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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF LIFESTYLE AND HABITS ON THE ECONOMY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ÉLETMÓDSZOKÁSOK GAZDASÁGRA GYAKOROLT HATÁSAINAK VIZSGÁLATA EGYETEMI HALLGATÓK KÖRÉBEN

ABSTRACT

Our study provides insight into the economic effects associated with changes in lifestyle and habits, health value, healthy lifestyle, health literacy, and with a literature review of the health status of Hungarian population, as well as our own research by comparing our results with domestic and international surveys. The basis of the comparison, a questionnaire-based self-survey, was conducted in 2019 November among the students of University of Nyíregyháza. The results were analyzed in the light of the ELEF 2019 surveys. The value factors were health-conscious nutrition, exercise, omission of smoking and alcohol consumption. According to our results, the assessment of health status shows a correlation between age, education, income, and health literacy. The vast majority of normal body type was among those with higher education qualifications, which showed a correlation with the time spent on exercise and health-conscious eating. During further investigation of factors in connection with lifestyle, we found that there was no change with age when it comes to number of smokers on a daily basis, but weekly alcohol consumption increased overall. People with higher level of health literacy are in better health. In summary, increasing the socio-economic background variables influencing health status could contribute to the development of a healthier life, further enhancing the social and economic efficiency.

Keywords: health value, lifestyle habits, health awareness, health literacy, economic impact

ÖSSZEFOGLALÓ

Tanulmányunk az egészségérték, az egészséges életmód, az egészségműveltség, és a magyar lakosság egészségi állapotának szakirodalmi áttekintésével, valamint saját kutatási eredményeinknek a hazai és nemzetközi felmérésekkel való összehasonlításával nyújt betekintést az életmódszokások változásaival járó gazdasági hatásokkal. Az összehasonlítás kutatási alapját képező kérdőíves saját felmérést 2019 novemberében végeztük a Nyíregyházi Egyetem hallgatói körében. Az eredményeket elemeztük az ELEF 2019-es felmérések tükrében. Értéktényezőkként jelenítettük meg az egészségtudatos táplálkozást, a testmozgást, valamint a dohányzás, és az alkoholfogyasztás mellőzését. Eredményeink szerint az egészségi állapot megítélése összefüggést mutat az életkorral, az iskolai végzettséggel, a jövedelemmel, az egészségműveltséggel. A felsőfokú végzettségűek körében volt a legnagyobb arányban normál testalkatú, amely a testmozgásra fordított idővel, és az egészségtudatos táplálkozással mutatott korrelációt. Az életmódbeli tényezők további vizsgálata során azt kaptuk, hogy az életkor előrehaladtával nem változott a napi rendszerességgel dohányzók száma, a heti rendszerességű

alkoholfogyasztás összességében emelkedett. Azoknak az embereknek, akiknek magasabb az egészségműveltsége, jobb az egészségi állapota. Összefoglalva, az egészségi állapotot befolyásoló társadalmi-gazdasági háttérváltozók növelésével lehetne hozzájárulni az egészségesebb élet kialakításához, tovább emelve a társadalmi és gazdasági hatékonyságot.

Kulcsszavak: egészségérték, életmódszokások, egészségtudatosság, egészségműveltség, gazdasági hatás

1. Introduction

According to the definition of WHO, health means the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not only equal to the absence of diseases or disabilities. (Internet 1)

From the aspect of prevention, lifestyle can be defined as „having an influence on a set of personal decisions about health, which the individual more or less can make choices about" (Internet 2).

It is necessary to emphasize the importance of a person's own decisions with which he influences his lifestyle. At the same time, the individual is also affected by the social and economic environment. With lifestyle related risk factors avoided, minimized or completely eliminated, the related diseases can be eliminated as well. In other words, diseases associated with an unhealthy lifestyle may even be eliminated completely. (Döbrössy, 2004)

From a sociological point of view, lifestyle can be defined as both a choice and a chance.

