

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine contributing factors to food consumption behavior among the youth in Uganda, using the Health Belief Model, Health Lifestyle Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Health Action Process Approach. The food choices made by the youth have a lasting impact on their health, which highlights the need to promote healthy eating habits among them. The study was based on the story of a youth who successfully improved his health by nurturing his eating behavior. The framework developed from this study can help promote effective food consumption behavior among the youth.

The study employed a 'sequential explanatory cross-sectional' research design. The researcher collected quantitative followed by qualitative data. To start with, he conducted a pilot study among 250 university students to determine the instrument's accuracy and reliability. For the final study, he collected quantitative data from 403 university students. The researcher entered this data into SPSS (version 23) for initial analysis and then combined it to form the unit of analysis. After that, the researcher imported data into AMOS-23 for Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis. He ran a mediation test using a bootstrap approach. The researcher collected qualitative data from 09 key informants and employed the content analysis technique with the assistance of the NVivo11 version software. This generated themes and sub-themes.

Research findings revealed that one's lifestyle is directly associated with their food consumption behavior, while modeling does not have a direct impact. However, results show discovered that modeling does affect food consumption behavior through meal planning. Hence, the study suggests that meal planning acts both as a partial and full mediator.

Qualitative findings, further, backed the quantitative results obtained from the youth.

Policymakers for instance the Health Ministry, along with other relevant government bodies, should focus on encouraging healthy food consumption behaviors among young people. To achieve this, the government should promote an active lifestyle and meal planning for the youth.

While the cross-sectional study provided valuable insights into food consumption behavior, a longitudinal study may be necessary in the future to examine how this behavior manifests over time. Moreover, while the study focused on health beliefs, lifestyle, modeling, and meal planning, future studies could explore the role other factors may have in explaining food consumption behavior.