

The Impact of Residence on College Students' Health

Ariya Bakhteri, Neel Barmecha, Adrian Garcia

INTRODUCTION

- The daily habits of post-secondary students lead to many factors (sleeping patterns, stress levels, daily nutrition, and learning environment) that impact their physical, emotional, and mental health.
- These habits may vary depending on the residence (whether they live on campus or they commute to school from home).
- Previous studies have focused on how these factors affect post secondary students' health and academic performance, but only a few explain which of the two (living at the dorms or commuting to school) is more detrimental to their overall health.

QUESTION

How does residence of college students relate to the health of college students?

HYPOTHESIS

If students commute to college, then they will have better overall health in comparison to students that live in dorm buildings.

METHODS

- Participants were recruited from a Writing for the Sciences class from the City College of New York.
- The sample consisted of 19 volunteering participants, either in their freshman or sophomore year of college.
- Eleven of these participants commuted from home to CCNY, while eight of these participants resided at the dorm building on campus.
- Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their general behaviors and health, respective to where they lived. Data was gathered and analyzed to determine the correlation of residence and the general health of the participants.

RESULTS

Dormers vs. Hours of Sleep



Figure 1

- Half of the students living on campus (4 out of 8) received approximately 4-6 hours of sleep per day (Figure 1). On the other hand, the majority of students that commuted to college (7 out of 11) received 4-6 hours of sleep per day (Figure 2).

Commuters vs. Hours of Sleep



Figure 2

Dormers vs. Frequency of Meals



Figure 3

- Most students (5 out of 8) living on campus were not sure about the frequency of their meals (Figure 3). However, more than half of the participants (6 out of 11) that commuted to college consumed approximately 1 meal every 6 hours (Figure 4).

Commuters vs. Frequency of Meals



Figure 4

From 1-10, how healthy are your meals? (Dormers)

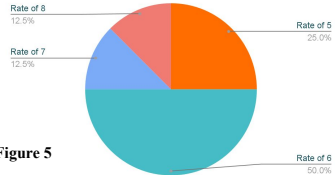


Figure 5

- 50% of students living on campus considered the healthiness of their meals to be a 6 out of 10 (Figure 5). 27% of commuters considered the healthiness of their meal to be a 6 out of 10 and another 27% of them considered it to be a 7 out of 10 (Figure 6).

From 1-10, how healthy are your meals? (Commuters)

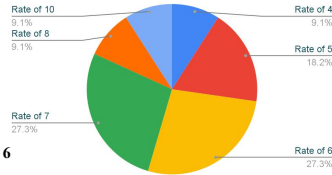


Figure 6

DISCUSSION

- The results yielded several conclusions about the lifestyle of college students.
- The recommended amount of sleep for adolescents in college is around 8 hours while the study showed that most college students regardless of living situation sleep between 4-6 hours. Approximately 25% of first year college students sleep 6 hours a night which creates sleep deprivation (Adams SK).
- People who lived on campus found distractions in social media and hanging out with friends while people who commuted found distractions in family obligations and social media.
- Students also had different dietary habits depending on if they lived on campus or at home. Students who lived at home ate every 6 hours while the students who lived on campus had varied frequency of having meals.
- Several limitations were present in this study. The small sample size, consisting of solely science-related freshmen and sophomores. In future research, the sample size should include a variety of college students including different majors, athletes, and those who are employed.

- Sleep quality and number of hours spent studying was not recorded as a part of this study; it would be beneficial, in future studies, to record this information to determine a potential correlation between residence, academics, and overall health.

- Overall, different behavioral and lifestyle choices such as sleep amount and quality, healthiness of food, grades, amount spent studying, and other extraneous factors such as alcohol and drug use should be studied in order to determine its effects on the general academics, mental and physical health, and the emotional state of college students.

REFERENCES

- Adams SK, Williford DN, Vaccaro A, Kisler TS, Francis A, Newman B. 11 May 2016. The young and the restless: Socializing trumps sleep, fear of missing out, and technological distractions in first-year college students. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*. 22(3):337-348.
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