A lifestyle is a set of behaviors and activities that under the given circumstances we can choose relatively freely. That means that a certain individual has free will, the ability to make decisions, which is determined by circumstances and personality type. In what way can the individual's circumstances affect this? It is influenced by society's custom system, value system, culture, and personal status. An individual's personality traits determine the ability to cope and self-motivation. A person's social status is reflected in the lifestyle elements appearing in everyday life. (Barabás, 2006) In case of a postmodern consumer, the interpretation of health is more complex and holistic: it is no longer only the harmony between body and soul, but also the mind, family, occupation and learning appear as essential components of complex health.

The WHO declares that health is a fundamental human right. Health preservation and development is essential for sustainable economic and social development. The goal for every individual is to reach a state of health that leads to a socially and economically productive life. To achieve health for a person or group of people, they must be able to realize and articulate their desires, meet their needs and change or adapt to their given environment. (Internet 1)

To make this possible, health literacy is very important, which includes skills that are essential when it comes to having access to necessary basic health-related information, and in making health-related decisions. (Szabó-Kósa, 2016)

2. Literature review

2.1. The change in the concept of health, health as a value

The concept of health has changed significantly in recent decades. Before the Second World War, and the following one or two decades, health meant the absence of disease. Later, with the mass awareness of health, health was identified with active lifestyle (fitness, wellness). The health image of the future is even more complex. For the postmodern consumer, in addition to the harmony of body and soul, family, occupation, learning, the holistic view also appears as components of complex health. (Kozák, 2019)

When it comes to aspects of health, social conditions are also important, the living conditions, the quality of the environment, but social relationships in the family and work are crucial as well. Health is therefore nothing else than when the body, soul and social factors are balanced in the individual's life. This balance can easily be upset, and if one of the above factors is damaged, it affects the other two factors as well. Health is not a stable state, but a dynamically changing process, where change can occur at any time.

The individual constantly adapts to changes in internal and external environment, and in a positive case, the purpose of this change is to reach a state of well-being. Maintaining health throughout our whole life requires a health-conscious attitude. Information, knowledge is easily accessible for this purpose nowadays.

Health as a value in general can be defined with all those factors, which can include the appropriate state of health as an asset value in achieving, maintaining and restoring health. If we want to name them, we have to set up a portfolio in which the elements are supporting all the goals in connection with reaching proper health from the aspect of the individual, families, and the entire population. We can structure the value portfolio of health into larger categories, so it is possible to speak about the categories of lifestyle, prevention and cure/recovery, while each of these consists further partial questions. These are, in fact, questions of health behavior and behavior factors, and their implementation helps to achieve the target value (Pavluska, 2015):

- health-conscious nutrition, eating
- sports, exercise

 ensuring quality free time (hobbies, recreation, relationships, culture, travel)
 refraining from smoking, drugs and other substances
 ensuring a healthy environment (housing, transport)
 mental health.

2.2. Health status of the Hungarian population

In terms of the health status of the Hungarian population, we find a more unfavorable situation than in Western European countries. One measure of the health status of the population is the life expectancy at birth. In Hungary, this figure was 76.2 years in 2018. In particular, it is important to note that from the 1970s to the early 1990s, more than two decades stagnation was observed in life expectancy at birth. The current statistics also shows that, despite the clear improvement of the metric, nowadays the life expectancy at birth is still 5-8 years behind the EU-28 average in Hungary.

If we break down the figures by gender, according to KSH data, in 2019, the average life expectancy in case of women was 79.3 years, while for men 72.9 years. Since the turn of the millennium the average growth in the case of men was 1.8 years more (4,7 years) than in that of women. For Hungarian men, the average life expectancy at birth was 5.4 years lower than in the Union in 2019, and by 4,3 years on the average for women, and the gender gap (6,6 years) exceeded the EU average by 1.1 years.

