

# FOOD PRACTICES OF THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN PHILIPPINES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The food practices of the students of the University of Northern Philippines- Laboratory Schools, Vigan City, the School Year 2020-2021, used a descriptive correlation design of research in determining the food practices of the 202 High School students enrolled during the school year 2020-2021. In gathering the data purposeful sampling and an adopted questionnaire was used. The research ethics was properly observed and was approved by the research committee. After the data was collected, the researchers concluded that the greatest number of respondents were Grade 9 students, 14 years of age, female, has a daily allowance of Php100 and above, whose fathers and mothers are college graduates. Both parents are professionals who have an income of Php 31, 000 and above and the primary sources of information of the students regarding the food practices was on the internet; food practices of the students were “High” practiced; there is a significant relationship between gender and the regularity of eating of the respondents; there is a significant relationship between the student’s food preferences, quality of food, and the overall food practices of the respondents. The researchers then recommended that a further study using other variables that could promote men’s participation in simple healthy practices; parents, teachers, and the school canteen will continuously guide and assist the students regarding the proper choice of food to meet the nutritional needs of the students and achieve its highest score rated “Very High”; teachers should integrate in their classes the importance of taking the right and quality food, regularity of eating and health protocol and practices, to achieve a sound mind and body.*

**Keywords:** food practices, Junior High School, regularity of eating aspect, quality of food

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important things that will provide energy in the body is the kind of food that we eat. Food plays an essential part in human’s lives. The need for food is one of the most basic needs of people that nourishes the body with different nutrients and keeps the immune system healthy. Nowadays, our society is facing a pandemic, which is the reason why proper choice of food is very much needed to combat today’s crisis. The food that we eat is determined by our personal practices as well as the availability of food in our locality and our economic stability. Knowledge and understanding of what foods mean to us and how this influences our decisions and practices can help food service personnel as well as parents to plan and prepare meals that are more acceptable to their children as well as students.

Choosing food each day affects one’s health, and how we feel today, tomorrow, and in the future. Our ability to choose the right food that we eat can contribute to our ability to enjoy life to the fullest because a healthy meal is a healthy mind.

The 7th National Nutritional Survey conducted in 2008 by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) reported that for every 100 adolescents aged 11-19 years, 17 were underweight and 5 were overweight. This could mean that 22% of adolescents were unhealthy. The results further revealed that there is 1% significant increase in underweight prevalence between 2005-2008. Food is meant to nourish our body but it can also represent who we are as a person.” This may explain how a person who eats nutritious food will become healthy, on the other hand a person who does not eat nutritious food is likely unhealthy. Every human has likes and dislikes when it comes to food choices. Decisions about picking the right foods to eat are influenced by personal taste, experiences and habits. At an early age, young people are advised to take in nutritious foods appropriate for their body.

Their parents will guide them on choosing their food and are extra careful on the food they eat. However, as they grow older their food choices may change due to numerous factors that will influence their food selection. Parents during this stage cannot maintain the nutritious eating behavior they had practiced for their children [5].

Our day is filled with meals from the moment we wake up in the morning to the moment we hit the hay at night. As food consumption is directly related to our survival as well as our day-to-day lives, it is closely tied to our most basic instincts. Although there are some differences depending on individuals, societies, and cultures, food and how we eat have been the single most important thing in guaranteeing our survival as well as bringing people together. However, the transition from the industrial age to the information age, the frequency, and regularity of meals are changing rapidly in response to our new lifestyle. Instead of gathering around the table for a meal, we’re finding that more and more people are dining alone, making it more common to eat whenever it may be convenient. With this in mind, the most important thing we should consider about our eating habits. The widely accepted norm these days seems to be that we eat three times a day. We start with breakfast when we wake up in the morning, then we have lunch around noon, and lastly dinner after we finish work. However, is this really an ideal eating pattern to everyone [7].

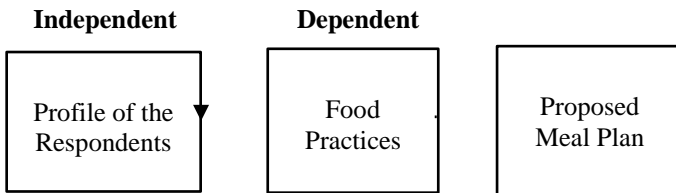
Food practices of a person vary depending on the influence they get around them. Some of these factors are age, gender, friends, family, cultural background, and many others. Children learn about eating by watching others, if they see their parents or siblings eat junk foods, they will most likely eat those also. It is important for the parents to not only refrain from consuming unhealthy foods but also to be mindful in setting up examples of healthy foods. Children are more likely to eat foods that are available and easily accessible, and they tend to eat greater quantities when larger portions are provided. Amongst the wide

variety of food, young people tend to choose those they prefer to eat. Therefore, setting limitations for the family is essential in influencing children’s food choices. It is important for children to be mindful of the foods they take in to ensure their health. Intellect of an individual is generally affected by the quality of nutrition a person partakes in. At school where most students spend time learning in preparation for the future, the food offered on school premises and their choices must be examined [4].

