NUTRITIONAL HABITS AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FOOD
AND NUTRITION AMONG PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS
DEPENDING ON THEIR LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Abstract
Introduction. Nutritional habits as well as views on food and nutrition are determined by a number of factors regarding an
individual, social group, or population. The aim of the study was to determine differences in nutritional habits and knowledge
about food and nutrition in physical education (PE) students depending on their level of higher education and physical activity.
Material and methods. The study included 207 first-year and last-year students of physical education from the Faculty of
Physical Education and Sport in Biała Podlaska. The eating habits of the study participants and their knowledge about food and
nutrition were evaluated using a questionnaire developed by Gawęcki, while physical activity was assessed with the Internation-
Al Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ – short version). Statistical significance of differences between groups distinguished
on the basis of the students’ level of higher education and physical activity was analysed with Student’s t-test or the χ² test.
Results and conclusions. Regardless of the level of higher education and physical activity, the students examined most often
demonstrated low intensity of nutritional behaviours that were either beneficial or detrimental to health, which means that they
did not choose products with a potentially beneficial influence on their health very often, but, at the same time, they limited
their consumption of unhealthy products. However, the comparison of students in terms of their level of education revealed that
last-year students consumed poultry, fruit, and vegetables more often, whereas first-year students consumed white bread, but-
ter, cold meat, cheese, and sweets more frequently. Women with a high level of physical activity consumed healthy foods more
often, while men exhibited such a tendency in the case of dairy products only. Most students demonstrated sufficient knowledge
about food and nutrition, and it was noted that their university studies increased their level of knowledge in this area.

Key words: diet, physical activity, students

Introduction
Lifestyle, including health behaviours, is a factor that exerts a significant influence on a person’s health status. Health behav-
iors are any health-related habits, attitudes, and activities as well as values accepted by members of a given society. These in-
clude proper nutrition, regular physical activity, adequate sleep duration, avoiding drugs, and being able to cope with stress [1].
Proper nutrition and appropriate physical activity levels are the most substantial of these factors [2].

University students are a social group that is important for the future of every country. Studying at university is a transition
period between the carefreeness of youth and the demands of adult life. During this period, a traditional home diet is often
remodelled as a result of acquiring knowledge while studying, observing peers’ diets, and gaining information from mass me-
dia. The fact that both studies and social life take up much time means that students usually eat on an irregular basis and con-
sume more and more fast foods which are difficult to digest and whose nutritional values are not properly balanced [3, 4]. Not
getting enough sleep, eating in a hurry, and consuming prod-
ucts of low nutritional value may lead to a deficiency in vita-
mins and mineral nutrients [5]. Diet is of particular significance in the case of physical education (PE) students, who are much
more physically active than their counterparts from other uni-
versity courses [6].

The aim of the study was to determine differences in nu-
tritional habits and knowledge about food and nutrition in PE
students depending on the stage of higher education and physi-
ical activity level.