Another important measure of the health status of the population is the number of years spent in health, the time spent by the individual without major health problems. Based on 2019 European Union data, this was 61.7 years in Hungary, which is a shorter span of time than the EU average, which is 64.6 years. In 2019, the healthy life expectancy of Hungarian women was 63 years, for men it was 61 years, which is 16 years and 12 years lower than life expectancy at birth, i.e., they struggle with diseases during their lives for this amount of time. According to Eurostat data, Hungarian women can expect a disease-free life 2.3 years less and men 3.5 years less than the EU average. (Internet 3)

In Hungary, the death rate in all age groups is higher than in the EU average.

Examining domestic lifestyle habits, it can be established that obesity (24.5% of the population are obese), alcohol consumption (6.3% of the population regularly drinks alcohol), and smoking (24.9% of the population smokes daily) is higher in Hungary than the EU average. Fewer people in our country exercise regularly (54% of the population), as well as the proportion of those who regularly consume vegetables and fruits is low (36.3% of the population do not consume it at all on a daily basis). Accordingly, the occurrence of

chronic diseases (diabetes, high blood pressure, liver cirrhosis) rate in Hungary is higher than the European Union average. (Internet 3)

3. Material and method

After an overview of health as a value, healthy lifestyle, health literacy and a general overview of health status of Hungarian population, we would like to analyze our own research results in the light of the ELEF surveys. (Internet 4)

Our own research is one part of our analysis. The questionnaire survey was carried out in November 2019 among the students of University of Nyíregyháza. [12] The sample included 114 people (N=114) full-time and correspondence sports major university students in the research, so the selection of participants was not random. We used a paper-based research, self-completion questionnaire method. Filling out the questionnaire took approximately 20-25 minutes. The items of the questionnaire examined general demographic data, lifestyle factors (diet habits, legal forms of harmful addictions) and sport habits.

The second part was based on European Population Health Survey that was made in Hungary for the third time in the fall of 2019. The ELEF questionnaire examined the health status of respondents', aged 15 years and older, their use of the health care system, their use of medicines and medicinal products, nutritional supplements, diseases prevention, failure to use the necessary services, their opinion about the health care system, the factors affecting general well-being, health, care, assistance and background factors. Further examined lifestyle factors included height, weight, exercise, nutrition, smoking, alcohol consumption and social relations.

4. Results

4.1. Assessment of the state of health among the Hungarian population

An indicator of health status based on self-assessment – the opinion of the respondents about their own state of health – is a widely accepted indicator of health assessment.

In 2019, 62% of respondents rated their health status as good or very good. (Internet 3)

Health condition is closely related to age, education, and to income. One in ten person judged their own health status as bad or very bad. Those who rate their health as poor or very poor had nearly 6-fold difference based on their education, and a nearly 8-fold difference based on income status, in favor of those with higher education qualifications and those who belong to the fifth with the highest income.

Self-reported statistics and GP records show that the frequency of the most common diseases could be reduced by developing a proper lifestyle. People consider healthy lifestyle important in our country: 26% of people think that they can very much participate in keeping their own health, according to another 58% they can do a lot for their own health and well-being. (Internet 4)

4.2. Changes in lifestyle habits in Hungary in the light of ELEF surveys

Smoking habits: In Hungary in 2019, every third man and every fourth woman smoked. In the case of gender, the 18–34 year olds had the largest a proportion of smokers. Thirty-seven percent of smokers were in a less favorable financial situation, every seventh person with higher education qualification, and one in five among those with the highest incomes were smokers.

Alcohol consumption: In 2019, 9.3% of men aged 15 and over, and 1.5 % of women could be classified as heavy drinkers. Thirty-nine percent of women and 19% of men claimed that they had never consumed alcohol. The number of non-drinkers is lower with higher education qualifications and those living in more favorable income conditions.

Eating and nutrition: One-sixth of Hungarians aged 15 and older are overweight or obese. Almost 50% of the population consumes milk and dairy products every day, and a third of them consumes meat products. Women, older people, and people with higher education qualifications tend to eat more vegetable and fruit.

