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## Breakfast Abstinence and Students' Health Status

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to determine the significant relationship between breakfast abstinence, lifestyle and health status of the students of MSU-IIT. The researcher would like to investigate if the independent variable, which is the breakfast abstinence, affects the students' health status which is the dependent variable. The data were gathered from 150 students who were officially enrolled in the first semester of S.Y 2016-2017. They were selected according to their willingness to cooperate in answering the research instruments.*

*To obtain accurate information about breakfast abstinence and the students' health status, a modified questionnaire was used. This was utilized with the permission from the respondents.*

*Hence, most of the respondents abstain from breakfast because they always wake up late and do not have enough time for preparing their breakfast. Also, they have reduced physical activity level throughout the day and overeat during lunch time when they abstain from breakfast. The respondents had more important things to do than eating breakfast in the morning. Religion did not prohibit them from eating breakfast most especially to the Islam respondents because during fasting season, they wake up 4 am in the morning and that is when they will have their breakfast. Lastly, there is a significant relationship between breakfast abstinence and students' health status.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Breakfast Abstinence, Students, Health Status*

### INTRODUCTION

College students nowadays are too busy in their academic performance and extracurricular activities. They are mostly focused on their studies thus, this part of their lives is a pivotal point because it is the time when they become responsible for managing their own lives. Hence, students often forget things which could affect their health status. One of those important things is breakfast. Most students, because of their business and total focus on their studies, forget to eat breakfast or skip breakfast.

As a maxim goes, "Breakfast is the most important meal of the day" and this has been spoken by countless moms throughout the ages. It has been whispered in the ears of school children on early-to-rise mornings for centuries, yet many people skip breakfast even though they know the fact. Students skip breakfast because of overnights and then the class seems so early that they cannot prepare for breakfast. Some students also are mere irresponsible and lazy that they cannot prepare for food even though they had an allotted time for that. Some students think that by skipping breakfast they can be physically fit and sexy which is always the wrong perception. More so, not

having breakfast is a serious worry as an unhealthy eating habit throughout Asia and the Pacific. In developed nations like Japan (Ministry of Health) [1], Singapore (Health Promotion Board, RaSPD) [2], (The Department of Nutrition, MoH) [3], Palestine (Nasser et al.) [4], Australia (Australian Department of Health and Ageing) [5] there has been a trend toward a higher prevalence of skipping breakfast.

Skipping breakfast for others seems a simple way of losing weight or saving time for rushing off to school. However, it can also be a sign of an unhealthy lifestyle with potentially dangerous consequences, including a higher risk of premature death. Regular breakfast skipping has been reported to be associated with generally unhealthy behaviors, such as consuming a poorer diet and having lower physical activity levels. Because skipping meals, especially breakfast, has become more common among school-age children, teenagers, and working adults, typical breakfast, lunch, and supper meals are difficult to identify (Greenwood, et, al.) [6]. Today, missing breakfast has emerged as a contentious public health concern. Many people think losing weight may be achieved by skipping breakfast. This habit may lead to a rise in the prevalence of obesity and its problems. Regularly having breakfast can significantly lower the risk of obesity (Blondin, et. al.) [7].

In Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) the vision involves not only the development of students in terms of academic proficiency but also the growth of their students in a holistic manner. To be able to develop holistic students, they should learn how to be responsible with themselves in order for them to be fully developed.

This study was undertaken to get a glimpse of how students of different academic fields manage their eating habits, particularly their breakfast, and if such has any significant effect on their health status. The results of this study can be used for the development and awareness of the students.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study aimed to determine the reasons of breakfast abstinence among students and its effects to their health. To be specific, this sought answers to the following questions: 1. Is there a significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and the health status?; 2. Is there a significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and the age, college, gender, lifestyle, monthly allowance and religious affiliation?; and 3. Is there a significant relationship between the health status and the age, college, gender, lifestyle, monthly allowance and religious affiliation?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used the descriptive-correlation method of research. The respondents of the study were the bonafide students of Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology of Academic Year 2015-2016. The study was conducted to 150 students from the different colleges of MSU-IIT namely: College of Education, College of Engineering, College of Arts and Social Sciences, College of Science and Mathematics, College of Nursing, School of Computer Studies, College of Business Administration and Accountancy and School of Engineering Technology. The questionnaire was derived from the self-made questionnaire instruments used of Pingped et. al. [8] titled "Skipping Breakfast and Its Association with Health Risk Behavior and Mental Health among University Students in 28 Countries" and Yang et. al. [9] titled "Irregular Breakfast Eating and Health Status Among Adolescents in Taiwan".

