

Food Selection and Its Impact on Health and Well-Being

Ms. Maria Virginia A. Fontanos

Instructor 1, Pangasinan State University – Lingayen Campus

Lingayen, Pangasinan

Maria Virginia A. Fontanos is an Instructor I at Pangasinan State University, where she passionately imparts



her expertise in Technology and Home Economics to future educators and professionals. Prior to her current role, she worked as a Trainer at Maxima Technical and Skills Training Institute Inc., where she gained extensive experience in competency-based training and skills development. She is a graduate of the Master of Arts in Education, majoring in Technology and Home Economics, and is currently pursuing her Doctor of Education, majoring in Industrial and Education Management, at Tarlac State University, demonstrating her commitment to continuous professional growth and academic excellence. Her professional credentials are a testament to her versatility and technical proficiency. She holds Trainers Methodology I and various National Certificates, including Food Processing NC II, Bread and Pastry Production NC II, Food and Beverage Services NC III, Housekeeping NC III, and Cookery NC II.

These certifications strengthen her role as an educator, enabling her to effectively bridge theory with practice in the technical-vocational field. Beyond teaching, she has made significant contributions to academic literature and instructional resources. She is the sole author of the book "Food Selection, Preparation, and Baking" and of the module "Food and Beverage Services," which serves as valuable material for learners in Home Economics and Hospitality Education. She has also published her research in the Asian Journal, with a notable study titled "Sweetened Breadfruit Cookies with Malunggay Sprinkles" that showcases her innovative approach to food product development and sustainable food practices. In addition, she is also an author of TVLE Magazine, further extending her influence in the field through professional publications. With her strong background in teaching, authorship, research, and industry-based competencies, she continues to inspire her students and colleagues while advancing technology, vocational education, and industrial education management.

Introduction

Food selection is the process of choosing food. Our food choices affect our health and well-being. There are many factors that influence the decisions we make when choosing food, including culture, personal taste or preferences, and the availability of options. Therefore, it is important to understand food selection, as it has a direct link to nutritional and health outcomes. Poor food selections can cause diet-related diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, or heart disease. On the other hand, making good food

selections can help people live healthier, have more energy, and enhance their quality of life.

In the last few years, more people have become aware of the effects that food selection has on health. Many people are making healthier food choices because they now have more information about the nutritional value of food and have changed their shopping behavior. This trend has led to increased demand for information on the nutritional content of food, enabling consumers to make informed dietary decisions. Due to the rise in online shopping, the variety of food available to consumers has increased, which has changed how we select our food; therefore, it is now more important than ever to carefully consider the nutritional value and quality of the food we eat.

By researching the nutritional components of food, we can gain a better understanding of how they contribute to our health. The information gained from this research can help us make choices that meet our personal preferences and benefit our health in the future.

Nutritional Components of Food

Food is composed of multiple components essential for health; therefore, if we better understand its composition, we can make better decisions. Macronutrients are the main nutrients providing energy and function for the body. Proteins build and maintain our bodies by forming muscle and repairing tissues. Carbohydrates are our main source of energy for our bodies. Fats are valued for their role as an energy source as well as producing hormones and sustaining the health of our cells.

Micronutrients, vitamins, and minerals, are just as important to our physical health as macronutrients, but are only needed in small amounts. Vitamins A, C, and D provide benefits such as improving immunity and helping to build strong bones. In addition, minerals (e.g., calcium and iron)

help maintain strong bones and transport oxygen in the blood. When there is a high intake of fiber from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, digestion improves, and blood sugar is regulated. Finally, water is sometimes overlooked as a nutrient, but it also serves many functions. It is a fluid that protects organs, regulates body temperature, transports nutrients, and aids digestion, to name a few.

More importantly, understanding how these nutrients interact can help us make better choices for our overall health. When we know what our bodies require, we can choose foods we enjoy, but also support improved function and health, and provide a base to further explore how our diet affects our physical health and how preventive measures against illness are achieved through diet.