Exercise: In our country, 59% of the adult population does not exercise at all in their free time. Three out of ten people do 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week, fulfilling the WHO recommendation. A third of adults do not play sports, but do the right amount of physical activity during their worktime.

Health status: Measured on a five-point scale, the domestic population aged 15 and over rated his own health at an average of 3.7 in 2019. Self-assessment of health status strongly depends – especially in the case of middle-aged people - on education.

Can we do something for our health? According to the 2019 European population health survey results, almost all Hungarians (98%) think that they can.

Examining lifestyle habits shows that a change had occurred compared to the 2009 ELEF results in men's smoking habits. By 2019, with the exception of graduates of the primary level of education, the number of daily smokers decreased**.** The total number of heavy drinkers increased, typically in the case of women, and an increase was experienced also among those with higher education qualifications. In 2019, 55% of the population consumed fruit on a daily basis, while 45% of the population consumed vegetables on a daily basis.

150 minutes of physical exercise per week was performed by 30% of adult population in accordance with the WHO recommendation. The number of obese people increased in both sexes. In 2019, the number of obese and overweight people among men was higher than in the case of women. Thirty-four percent of the population, aged 15 and older, fell into the overweight category, and 24% into the category of obesity.

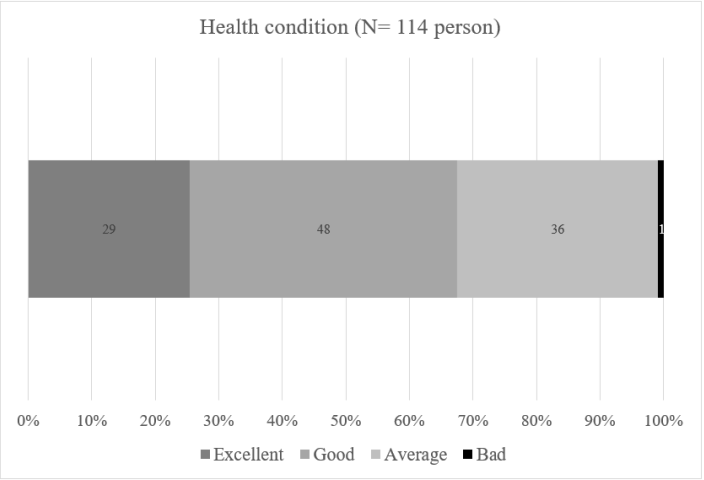
The largest number of normal body type is found among people with higher education qualifications. (Internet 5)

4.3. Our own research in the light of the ELEF 2019 survey

In our own research, almost two-thirds of the students considered their own state of health good or very good. When asked how motivated they were by their health, and 95.6% of them said that they can do a lot for the preservation of their own health.

In the ELEF survey (2019), 62% of the respondents considered their own health status as good or very good, and the state of health showed a correlation with age, education and income.

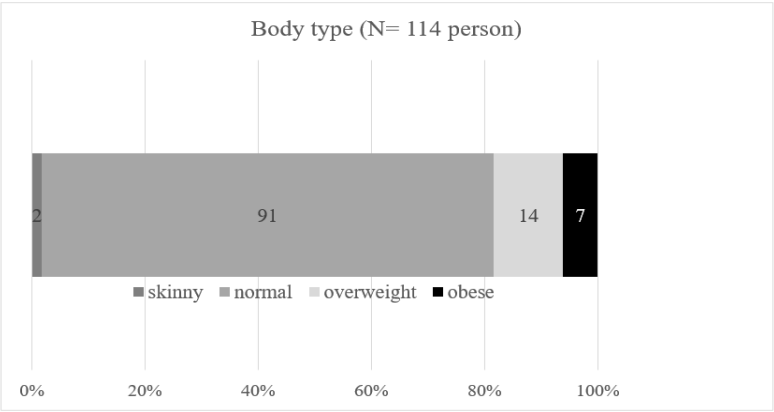
Figure 1. Health Assessment



Examining the lifestyle factors in our own research, 80% of the students had normal body weight, 18% were overweight. (Figure 2)

Looking at the ELEF survey (2019), 34% of the population aged 15 and over are in the category of overweight, and 24% in the obese category. It was found that the higher education a person received, the higher their chance was do develop normal body type.

