The Different Eating Behaviours Students Face During Their University Year

Introduction

The three potential ideas for possible dissertation topics are 1). The different eating behaviours students experience during their university year, 2). The barriers that may prevent males from seeking support with mental health, 3). The different attitudes and beliefs on university lifestyle. The first topic listed is the preferred topic because eating behaviours in students are increasing extensively, which makes this proposal important to study. The students are also unlikely to seek support about the changed eating behaviours they may be facing during their university year therefore it is important to make sense of what the eating behaviours are and why they may be facing them. This current proposal has theoretical and practical implications for understanding the eating behaviours students experience during their university year. Previous research has not looked at the explanations of why students experience different eating behaviours during their university year therefore it is important to understand the reasons behind why they may do.

Review of Literature

There is an increasing occurrence of eating behaviours in students that are broadly acknowledged, The Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011). Although treatments remain available, it is highly unlikely that the students will seek advice or help from these campaigns that offer help and advice. Previous research has found that university students face negative eating behaviours whilst their era at university, but the research has not looked at what the reasons are behind why the students may be facing these particular behaviours.

Stewart – Brown et al, (2000) found that wellbeing practices made in this era of university life can be a challenge to adjust in adult - life. Subsequently, it is important to recognise what the different eating behaviours are in students and why may they face them.

Tanton et al (2015) conducted a study on university students in engaging in risky eating behaviours. They used a questionnaire sampling technique that examined the eating behaviour patterns in the students. It was established that more than half of the students were considered of experiencing ‘favourable eating behaviours’ and these students were living on campus. This resulted in unhealthy eating and students choosing fast – food as the easier option.

Deliens et al (2014) investigated eating behaviours in Belgian university students, using a semi-structured interview guide. The results found that students are opposed to make healthy food choices. It was also found that the students are influenced by taste preferences, time and convenience and the lack of parental control.

This study will aim to add to past research by exploring the eating behaviours students experience during their university year. The research question will be ‘in what ways does the participants experiences influence their eating behaviours during their university life?’. The

research gap is earlier research has been ineffective in emphasising the particular elements for why the students experience these eating behaviours whilst at university in contrast to when at home with their families consequently, this study will pay particular attention on concentrating on the eating behaviours and the explanations about why the students have certain eating behaviours. As a result, the study will be using semi-structured interviews which will allow the topic of eating habits to be discussed freely, which will help the information of eating habits to be conversed in detail.

Method

Participants – the potential participants will be Psychology Undergraduate students at Coventry University in their first or second year. The sampling strategy the participants will be recruited through is the use of opportunity sampling, the size of the sample will be minimum twelve participants. The participants may be male or female and the mean age may be 20 years old.

Procedures – ethical approval will be granted if the study approves the ethical guidelines that are set out by the Psychology Ethical Committee. Each of the participants will provide informed consent to take part in the study. Before the participants provide consent each of the participants will read and keep an ‘Participant Information Sheet’, this will include important detail concerning the study such as the purpose, the participants data protection rights, what their involvement consists off and their right to withdraw. They will then be given the ‘Informed Consent Form’ if they are pleased to participate, they will agree by signing the consent form. After finishing the interview, the participants will be given a ‘Debrief sheet’ which will also include more detail about the study and answer any other questions.

The participants will separately enter Coventry University’s lab rooms, where the interviews will be carried out. They will then be asked a variety of questions concerning their eating behaviours. The estimated time for every interview is approximately 25 to 30 minutes.

Design – the research design will be a semi-structured interview this will be an appropriate design because it supports two–way communication between the participant and interviewer. The participants can enquire the interviewer any questions they may have and then the researcher can focus the significant perceptions of the topic eating behaviours which will allow reliable and detailed data for the study to be gained (Brenner, 1985).

Measures/data collection – the type of interview that will be used is a semi-structured interview style. The setting for the interview will be one of Coventry University’s lab rooms, without interference from any other students. It is estimated that each interview will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes. It can be said that semi-structured interviews are high invalidity because the participants are able to speak about the particular topic of eating behaviours in detail and depth. They can also speak for themselves without any interference from the interviewer. However, semi-structured interviews may not be as reliable because it is difficult to keep a structured interview style as the participants may be questioned about different things to what’s in the actual interview guide.

Data analysis – the study will be qualitative and the desired sample size for the study will be minimum twelve participants and maximum sixteen participants. The appropriate method of analysis will be Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA will be used because it

explores how the participants acknowledge their individual world it studies the senses of precise understandings of the participants. As a result, by using IPA will get an improved understanding of the participants eating behaviours.

The steps involved to carry out IPA are firstly, the data that will collected during the interviews will be read in depth to acquire a rounded perspective, at this stage the research question will be created before identifying the key themes of the interview data. Secondly, the themes will then be recognised by arranging them into groups by coding and then inspecting it against the interview data. Thirdly, the themes will then be refined, compressed and reviewed into key themes, this will allow the other themes that may have been found to be discarded because they may not have enough support from the interview data. As a result, this will allow association between the key themes that are clustered together by their connections, which will then lead to an explanatory label of the key theme being specified. Fourthly, these key themes will then be explained in descriptive material with quotations from the interview as evidence.

Conclusion

The results that may be expected to be found are that the eating behaviours in the students are a lot different in contrast to when the students are at home away from university with their families. These differences are expected to be negative eating behaviours such as emotional eating, the convenience of fast – food consumption and the change of lifestyle whilst being at university.

The results of the study may be used for forthcoming interventions to progress eating behaviours in university students. This can be done by delivering improved education for students by encouraging health and well–being aware of eating healthy food, if this is taught at a younger age when students are at school this will help them in the future when they start university.

Limitations for the study may be that the participants will only be from Coventry University and not any other universities, this prevents researching the eating behaviour of other university students which would have completed the results to be more reliable and valid. However, this could also be more time – consuming which may have an influence on the study.

Overall, the study will contribute to present research by exploring the experiences of the participants eating behaviours during their academic year. It has been found that previous research is restricted in explaining why the students face negative eating behaviours during their academic year. As a result, this study will aim to research the reasons behind why the students may face them.

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