

Exploring Nursing Students' Perceptions of Mid-Break Snacks: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

Background: Amid long lectures and clinical demands, nursing students need more than just motivation; they need fuel. While mid-break snacks are known to boost alertness and ease fatigue, little is known about how students themselves perceive the value of these snacks in the academic setting.

Aim: This descriptive study aimed to assess nursing students' perceptions of mid-break snacks, identify commonly consumed snack types, and examine attitudes toward structured snack breaks.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 120 undergraduate nursing students at the Holy Spirit Institute of Nursing Education. Data were collected via a structured, validated Google Form questionnaire that included demographic details, perception scale items, snack preference checklist, and attitude-based questions. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used for data analysis.

Results:

- 85% of students agreed that mid-break snacks help maintain energy during lectures, while 78% reported improved concentration.
- Fruits (40%) and packaged snacks (35%) were the most preferred snack types.
- 82% supported the inclusion of structured snack breaks in the academic schedule.

Conclusion: Nursing students view mid-break snacks as beneficial for energy, focus, and learning. The practice is already implemented at our institute, reinforcing its positive impact and potential as a model for other institutions.

Keywords: Mid-break snacks, Nursing students, Perception, Academic performance

INTRODUCTION

“A Banana Between Two Lectures”

At 10:45 AM, midway through a demanding nursing lecture, Aisha reached into her bag for a granola bar. A familiar rustle echoed in the classroom as several students unwrapped snacks, some fruit, others a packet of biscuits. For many nursing students, these mid-break moments are not just about food, they're survival rituals in the marathon of academic life.

Long academic hours, emotional demands, and cognitive fatigue are daily companions for nursing students. Emerging research highlights the link between nutrition and academic performance, with balanced mid-break snacks shown to enhance alertness and reduce classroom fatigue (Micha et al., 2017). However, there is limited literature focusing on how students perceive these snacks, not just as food, but as a part of their learning toolkit.

This study explores how nursing students perceive the role of mid-break snacks in supporting their academic journey, the types of snacks they prefer, and their attitude toward having structured snack breaks during their schedule.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was adopted for this research. The study was conducted at the Holy Spirit Institute of Nursing Education among undergraduate nursing students enrolled in the institution. A total of 120 students participated in the survey. The sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The tool consisted of four sections: demographic details, a perception scale using Likert-type items, a snack preference checklist, and attitude-based questions related to structured snack breaks. Content validity of the tool was established by seeking expert opinions from nursing faculty and professionals in the field of nutrition and health education. Necessary corrections were made based on the suggestions to ensure the clarity and relevance of the items. The questionnaire was administered digitally via Google Forms, and the responses were collected from all eligible and consenting students. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The results were tabulated and interpreted in alignment with the stated objectives of the study.

Ethical Considerations

- Ethical permission obtained from the institutional research committee.
- Informed consent was taken from participants.
- Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile

- Total participants: 120 nursing students.
- Age range: 18–24 years.
- Gender: 100 % female.

Objective 1: Perception Regarding Usefulness of Mid-Break Snacks

- 85% agreed that mid-break snacks help maintain energy during lectures.
- 78% reported improved concentration after consuming snacks.
- 70% felt snacks helped them stay attentive throughout sessions.

Objective 2: Types of Snacks Commonly Consumed

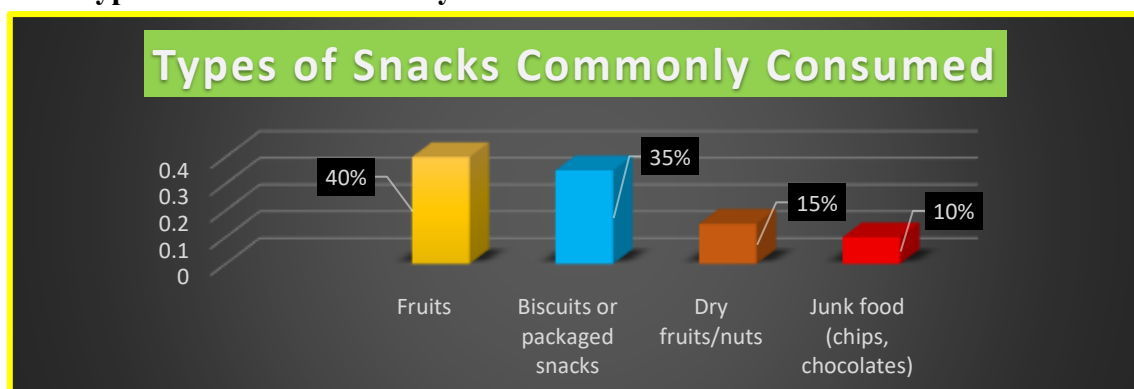


Fig 1: Types of snacks commonly consumed

Objective 3: Attitudes Toward Structured Snack Breaks

- 82% supported the idea of including a designated snack break in the academic timetable.
- 75% believed a short snack break would reduce classroom fatigue.
- 60% felt it would improve overall academic performance and participation.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study reflect a predominantly positive perception of mid-break snacks among nursing students. A large majority of students reported enhanced concentration and reduced fatigue after consuming snacks during class breaks. This is consistent with literature indicating that small, nutritious meals or snacks can improve cognitive functioning, mood, and academic engagement (Micha et al., 2017). The preference for healthier options such as fruits and nuts suggests a growing awareness of nutrition and health among the students. However, a notable proportion still preferred packaged or less healthy options, indicating the need for nutritional guidance within academic institutions.

The strong student support for incorporating structured snack breaks into the academic schedule highlights the demand for holistic learning environments that cater to physical as well as mental needs. Educational institutions may consider implementing short, scheduled breaks with access to healthy snacks to enhance learning outcomes and student well-being.

CONCLUSION

Mid-break snacks are more than a luxury; they're a vital support for nursing students' energy, focus, and classroom engagement. This study highlights students' strong preference for structured snack breaks, urging institutions to adopt nutrition-friendly academic routines.

At the Holy Spirit Institute of Nursing Education, a 15-minute snack break at 10:00 AM is already part of the daily schedule, an approach that likely reinforces the positive perceptions observed. Such simple, student-centered practices can go a long way in boosting wellness and academic success in high-demand learning environments.

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