THE LEVEL OF HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG YARMOUK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARDS IT

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Abstract:

The current study aims to examine the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students, as well as to investigate differences in health awareness based on variables (gender and college). To achieve the objectives of the study, a questionnaire consisting of (32) items was administered to a sample of (800) male and female students at Yarmouk University. The findings demonstrated a medium level of general health awareness among the participants, as the percentage of response reached (64.80%). In addition to statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among students attributed to the college variables in favor of scientific colleges, and the gender variable in favor of female students. The study suggested holding workshops for students to increase their health awareness and enriching university courses with health awareness material, particularly in majors such as sports, health, health education, and public health.

Key words: Health Awareness, Attitudes, University Students.

Introduction:

People's health is one of their most valuable assets, and it is one of the first goals that educational institutions strive for. Therefore, the responsibility to preserve it extends to all institutions of society, especially since societies today face health issues and problems that necessitate finding effective ways to limit its spread to avoid destroying the lives of many people.

Education and health are two interconnected elements that assist the learner in explaining health phenomena, searching for the causes of diseases and ways to prevent them, and making the right decisions in this regard (Al-Shalhoub, 2013), resulting in a higher level of public health among learners. This confirms that the role of education is not limited to developing educational processes in terms of education strategies, classroom environment, and curricula, but also includes focusing on behaviors related to public health maintenance through the implementation of a variety of different programs and activities which aimed at spreading health awareness among students and providing Healthy school environment and health care through conducting medical examinations and awareness programs inside or outside the school (Qteishat, Al-Biyari, Nazzal, Abdel Rahim, 2019).

In examining the extent to which the growth of static life is associated with the health of the body in the United Kingdom, the Journal of Sports and Medical Sciences (2011) reported that some external obstacles such as a lack of time and a lack of health awareness are among the main factors that negatively affect the health of the body (Fuqaha, 2020).

The concept of health education and awareness refers to educating and raising individuals' awareness to modify their behavior and habits, particularly in the event of disease outbreaks within the community. Instilling social habits that support the health aspect and its development, such as exercise, healthy nutrition, and proper habits, is also important. The success of establishing health awareness among individuals is closely related to the formation of a significant aspect of their personality, and thus this issue must receive more attention, as is the case with any academic level's regular educational process (Harb, 2019).

Education and health awareness may contribute to raising the health level of individuals in general, which leads to enhanced production and savings in medical spending, as there is a close relationship between having good food and sports activity in enjoying good health. It is also important to direct individuals to methods for helping them in assessing their health status (Haddad, 2000).

Scientific research has shown that being a well-educated person does not necessitate being health conscious. As a result, attention must be paid to practicing sports activities from a practical standpoint to improve health, particularly by increasing the efficiency of the circulatory and respiratory systems, which are directly responsible for other body systems, especially the muscular system (Al-Marassi, and Abdel-Majid, 2010).

According to Nazi (2021), the ideal person is the person who enjoys high levels of health as represented by physical, mental, psychological, social, and health integration. And that

participating in sports activities helps to prevent the most common modern diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, respiratory diseases, obesity, overweight, and body deformities. He added that the health aspect is divided into two parts: health culture (the acquisition of health knowledge and information) and health awareness (the practice and application of that knowledge and information in practice). Therefore, the curricula in the faculties of different Algerian universities concerned with imparting health knowledge and information by teaching some relevant optional courses such as health education, sports and health, health-related fitness, public health, and first aid to provide opportunities for university students to be health educated. However, Qaddoumi (2005) confirms that individuals do not have to be health-conscious despite their health culture. For example, some individuals are given knowledge and information about the harmful effects of smoking and the effect on physical exertion. However, some of them are still keen to smoke. So, the individual, in this case, is health-educated, but not health conscious.

Barioadah & Almuntashiri (2020) defines Health Awareness as "the citizens' familiarity with information or health facts and their sense of responsibility towards their health and the health of others, which is the intentional health practice as a result of understanding and persuasion, and the transformation of those health practices into habits practiced without feeling or thinking." Kammash (2015) considered it as "the amount of information that individuals possess regarding the prevention of diseases and following health instructions to stay away from everything that might affect health." While Qandil (1990) defined it as "the positive behavior that affects health, and the ability to apply this information positively in daily life constantly, that acquires the form of a habit that directs the individual's abilities to determine his integrated home duties that maintain his health and vitality, within the limits of its potential".