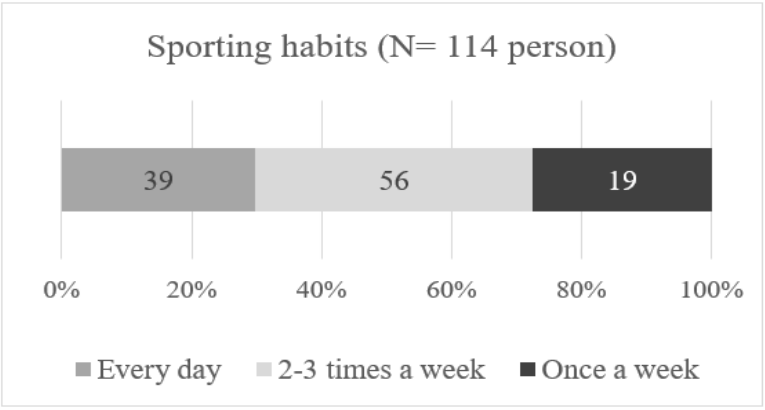
Figure 2. Lifestyle factors: Weight



Examining sports habits in our research, among our students, three quarters of them exercised on a daily basis. (Figure 3)

Based on the ELEF survey (2019), a 150 minutes of exercise is performed weekly by 31% of the population (women: 24.7%, men: 33.1%).

Figure 3. Sporting habits

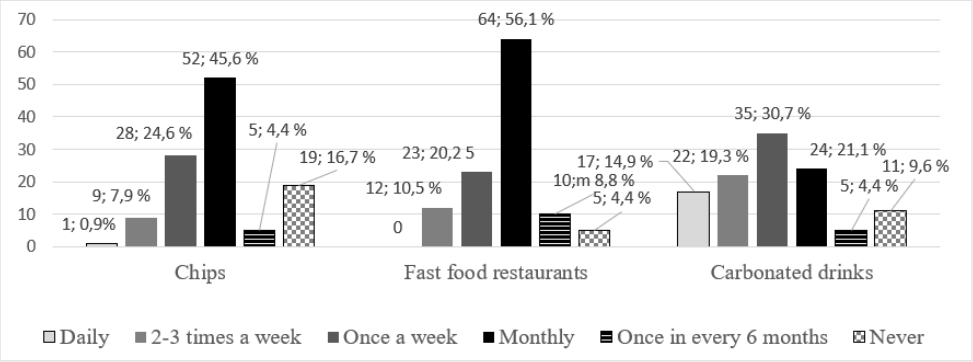


Examining sports major students, we thought it was important to ask them what role a healthy diet played in their lives. Two third of them answered healthy eating was an important aspect, and unhealthy eating habits were not typical in their life. During the examination of lifestyle habits we were curious about how often young consumers made unhealthy food choices (high sugar, carbohydrate and trans fat).

24.6% of the respondents consume crisps weekly, and 45.6% does monthly. 56.1% of students go to a fast food restaurant every month, 20.25% every week.