Food practice constructs have included pressure to eat, restriction, monitoring of the child’s food intake, or the use of rewards for food consumption. More recently, constructs have been expanded to include parent food modeling, family mealtime environments, food preparation practices, involvement of children in food planning and preparation, and control allowed to children over when, where, what, and how much they eat. While food practices are specific behaviors or actions, they are often used to categorize parent feeding styles [5]. A parent’s feeding style reflects the emotional climate in which these practices occur or the balance between demanding versus responsive feeding practices [14]. Feng Shui is a Chinese culture that also has a great contribution to Filipino food, language, beliefs, and culture. Filipinos, apply it in homes and businesses [15].

The health behaviors and protective factors of the international students in the University are admirable such that most of the surveyed respondents did not eat in fast-food chains and have never been engaged in alcohol use, drug use, or tobacco use recently. They have not engaged in any sexual activity. They have not incurred any violence, or unintentional injury and have not attempted suicide even though they have suicide ideation. They perform hygienic practices such as frequent hand washing and are physically active by walking from their home to school regularly. Their satisfying school attendance and solid support system speak of their good health status [13].

The result of this study will help food service personnel, teachers, parents, and school administrators, to gain insights that will be of help in planning what food to be served in the school canteen to ensure the nutritional needs of students and formulating intervention plans to minimize or even eradicate malnutrition in the school.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Paradigm of the Study**

Figure 1 above shows the profile of the respondents in which is comprised of the following as age, gender, place of residence, daily allowance, educational attainment of parents, parent’s occupation, and parent monthly income to determine their food practices in terms of food preference, regularity of eating aspects, and quality of food.

**2. METHODS**

**Research Design.** This study used a descriptive correlation design of research. This led in identifying the profile and food practices of the students of the Junior High School of the University of Northern Philippines, the School Year 2020-2021. It is a descriptive correlation design that served as a basis for developing a meal plan.

**Subjects of the Study.** The participants of the study were 352 Junior High School students of the University of Northern Philippines, Laboratory Schools during the school year 2020-2021. The researchers retrieved only 202 responses due to the restrictions of the pandemic, however, the result of the study was not compromised.

**Data Gathering Tools.** The researchers made use of questionnaires to gather the data needed. The questionnaire was adopted by the study of Quillopo [2] and was validated by the experts along the following: profile of the respondents, food preferences, regularity of eating aspect, and quality of food. The instrument was composed of two parts namely: Part I personal profile of the respondents, and Part II food practices of the respondents a five-point Likert Scale was used.

**Data Gathering Procedure.** In the conduct of this study, the researchers asked permission from the Principal of the University of Northern Philippines-Laboratory Schools. After this, a letter of consent and the questionnaire in a google form were sent via email/messenger to the advisers of the different grade levels in the Junior High School. Advisers sent the link to the google form to the respondents. Answers were retrieved online using the link given to the respondents. The data gathered were tallied and interpreted, after the results were determined. The researchers made the proposed meal plan for the Junior High School students composed of two (2) snacks (AM and PM) and a lunch based on the result of the study. The meal plan served as a basis for canteen personnel in preparing food for the students.

**Statistical Tools.** Frequency and percentages, mean and simple correlation analysis was used to determine the food practices and general health condition of students.

**Ethical Considerations.** Before the conduct of the study, the research underwent ethics review and was approved by the Ethics Review Committee.

Research ethics was properly observed in the conduct of the study. Permission to gather data was asked to the proper authorities. The researchers provided informed consent for the respondents assuring the anonymity of their names.

There was no conflict of interest in this study. The researchers’ interest is to determine the food practices and the general health condition of the Junior High School students of the University of Northern Philippines-Laboratory Schools.

Privacy and confidentiality were considered by the researchers. Any records and data acquired are for the

purpose of the study. The data gathered was properly stored until the study is completed.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Profile of the Respondents

The respondents who answered the survey questionnaires were Junior High Schools students of the University of Northern Philippines enrolled during the School Year 2020-2021, females, 14 years old and Grade 9 students, with a daily allowance of more than 100.00, both parents are college graduates with a monthly income of 31,000 and above and their food practices were greatly influenced thru the internet.

