

## The Effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Food Habits and Knowledge of Nutritional Requirements: A College Students Perspective

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**Abstract :** The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the everyday lives of people all over the world. This pandemic affects heavily the lifestyle of people in different aspects of life, including eating habits. The objective of this paper is to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on key factors affecting food habits among the Community College of Qatar (CCQ) students. Method: The research is a cross-sectional survey that deployed a questionnaire among 217 CCQ students. Results: The results showed that 47.5% of the respondents were male and 52.5% female. In our previous study about 30% percentage obesity with a BMI of 30-35 was shown. Surprisingly, during the pandemic, the obesity percentage remains almost the same, but the BMI range jumped to 30-46. The nutritional knowledge of CCQ students is at an average level. Besides, during pandemic the personal eating habits continued to be imbalanced and getting unhealthier than in the pre-pandemic period. Regarding the key factors that could affect eating habits, most of the respondents reported that during the pandemic in the absence of restaurants they had daily meals with their families, and had a lack of physical activity. Besides, most of the respondents agree that they gained weight during the pandemic. These findings indicate that the pandemic changed the food habits and the lifestyle of Qatari students. Accordingly, increasing the awareness among college students (and Qatari community at large) is recommended. College students can be given some recommendations related to healthy eating tips to overcome the effect of pandemic on their health status. The detailed comparative analysis between pre- and post-pandemic eating habits of students can help reveal the main differences and give effective guidance to improve body composition and health status of students.

**Keywords :** food habits, BMI, obesity, COVID-19, nutritional knowledge, community college of Qatar, pandemic

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