30.7% of young people consume carbonated drinks weekly, while 21.1% consume them monthly. Daily crisps consumption is rare, 0.9%, similar to fast food consumption, which these students avoid on a daily basis. The amount of carbonated drinks consumed daily was 14.9%, here they preferred the choice of low-carbohydrate drinks. (Figure 4)

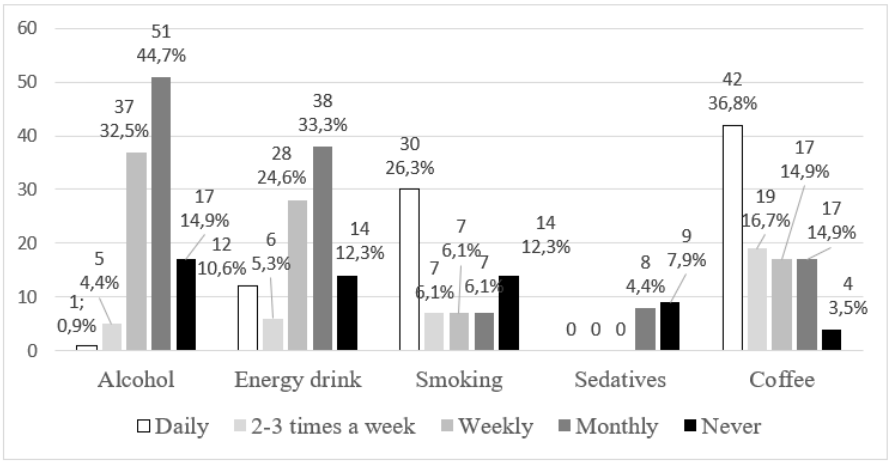
Figure 4. Eating habits



According to the ELEF survey (2019), 55% of the population consumes fruits daily, 45% of them consumes vegetables daily. 60,1% of the population who consumed fruits and vegetables on a daily basis were women, while 50,6% were men.

Legal drug use, like that of alcohol, energy drinks, coffee and smoking habits were also examined.

Figure 5. Alcohol, energy drinks, smoking, sedatives, coffee consumption



32.5% of the examined students consume alcohol weekly. The number of monthly consumers is 44.7%. Energy drink and coffee consumption is surprisingly high. The number of the regular energy drink consumers, which means drinking at least once a month, is 73.8%. The percentage of regular (daily) and occasional (weekly, monthly) coffee consumption is 83.3%. When it comes to smoking, 26.3% of the respondents said they smoked on a daily basis. The consumption of sedatives is not typical, 4.4% use them every month. (Figure 5) One-fifth of students smoke regularly every day, almost two-thirds drink alcohol occasionally.

According to the ELEF survey (2019), 22.6% of women and 28.6% of men in Hungary smoke on a daily basis. This number was not influenced by the age of the participants. Weekly alcohol consumption among women was 10.7%, and 29.9% in the case of men. Total weekly alcohol consumption grew, which was especially typical for women, even among those with higher education qualifications.

Overall, compared to our 2019 research, we obtained similar results as ELEF2019 study. (Barabásné–Olajos, 2020)

5. Summary

Looking at the health situation in 2019, Hungarians can expect to live a healthy life for an average of 62 years. The number of years spent in health has increased, and the population has an increasingly positive view of their health. Four-tenth of people aged 16 or older have a chronic disease or other long-term health problems. Health behavior risk factors are to blame for half of the mortality.

Health as a value is a set of factors that can be an asset value in achieving, maintaining, and restoring a suitable state of health. Values in everyday life are health-conscious eating, exercise and sports, the exclusion of smoking, alcohol consumption, drugs and other substances.

Health status and socio-economic background variables are closely correlate and affect each other. By increasing the socio-economic background variables that influence health, it would be possible to contribute to the development of a healthier life, further increasing social and economic efficiency as well.

Programs aimed at the wider promotion of a healthy lifestyle could improve the health status of the population.

Examining the lifestyle factors of the young age group is also of great importance, as they will be the workers and consumers of the future. During their university studies, they make their own daily decisions about their lifestyle.

Experiences during the university years are very decisive in shaping the way

of life later on. Healthy lifestyle, health promotion, lifelong learning, the importance of creative thinking must be made a part of the lives of young people studying in higher education.

If we are able to motivate our students to be health conscious, equip them with knowledge, they will be able to lead a much more efficient lifestyle.

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