

Abstract

The present study was designed to investigate the impact of dietary patterns on psychological distress and executive functioning of young adults. It was an attempt to develop an intervention plan to improve dietary patterns of young adults. Three studies were carried out to achieve the objectives of this research project. Translation adaptation and psychometric properties of the research instruments to be used in study two were tested as a pre requisite in study one. Firstly a few items of food preferences questionnaire for adolescents and adults scale was adapted according to Pakistani cultural context English version of both food preferences questionnaire for adolescence and adults and Adults Executive functioning scale (ADEXI) scale were translated into Urdu language by following the standard procedure of forward and backward translation method. Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted to compute the underlying structure of the scales. Psychometric properties of food preference questionnaire for adolescents and adults and adults executive functioning inventory a self-report measure were determined and administered on a sample of 300 students (150 males, 150 females) with an age range of between 19-25 years. Results of confirmatory factor analysis via AMOS 20.0 supported the original factor structures of both scales to be used in the subsequent analysis. The reliability analysis showed the promising values of Cronbach alpha of both scales. Study two was conducted on a sample of 400 students (200 males, 200 females) with an age range of 19-25 years collected through a conveniently approached purposive sampling strategy. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data. Firstly, impact of dietary pattern on psychological distress and executive functioning were analyzed. Multiple Regression analysis was run to predict Executive Functioning and psychological distress of young adults on food preferences scales. Results revealed that healthy food preferences predict less impaired adults' executive functioning (working memory, inhibition) and psychological distress. Young adults who like a lot in food preferences categories (vegetables, fruits, meat, dairy, snacks, and starches) have better their executive functioning working memory, less Inhibition and less psychological distress. Demographic variables, gender, BMI, SES, family system, family size predict food preferences. One-Way Analysis of Variance result depicted that there was a significant difference between doesn't like and like a lot in varying food preferences categories (vegetables, fruits, meat, dairy, snacks, and starches) of young adults on their executive functioning (Working Memory & Inhibition) and Psychological Distress. Study 3 was carried out to investigate the differences in the food preferences of young adults before and after introducing an educational intervention plan. This study was based on quasi-experimental

research (pretest and posttest research design) A sample of 40 students (20 males, 20 females) were selected by following inclusion and exclusion criteria. Firstly, participants' food preferences were assessed through a demographics sheet, food preferences questionnaire, and food choice patterns checklist. An intervention plan was designed to improve the dietary patterns of young adults. This intervention plan was based on three months' lectures. A total of six lectures were delivered. These lectures were based on a diet chart and nutritional course (a paid course available at udemy). The data was analyzed using BMI SPSS version 21.0. Percentage and frequencies of food choice patterns checklist were computed to see the modification of young adults' dietary patterns. A paired sample t-test was run to draw differences in young adults' food patterns.

The finding indicated significant mean differences in six categories of food preferences questionnaire of adolescents and adults. This study provides an insight about the importance of healthy dietary patterns and its impact not only physical but also mental health and executive functioning. It aimed to bridge the know40ledge gap in nutritional education and attempted to develop innovative intervention strategies to effectively engage young adults in improving their dietary patterns.

Key words: Dietary patterns, executive functioning, psychological distress, vegetables, fruits, meat, dairy, snacks, starches, sociodemographic variables