Given the importance of health awareness in general for different individuals and at all ages for growth and sound health, many studies have been conducted to investigate health awareness. Al Arabi, Masoudi, Khadhoum (2019) investigate the relationship between health awareness and the level of physical activity (NAP). A Health Awareness questionnaire and physical activity level scale were applied to (67) students at the Department of Science and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities at the University Center in El-Bayed. The participants were also interviewed. The findings demonstrated a strong correlation between health awareness and the level of physical activity (NAP).

In a recent study, Nazy (2021) aimed to investigate the relationship between health awareness and the practice of health behavior for teachers in the intermediate stage practicing sports. The study was conducted on a sample of 80 students in Blida by employing the descriptive approach and using health awareness and health behavior scales. The results yielded no statistically significant correlation between health awareness and the practice of healthy behavior for the study sample members. Another recent study by Fuqaha (2020) aimed to identify the level of health and nutritional awareness among (137) female trainers and participants in fitness centers in the northern West Bank governorates by using the

descriptive approach and using health awareness measures. Findings revealed that the level of health and nutritional awareness among female trainers and participants in the fitness centers was high and that there was a significant relationship between the level of health awareness and the level of nutritional awareness.

Al-Hawari, Qazquz, Bin Shmeisha (2018) sought to examine the differences in the level of health awareness among university residency students who are practicing and non-practicing sports recreational activities by using the descriptive approach. A questionnaire (Health Awareness) was applied to a sample of (280) male students. The results indicated that all areas of health awareness came at a high level, including the total degree of health awareness fields, except for the field of stature, which came at an average level for university residence students at the White University Center practicing recreational sports activities. The overall percentage of the questionnaire was (71,60%). As for the level of areas of health awareness among university residency students at Al Bayadh university center who do not practice recreational sports activities, it came at a medium level, including the total degree of health awareness fields. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the areas of health awareness among university residency students who practiced and who did not practice recreational sports activities in favor of university residency students practicing recreational sports activities for males.

Using a descriptive-analytical approach, Al-Muhaizeh (2019) examined the reality of the practice of physical activity by female students at King Saud University as a healthy lifestyle, identifying their motives to engage in sports, their level of health awareness, and the obstacles preventing them from practicing physical activity as a healthy lifestyle. Interviews were conducted with a sample of (8) female students. The results of the study revealed that the students practiced various physical activities as a healthy lifestyle to maintain an appropriate weight, health, youth, and good appearance. The study also revealed academic pressure and distance between the club and their house play a critical challenge for them to practice sports, however, the participants in the club agreed that there are no obstacles because, from their point of view, they are their favorite hobby.

Harb (2019) conducted a study to identify the compatibility of the level of health awareness among students of preparatory programs at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Riyadh with the vision of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 2030. This study was conducted on a random sample of (232) male and female students, and a questionnaire was applied to them to measure the level of health awareness. The level of general health awareness among the participants was medium, and that there are statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among students attributed to the variables of the major in favor of the applied major, and for the variable of gender in favor of the female students.

To get acquainted with the level of health awareness of the students of the Department of Physical Education and Sports Science in the College of Education for Girls, Zahaf, and Zahaf (2019) used the descriptive approach by applying the health awareness scale on a

sample of (50) female students from the Department of Physical Education and Sports Sciences. The findings suggested that the level of health awareness among the female students was medium, the highest level of health awareness among them was in the field of personal health, where the lowest level of health awareness was in the field of sports activity. And there are statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among female students, attributed to the academic year and in favor of the fourth year. Based on the foregoing and my experience in the academic field teaching some courses related to health awareness, I discovered that the majority of students have a healthy culture but are not health conscious, confirming the importance of conducting such a study for university students because they are the most important segment in society.

Statement of Problem

After reviewing studies related to health awareness, the researcher found that these focused on students in schools, sports centers, and others in general, which prompted her to conduct the current study on an important segment of society represented by the students at Yarmouk University to identify their level of health awareness.

Previous research found that the level of health awareness among students varied. The findings of (Harb, 2019; Zahaf and Zahaf, 2019) revealed a moderate level of health awareness, whereas the findings of Fuqaha (2020) revealed a high level of health awareness. The researcher also conducted personal interviews with 12 faculty members to gauge their perspectives on the level of health awareness among female students at this stage. They responded that female students lack a lot of information about public health, disease prevention methods, healthy eating habits, and general and personal hygiene, and emphasized the importance of spreading health awareness through collaboration between the university and the authorities in charge. Therefore, the need arose to identify the level of health awareness among students.

From the aforementioned, the research problem can be determined by answering the following main question:

"What is the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students?"

This question requires answering the following sub-questions:

1. What is the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students attributed to gender and type of college variables?

Objectives of the study:

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identifying the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students.