How Your Diet Affects Your Physical Health

Poor dietary selections can lead to numerous diseases that will negatively affect your physical health, such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc. All three of these diseases represent some of the most common sources of morbidity and mortality in the world. The obesity epidemic is a consequence of a caloric imbalance (the calories consumed versus the calories burned) in the general population, and there are several causes of this imbalance. One of the main factors contributing to this caloric imbalance is the increased consumption of processed foods, which usually contain excessive amounts of added sugars (fructose) and unhealthy fat (saturated fat). Due to the caloric imbalance, overweight individuals have been shown to have increased levels of inflammation and metabolic dysfunction and thus have an elevated risk for developing chronic diseases.

Therefore, individuals who eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources will maintain a healthy body weight and reduce their risk of obesity-related diseases. In addition, maintaining a well-balanced diet provides an individual with the essential nutrients needed for optimal bodily function. Moreover, a well-balanced diet helps the individual maintain a healthy metabolism and supports the immune system. For instance, a high-fiber diet can improve an individual's gastrointestinal health and help maintain stable blood glucose levels. Furthermore, fruits and vegetables that contain high levels of antioxidants will help reduce the amount of oxidative stress placed on their bodies, which is a major contributing factor in the development of chronic diseases.

Malnutrition is a result of consuming excess energy-dense foods that are low in nutrients and/or not eating enough nutrient-dense foods. Poor nutrition results in poor physical health and is detrimental to overall well-being. The food choices we make also affect our emotional state; thus, it is important that we understand that they affect both our physical and emotional well-being. There is an increasing body of evidence that shows a relationship between mental health and diet. When we eat a healthy diet, we improve our mood and lower our anxiety; thus, good nutrition positively contributes to an individual's ability to make healthy food choices.

Through our continued discussion of the psychological impact of food selection, we should gain additional insight into the relationship among diet, an individual's physical health, and their emotional state. Finally, to have a healthy population, we need to increase the number of individuals who are aware of and understand the effects of food selection on psychological well-being. The effects of food selection on psychological well-being are very powerful, as there are many ways in which food choice correlates with mood. It has been well established that the type of food consumed can positively or negatively affect mental health; certain

diets have been associated with higher levels of happiness and cognitive function. The reverse is true for diets consisting primarily of fast/processed foods (and those containing added sugars), which have been shown to impair mental clarity and emotional stability.

The way people perceive food and the effect it has on mood are mostly influenced by the culture in which they live. Each culture has its own unique food traditions, some of which influence how individuals relate to food. For example, communal eating and shared meals are viewed as assisting with stress reduction, promoting social interaction, and providing emotional support among individuals in certain cultures. While individuals from cultures focusing primarily on individualism may be more likely to consume food away from social interactions (alone), increasing their potential risk of experiencing an increase in feelings of isolation that are associated with eating alone, causing a negative effect on their mood.

Understanding how an individual's culture affects their food choices will provide the necessary information to encourage more mindful eating by recognizing how one's surroundings have impacted their relationship with food and encouraging healthier, more fulfilling food choices.

These same experiences will provide a basis to explore how various cultures select the foods they consume, demonstrating the diversity of food choices and their associated effects on an individual's mental well-being. #The Impact of Culture on Food Selection

Across many cultures, food selection has been influenced by customs, beliefs, and traditions. A predominant way of influencing food selection is through cultural dietary practices, which can dictate what is considered acceptable or desirable for consumption (preparation and consumption rituals, etc.). Many times, traditional foods represent the ingredients of the area and how those ingredients have been prepared and continue to

be passed down through generations, allowing individuals to connect to their ancestry.

For example, individuals who follow the Mediterranean diet (which is largely composed of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains) have much lower rates of chronic diseases and other health issues than those who do not follow this diet. Therefore, traditional dietary practices do indeed provide individuals with a way to connect to their cultural heritage while also meeting their health needs.

With the increase in access to fast and processed foods that comes with globalization, many communities experience changes in their food choices. As a result, many people choose to eat convenient foods that often contain unhealthy fats, sugars, or additives. There is another aspect of globalization that could potentially facilitate cultural exchanges, allowing people within countries to become exposed to and incorporate foods from around the world.

