and preventive health measures for cardiovascular diseases. However, they are more susceptible to stress and related psychological issues. Although men are more physically active, they tend to have higher rates of overweight and obesity, and are less likely to seek nutritional advice or engage in health-promoting behaviors [7, p. 35-36].

The variation in healthy lifestyle behaviors by gender across different countries highlights the need for targeted programs and policies tailored to the specific needs of male and female students. Such efforts are crucial for improving the overall health outcomes of university populations.

Conclusion

The analysis of conducted studies and literature confirms that there are clear gender-based differences in adherence to a healthy lifestyle among university students. Female students are generally more inclined to adopt healthy eating habits, prevent cardiovascular diseases, and refrain from smoking and alcohol consumption. However, they are also more likely to experience psychological distress and higher levels of stress. Male students, on the other hand, tend to engage in more physical activity, yet demonstrate lower levels of weight control, healthy eating, and seeking medical advice.

These differences underscore the need for comprehensive preventive and corrective programs tailored to gender-specific characteristics, particularly within universities and healthcare institutions. In addition to educational programs promoting a healthy lifestyle at the university level, targeted measures should be taken to enhance psychological support systems for students, encourage physical activity, and improve nutritional awareness and culture.

In conclusion, addressing gender differences through scientifically grounded, evidence-based, and adaptive strategies is essential for fostering healthy lifestyle habits among university students — ultimately serving as a strong foundation for the future health of the nation.

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ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ СОБЛЮДЕНИЯ ЗДОРОВОГО ОБРАЗА ЖИЗНИ СТУДЕНТАМИ ВЫСШИХ УЧЕБНЫХ ЗАВЕДЕНИЙ С УЧЕТОМ ГЕНДЕРНЫХ ОСОБЕННОСТЕЙ

Данное исследование анализирует особенности соблюдения здорового образа жизни среди студентов высших учебных заведений с учетом гендерных различий. На основе результатов исследований, проведённых в различных странах, рассматриваются различия в привычках, связанных со здоровьем студентов, питании, физической активности, управлении стрессом и общем уровне благополучия. Результаты исследования подчеркивают важность внедрения программ и политик, учитывающих гендерные особенности, для улучшения здоровья студентов в университетской среде. В данной научной статье в качестве ключевого понятия выделены «Цели устойчивого развития Казахстана», которые служат индикаторами достижения устойчивого развития.

Ключевые слова: *студенты университетов, качество жизни, хорошее здоровье и благополучие, гендерное равенство, культура питания, здоровье молодежи.*