2. Identifying the differences in the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students according to the variables gender and type of college.

Study importance

The study importance lies in the following points:

1. Shedding light on the importance of promoting health awareness among students

2. Drawing the attention of the authors and developers of the curricula in the Department of Physical Education to the importance of including topics related to health awareness and assisting in raising awareness of it.

3. Its results may benefit the new research on health awareness and contribute to the advancement of education among students.

4. This study provides a measure of health awareness that will aid researchers in developing similar research tools in the future.

5. Emphasize the significance of sport in terms of acquiring other healthy behaviors.

6. Specialists in the field of health psychology may benefit from the study's findings as this study will provide clear health data about students' attitudes towards practicing health habits as well as showing their level of health awareness. Furthermore, helping them to plan proper health developmental programs for this segment of society.

Study Limitation:

1. Spatial limitation: Yarmouk University

2. Objective limitation: the study tool used by the researcher (the health awareness scale).

3. Time limitation: the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 AD.

4. Human limitation: Yarmouk University students, first semester, the academic year 2021-2022.

Terminology of study:

Health awareness: Aliwa (2015) defines it as "translating health knowledge, information, and experiences into behavioral patterns among individuals". Procedurally, it means the degree that the student obtains on the health awareness measurement questionnaire used in the study.

Undergraduate students: They are the students who are studying in the Faculty of Physical Education for the academic year 2021-2022 AD.

Methods and Procedures

Study approach:

The descriptive approach was used to describe, analyze, and interpret the results of students' responses to the study tool.

Population and Sampling:

The study population consisted of all the (18000) students of the humanities and scientific faculties during the first semester of the academic year 2021/2022. Where (800) students, who were selected randomly participated in this study, representing approximately (19%) of the study population (see Table 1).

Table (1)

Distribution of the participants according to the study variables (n=800)

independent variables	Level	Frequency	(%)
Gender	Male	252	31.5 %
	female	548	68.5 %
the college	humanity	365	45.6 %
	Scientific	435	54.4 %

Instrument:

A questionnaire was used as an instrument for collecting data related to the study variables, which the researcher developed by reviewing many previous studies, including (Nazi, 2021; Al-Hawari et al.,2018; Harb, 2019). The scale included (32) items representing behavioral practices related to awareness. A five-point Likert scale was used. Each response is represented numerically as follows: very high (5); high (4); medium (3), low (2), and (1) for very low level. All the items have positive attitudes as they express the level of health awareness. The overall reliability coefficient of responses reached (0.83), which is high and satisfies the purposes of the study. To check the face validity of the instrument, it was presented to a committee of experts and academics.

Variables:

1. The independent variables include:

Gender: It has two levels: male and female.

The College: It has two levels: humanitarian and scientific.

2. Dependent variable:

It is represented in the response of the participants to a questionnaire measuring the level of health awareness.

Statistical Analysis:

To address the questions of the study, the researchers used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program, using the following statistical treatments:

1 - Finding means and percentages for each item and its field to determine the level of health awareness.

2 - One Way ANOVA and Sidak Test for dimensional comparisons between means when necessary, to determine the effect of independent variables on the level of health awareness.

Correction criteria

To interpret the results, and given that the response scale is five, these percentages were adopted, as shown in Table (2).

Table (2)

Correction criteria

Mean	Level
<80%	Very high
70-79%	High
69-69%	Medium
50-59%	Low
>50%	Very low

Results

Results of the first question:

"What is the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students?" Descriptive analysis was used to answer this question (means, percentage) for the fields of Health Awareness as shown in Tables (3, 4,5,6).

Table (3)

Descriptive analysis of the overall level of health awareness (n = 800)

N	Field	Mean	(%)	Level
1	healthy nutrition	3.35	67.02	Medium
2	personal health	3.39	67.84	Medium
3	Doing physical activity	2.92	58.42	Low
Overall score		3.24	64.80	Medium

The overall level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students was medium in the field of healthy nutrition and the field of personal health. The percentage of their responses were (67.02 - 67.84%) respectively. The field of physical activity obtained a low level with a percentage of (64.80%). Where the overall score of the level of health awareness among students at Yarmouk University for all fields was medium and with a percentage (64.80%).

