

The Effect of Nutrition Education on Adherence to the Mediterranean Diet and Sustainable Healthy Eating Behaviors in University Students

Authors : Tuba Tekin, Nurcan Baglam, Emine Dincer

Abstract : This study aimed to examine the effects of nutrition education received by university students on sustainable healthy eating behaviors and adherence to the Mediterranean diet. The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-grade university students studying at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Nutrition and Dietetics, Midwifery, Nursing, Physical Therapy, and Rehabilitation departments of universities in Turkey were included in the study. Students' adherence to the Mediterranean diet was evaluated using the Mediterranean Diet Adherence Scale, and their sustainable and healthy eating behaviors were evaluated using the Sustainable and Healthy Eating Behaviors Scale. In addition, the body weight and height of the students were measured by the researchers, and the Body Mass Index (BMI) value was calculated. A total of 181 students, 85 of whom were studying in the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics and 96 of whom were educated in other departments, were included in the study. 75.7% of the students in the sample are female, while 24.3% are male. The average body weight of the students was 61.17 ± 10.87 kg, and the average BMI was 22.04 ± 3.40 kg/m². While the mean score of the Mediterranean Diet Adherence Scale was 6.72 ± 1.84 , in the evaluation of adherence to the Mediterranean diet, it was determined that 25.4% of the students had poor adherence and 66.9% needed improvement. When the adherence scores of students who received and did not receive nutrition education were compared, it was discovered that the students who received nutrition education had a higher score ($p < 0.05$). Students who received nutrition education had a higher total score on the Sustainable and Healthy Eating Behaviors scale ($p < 0.05$). A moderately positive correlation was found between the Sustainable and Healthy Eating Behaviors scale total score and the Mediterranean Diet Adherence scores ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the linear regression analysis, it was revealed that a 1-unit increase in the Mediterranean diet adherence score would result in a 1.3-point increase in the total score of the Sustainable and Healthy Eating Behaviors scale. Sustainable and healthy diets are important for improving and developing health and the prevention of diseases. The Mediterranean diet is defined as a sustainable diet model. The findings revealed the relationship between the Mediterranean diet and sustainable nutrition and showed that nutrition education increased knowledge and awareness about sustainable nutrition and increased adherence to the Mediterranean diet. For this reason, courses or seminars on sustainable nutrition can be organized during educational periods.

Keywords : healthy eating, Mediterranean diet, nutrition education, sustainable nutrition

Conference Title : ICNFS 2023 : International Conference on Nutrition and Food Science

Conference Location : Florence, Italy

Conference Dates : May 11-12, 2023