The descriptive data were treated with the frequency and percentage distribution. The chi-square tool was used for the test of inference.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Relationship between breakfast abstinence and the health status of the students

### Correlation

Variables	$\chi^2$ value	df	cv	Decision
Breakfast Abstinence and Health Status	5.25	4	9.49	Not Significant

Legend: If *p*-value is less than 0.05, then the relationship is significant; otherwise is not significant

The chi-square value of 5.25 is lesser than the critical value of 9.49 at the 0.05 probability level with four degrees of freedom. This implies that the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and health status.

The data analysis showed no evidence that breakfast is really important for the health. In fact, the findings contradict with the research that daily meal frequencies, and breakfast skipping in particular, have been linked to risk for overweight and obesity in UK, USA, and Australian populations, and are associated with female gender, lower socioeconomic status (SES), urban environments, and older age (Raksha Goyal et al) [10]. Notably, irregular breakfast eating (IRBE) had a significant negative association with quality of life among Japanese schoolchildren. Some studies have shown that earlier menarche or dysmenorrhea is more common in girls with IRBE than in girls with RBE.

Table 2. Relationship between breakfast abstinence and the profile of the students

Variables	$\chi^2$ value	df	cv	Decision
Breakfast Abstinence and Age	3.837	4	9.49	Not Significant
Breakfast Abstinence and College or School	1.765	4	9.49	Not Significant
Breakfast Abstinence and Gender	0.056	2	5.99	Not Significant
Breakfast Abstinence and Lifestyle	17.57	4	9.49	Significant
Breakfast Abstinence and Allowance	11.405	4	9.49	Significant
Breakfast Abstinence and Religious Affiliation	0.378	2	5.99	Not Significant

As revealed above in the Table 2, there is no significant relationship. Note that the chi-square value of 3.837 is lesser than the critical value of 9.49. This means that there is no relationship between age and the breakfast abstinence of the respondents.

Therefore, this means that age does not affect why students abstain from breakfast. However, a 2008 study in the journal *Pediatrics* found that adolescents who ate breakfast daily had a lower body mass index than teens who never ate breakfast or only on occasion. Ironically, the breakfast eaters even ate more calories, fiber, and cholesterol in their overall diets compared to the kids who skipped breakfast. But the kids who ate breakfast also had diets with less saturated fat. “We know

that the biggest predictor of overeating is undereating,” Dr. Schneider says. “Many of these kids skip breakfast and lunch, but then go home and don’t stop eating.” Eating breakfast also has ramifications on school performance. “Study after study shows that kids who eat breakfast function better,” Dr. Schneider says. “They do better in school, and have better concentration and more energy.” Children who eat breakfast are generally in better health overall, a fact that may be attributed to the types of food often associated with the morning meal. Breakfast provides a golden opportunity to fortify teens with nutrients that can easily fall by the wayside the rest of the day. “Breakfast is a great time to consume fiber in the form of cereals and whole wheat breads,” Dr. Cochran says. Fiber can help with weight control and has also been linked to lower cholesterol levels (Schneider) [11].

Also noted in the same table that the critical value of 9.49 exceeds the computed chi-square value, thus the null hypothesis is not rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that there is no relationship between breakfast abstinence and the college or school of the respondents.

There is no significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and gender. Therefore, the researchers conclude that gender does not affect why students skip from eating breakfast. However, according to Marcie Beth Schneider, M.D., FAAP, a member of the AAP’s Committee on Nutrition and an adolescent medicine physician in Greenwich, Conn, many older teens are busy until late into the night with homework, extracurricular activities, and part-time jobs. They go to bed late, then get up and rush off to school, too frantic to eat. The worst offenders are girls and older teens, though boys and younger adolescents are certainly not immune. Compounding the challenge is biology. As teens get older, they’re often more inclined to fall asleep later at night — it is even natural for teens to be unable to fall asleep until 11 p.m., according to the National Sleep Foundation [12] — and awaken later in the morning, a biological schedule that often does not match the one set by schools. When that happens, most kids would rather sleep an extra 15 minutes than get up for a bowl of cereal. “Many of them are not getting enough sleep,” says Marcie Beth Schneider. “They often wake up too tired or too nauseous to eat.” Experts believe that some kids, especially girls, may be also bypassing the morning meal in an effort to control weight gain.