When we analyze the relationship between culture, food selection, identity, and health, it provides a good basis for arguing that economic factors also play an important role in influencing what people eat. Factors like access to food, educational opportunities on nutrition, and economic stability are a few examples of how socioeconomic factors can have an enormous impact on individuals' food choices. Socioeconomic determinants affect food choices and nutrition through a range of influences; the two primary determinants are income and education. Higher-income households tend to have better access to fresh, nutritious foods, whereas lower-income households frequently live in food deserts where access to healthy foods (e.g., fruits and vegetables, whole grains) is limited or too costly. As such, their diets tend to be composed mainly of processed foods and to be deficient in many of the most important nutrients (Canakis et al., 2022).

Education plays a significant role in raising awareness of nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet; individuals with higher education are more aware of the nutritional value of food than those with lower education. This knowledge leads to better food choices; however, individuals with low food literacy may not be able to make the healthiest choices. Within communities where little or no education is available on the importance of healthy eating and how to develop healthy eating habits, some individuals may be unaware of the healthiest choices they could be making, thus compounding the effects of socioeconomic challenges.

Marketing and advertising of food products may also contribute to socioeconomic disparities in food access and consumption. In particular, in low-income neighborhoods, the marketing of unhealthy processed food is more prevalent than that of healthy foods, which can create a norm in which poor dietary habits are considered acceptable. Thus, addressing the socioeconomic barriers to food access and promoting the consumption of healthy, nutrient-dense foods creates an opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of how food marketing impacts consumer eating behaviors and ultimately, health outcomes.

Food marketing and advertising significantly influence consumers' food purchasing and consumption decisions. The creation of consumer perceptions of products through advertising is a primary factor in determining what consumers will buy and consume. Food marketers often segment their target markets and develop tailored messages to appeal to specific demographics (i.e., age, gender, culture). Through this process, they not only promote specific food products but also promote their consumption.

References

- Canakis, J. P., Swink, S., Valle, N. P., Rivers, D., Lim, K., Oberlender, S., Purcell, S., & Bartus, C. L. (2022). Cutaneous Manifestations of Nutritional Deficiencies in the Context of Food Deserts of United States. In *Cureus* (Vols. 14). <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.29464>
- Dèdelè, A., Bartkutė, Žydrūnė, Chebotarova, Y., & Miškinytė, A. (2021). The Relationship Between the Healthy Diet Index, Chronic Diseases, Obesity and Lifestyle Risk Factors Among Adults in Kaunas City, Lithuania. In *Frontiers in Nutrition* (Vols. 8). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnut.2021.599567>
- Kádeková, Z., Košičiarová, I., Kubicová, L., Holotová, M., & Predanócyová, K. (2019). The impact of inappropriate food advertising on consumer behavior. In *Potravinárstvo* (Vols. 13, pp. 1034-1039). <https://doi.org/10.5219/1216>
- Kagawade, S. (2024). "Leveraging Immersive Technologies in Retail: The Role of Augmented Reality in Enhancing Packaged Food Marketing and Shaping Consumer Behavior". In *Power System Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.52783/pst.1042>
- Khalid, S. (2014). Food Labeling Regulations in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Countries: Benefits, Challenges and Implications. In *Turkish Journal of Agriculture: Food Science and Technology* (Vols. 3, pp. 196-203). <https://doi.org/10.24925/TURJAF.V3I4.196-203.214>.
- Macdiarmid, J. (2021). The food system and climate change: are plant-based diets becoming unhealthy and less environmentally sustainable?. In *The Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* (pp. 1-6). <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0029665121003712>.
- Mehmas, A. M. H., Fehaid, A. S. D., Omar, A. O. K., Nasser, A. Q. R., & Mathkar, A. M. S. (2022). THE POWER OF NUTRITION: HOW A HEALTHY DIET CAN SHIELD AGAINST CHRONIC DISEASES. In *EPH - International Journal of Medical and Health Science*. <https://doi.org/10.53555/eijmhs.v8i2.176>.
- Pal, M. (2022). Criteria of Healthy Diet: Prevention and Additional Treatment of Chronic Diseases with Nutrition. In *World Journal of Food and Nutrition (WJFN)*. <https://doi.org/10.54026/wjfn/1008>.