**Table 2: Food Practices of the Junior High School Students of the University of Northern Philippines, Laboratory Schools**

Indicators	Mean	DR
<b>On Food Preference</b>		
1. Eat native delicacies like bibingka, suman, tupig, dudul	3.54	VO
2. Noodles like bihon, miki, spaghetti, macaroni, palabok, pancit canton	4.18	VO
3. Junk foods like curls, soft drinks.	2.80	O
4. Baked products like cookies, puddings, cakes, breads, pies	2.92	O
5. Sweets like chocolates, candies, gums, etc.	3.04	O
Overall	3.30	F
<b>On Regularity of Eating</b>		
1. Eat meals regularly	4.37	A
2. Eat only when hungry	3.00	O
3. Eating in between meals	2.99	O
4. Eat meals at regular time	3.78	VO
5. Eat two meals only (lunch and supper) (breakfast and supper)	2.76	O
Overall	3.38	F
<b>On Quality of Food</b>		
1. Eat fresh fruits, green and yellow vegetables	3.92	VO
2. Drink plenty of fruit juices, milk and water	4.07	VO
3. Eat variety of food	3.75	VO
4. Choose in expensive but nutritious meal/ food	3.85	VO
5. Eat protein-rich food like fish, eggs, legumes and nuts	4.13	VO

The food practices of students were rated “High” practiced supported by a “Fair” rating on food preferences, a rating on the regularity of eating, and a “High” rating on the quality of food. This further implies that the students were knowledgeable enough to choose the right quality and nutritious food to keep their body healthy and strong. in the improvement of their computer and basic internet skills.

The quality of food is one of the most important things you can do for better nutrition and a successful diet is to drink enough water. [4] Moreover, the quality of food while eating a diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables has been linked to improved health, and for a good reason. Veggies and fruits are loaded with vitamins, minerals, fiber and antioxidants, which have been shown to protect against chronic diseases[2].

**Table 3: Correlation Coefficients between the Profile of the Respondents and their Food Practices**

Profile	Food Preference	Regularity of Eating	Quality of Food	Overall Food Practices
Grade Level	-0.074	0.017	0.047	0.001
Age	-0.075	-0.023	0.015	-0.033
Gender	0.011	-.209**	-0.086	-0.128
Daily Allowance	0.093	0.023	-0.035	0.030
Father's Educational Attainment	-0.076	-0.013	-0.021	-0.048
Mother's Educational Attainment	0.008	0.040	-0.096	-0.029
Father's Occupation	-0.040	-0.067	-0.082	-0.087
Mother's Occupation	0.009	0.018	0.006	0.014
Monthly Family Income	0.015	-0.027	-0.054	-0.033
Source of Information	0.040	-0.023	0.133	0.075

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Gender is significantly related to the regularity of eating at a 0.01 level of significance. All other variables are not significantly related to the food practices of the students such as grade level, age, daily allowance, educational attainment and occupation of parents, monthly income and sources of information. The result of the study implies that female students tend to eat their meals regularly and engage in health-promoting behaviors to have better lifestyle patterns than male, gay, and transgender.

Beardsworth *et. al.* [1] shared that women have been shown to be more thoughtful about food and health issues and they seem to have more moral and ecological misgivings about eating certain foods than men, who are more confident and demonstrate a rather uncritical and traditional adherence to eating profiles and patterns.

The one-month proposed meal plan for the Junior High School students of the University of Northern Philippines, Laboratory Schools will be utilized by the school canteen food service personnel in the preparation of healthy foods to be served to the students and employees.

This food practice using a meal plan is a very important guide especially to students because meals were planned according to the budget of the students. There can be maximum utilization of money if it is spent in the best possible way.

The proposed meal plan is a combination of fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, and other sources of carbohydrates which consist of two (2) snacks, one in the morning and one snack in the afternoon, and lunch in school. Breakfast and dinner are not included since the study is focused only on the

time the student spent in school. There are many benefits in making a meal plan for the students and that is to save their time especially when they are buying their snacks and lunch in the canteen, to buy a healthy but affordable meal and to improve their eating habits and by consuming nutrient-rich meals and healthy snacks throughout each day, it provides adequate energy to fuel cognitive function.

A healthy meal plan and diet for students improve energy, memory, and focus. Students who eat a balanced diet are less likely to get sick of nutrient-rich foods high in vegetable intake and low in processed foods, sugars, and red meat creating a healthier immune system. By creating accessible, diverse, and affordable student meal plans, universities can pave the way for healthier students for years to come [16].

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of the study, the researchers concluded the following: the greatest number of respondents were grade 9 students, 14 years old of age, majority of them are female, have a daily allowance of Php100 and above, whose fathers and mothers are College Graduate. Both parents are professionals who have an income of Php 31, 000 and above and the primary sources of information of the students regarding the food practices was on the internet; food practices of the students were “High” practiced; the overall health condition of the students “Fair” experienced; there is significant relationship between gender and the regularity of eating of the respondents; there is a significant relationship between the student’s food preferences, quality of food, and the overall food practices on the physical and social health condition of the respondents.

From the findings and conclusions made through this study, the researchers recommend that further study using other variables that could promote men’s participation in simple healthy practices should be conducted; although result was a “Very High” practiced, parents, teachers and the school canteen will continuously guide and assist the students regarding proper choosing of food to meet the nutritional needs of the students and achieve its highest score rated “Very High” and teachers should integrate in their classes the importance of taking the right and quality food, regularity of eating and health protocol and practices, to achieved a sound mind and body

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