Lifestyle is a reason why students abstain from eating breakfast. According to the new study, Harvard looked at the health records of nearly 27,000 men, all healthcare professionals 45-82 years old when the study began. The team looked for correlations in lifestyle choices – e.g., skipping breakfast – and health outcomes over a period of about 16 years. Men who skipped breakfast were 27% more likely to experience heart attack or to die as the result of coronary heart disease. The men who skipped breakfast were more likely to be single, smokers, employed full-time, to drink more alcohol, were younger, and were less likely to be physically active than people who ate breakfast. Controlling for a slew of these and other risk factor for heart disease – like alcohol consumption, smoking history, body mass index, regular doctor visits, quality of diet, TV watching, activity level, and sleep habits – did reduce the link between skipping breakfast and heart disease, but didn’t obliterate it. The number of times per day the men ate was not linked to heart risk (Walton) [13].

There is a significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and allowance per month. Therefore, the researchers conclude that the monthly allowance the respondents receive is a reason why they abstain from breakfast. Income and consumption had maintained a rough proportionality over many years. At the same time, the econometricians were conscious that there is a double

relationship between income and consumption, which follows from the fact that consumption expenditures are a major factor in determining the level of aggregate income.

Therefore, the lower the monthly allowance, the more chances that they will abstain from breakfast. The null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant relationship between the breakfast abstinence and religious affiliation. Thus, students abstain from eating breakfast not because of their religion because of the factors.

Table 3. Relationship between health status and the profile of the students

Variables	$\chi^2$ value	df	cv	Decision
Health Status and Age	5.558	4	9.49	Not Significant
Health Status and College or School	3.551	4	9.49	Not Significant
Health Status and Gender	4.029	2	5.99	Not Significant
Health Status and Lifestyle	13.049	4	9.49	Significant
Health Status and Allowance	4.529	4	9.49	Not Significant
Health Status and Religious Affiliation	0.254	2	5.99	Not Significant

Based on the data of Table 3, it is only in the aspect of lifestyle that the null hypothesis is rejected. This is so as the chi-square value of 13.049 exceeds the critical value of 9.49 at the 0.05 probability level with four degrees of freedom.

However, the other profile variables were not significantly related to the health status of the participants as the chi-square values were below the critical value. Hence, no significant relationship between the age, school or department, gender, monthly allowance and affiliation and health status of the participants.

Considering that the result is significant, the researchers care to a conclusion that lifestyle could really affect the health of individuals if they keep on skipping breakfast. According to Choi [14], college students are already prone to malnutrition. The most common reason? Time constraints. As schedules become cluttered with classes, work, meetings and coffee dates, health is the first to go because it is the easiest to sacrifice. Not only do busy agendas lead to having less time to eat, but they also encourage eating the quickest, cheapest meals. Before long, having “lunch” at 4 pm becomes the norm, and seeking out healthy options is no longer a priority.

According to Walton [13], a new study questions the long-shield notion that skipping breakfast is inherently bad for the health – or at least for the weight. Though earlier studies have found correlations between breakfast-eating and better health outcomes, few studies have put it to the test in randomized clinical trial, the gold standard in scientific research. In the new study, dieters who ate breakfast lost no more weight than people who skipped breakfast. However, the study *only* looked at weight outcomes – not at any other aspect of health, like cardiovascular or metabolic health. So, the take-home message is that skipping breakfast may be OK for weight loss, but how it affects health overall is still up for grabs.

Also, According to Spector (2013), she stated that a new study published in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation* found that middle-aged men who skip breakfast are more likely to have a heart attack or die from heart disease.

The news validates what scientists have long known: eating breakfast consistently pays off through nutritional and mental health benefits, both in children and adults.

Therefore, the researchers conclude that age does not affect the health status of the students if they abstain from eating breakfast. Nevertheless, according to a study, healthy eating and regular physical activity play a substantial role in preventing chronic diseases, including heart disease, cancer, and stroke, the three leading causes of death among adults aged 18 years. Poor diet and physical inactivity among younger persons can lead to an increased risk for certain chronic health conditions, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. Engaging children and adolescents in healthy eating and regular physical activity can lower their risk for obesity and related chronic diseases (Lee) [16].

Students who abstain breakfast struggles lack of energy or frequent energy slumps mid-morning when they do not eat breakfast.

The monthly allowance does not affect the health status of the students. Thus, there is no significant relationship between the health status and religious affiliation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Breakfast abstinence and lifestyle have significant relationship with the students' health status. Among the moderating variables, only monthly allowance affects breakfast abstinence. Moreover, only college and gender affect the health status of the students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Every student in MSU-IIT must be encouraged to eat breakfast every day because breakfast is the most important meal of the day.
2. Students should be time-conscious for them to have their breakfast every day.
3. MSU-IIT should also highlight healthcare and give emphasis to it, such as giving symposiums about breakfast abstinence or why students should not skip their breakfast.

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