A. Healthy nutrition

Table (4)

Descriptive analysis of the level of health awareness for the field "healthy nutrition" (n=800)

N	Items	Mean	(%)	Level
1	I take a shower every day	66.3	20.73	Very high
2	I sleep early	3.02	60.40	Medium
3	I take care of having cold or hot drinks between main meals.	3.27	65.40	Medium
4	Drinking coffee and tea helps me focus.	2.7	54.00	Low
5	I'm curious about the food components that provide energy.	3.22	64.40	Medium
6	I maintain my weight properly.	4.02	80.40	Very high
7	I eat fresh fruits and vegetables constantly	3.51	70.20	High

8	I try to stay away from fried food and prefer cooked food.	3.48	69.60	Medium
Overall score		3.35	67.02	Medium

• Maximum response score (5)

The responses of the participants in the field of Healthy nutrition are represented by the statements (1–8). A very high level of health awareness was demonstrated among students in item (6), where the response rate was (80.40 %), as well as in items 1-7, where the response rate ranged from (70.20 - 71.80 %). While the response rate was low in (2, 3, 5), it was medium in (2, 3, 5). (60.40 - 69.60 %). Item (4), where the response rate was low, received a low level (54.00 %). In terms of overall health awareness among university students, it was average, and the response rate was low (67.02 %).

B. Personal health

Table (5)

Descriptive analysis of the level of health awareness for personal health

(n=800)

N	Items	Mean	(%)	Level
1	I make sure to get enough sleep and rest.	2.86	57.20	Low
2	Take a shower, especially after working out.	3.64	76.40	High
3	I consider the air temperature when selecting my clothing.	3.24	72.80	High
4	I make sure to live in a clean and healthy environment with plenty of natural light and ventilation.	4.10	82.00	Very high
5	I trim my nails and feet as needed.	3.12	64.20	Medium
Overall score		3.39	67.84	Medium

• Maximum response score (5)

Table (5) shows that the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students was very high on item (4), with a percentage of response of (82.00 %), while it was high on items 2, 3, with a percentage of (72.80. -76.40 %) respectively. Item (5) obtained a medium level with a percentage of (64.20 %). While item (1) ranked last with a low level and a percentage of (57.20%). The overall level of health awareness among students in the field of personal health was medium, with the response percentage reaching (67.84 percent).

C. Doing physical activity

Table (6)

Descriptive analysis of the level of health awareness of physical activity (n = 800)

N	Items	Mean	(%)	Level
1	I walk for a long time to increase blood circulation.	2.68	53.60	Low
2	I enjoy sports and other recreational activities.	3.42	68.40	Medium
3	I allocate time for physical activity.	2.81	56.20	Low
4	I stop participating in sports that could result in an injury.	3.27	65.40	Medium
5	If I was tired, I avoid exercising.	2.23	44.60	Very low
6	I participate in sports activities to feel happy and satisfied.	3.20	64.00	Medium
7	Before joining the school team, I make sure to get a medical exam.	3.05	61.00	Medium
8	After recovering from an injury, I schedule a medical exam.	2.84	56.80	Low
9	Each registered student must have a health card that details his or her medical condition.	2.79	55.80	Low
Overall score		2.92	58.42	Low

Maximum response score (5)

The level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students was medium on items (2, 4, 6, 7) where the percentage of responses were (68.40, 65.40, 64.00, 61.00%) respectively. Items (1, 3, 8, 9) obtained a low level with the percentage ranging between (53.60 and 56.80 %). Item (5) obtained a very low level with a percentage of (44.60%). The overall level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students in the field of doing physical activity was low, as evidenced by the low response percentage (58.42 %).

Results of the second question:

"Are there statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students attributed to gender and type of college variables?" One-way analysis of variance was used to obtain the answer to the second question. Table (7) illustrates the descriptive analysis of health awareness according to the study variables, while the results

of Table (8) show the results of the ANOVA to determine the significance of the differences in health awareness attributable to the study variables.

Table (7)

Descriptive analysis of health awareness among university students according to gender, and college variables (n = 800)

independent variables	Level	Mean	SD
Gender	Male	2.94	0.252
	Female	3.25	0.469
College	humanity	2.89	0.345
	Scientific	3.05	0.311

Table (8)

ANOVA results of according to the variables of gender and college

independent variables	Source of variance	SS	DF	MS	Calculated F	Sig*
Gender	Between groups	0.639	1	0.639	5.611	0.000*
	Within groups	90.94	797	0.114		
	Total	91.58	799			
College	Between groups	4.901	1	4.901	45.125	0.000*
	Within groups	86.67	798	0.109		
	Total	91.58	799			

* Statistically significant at the level (α = 0.05).

Table (8) demonstrated statistically significant differences in the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students attributed to the gender variable in favor of the female students and the college variable in favor of the scientific colleges.

Discussion

By examining Tables (3, 4, 5, 6), we concluded that the level of health awareness among university students was average, and the overall percentage of health awareness in all areas reached (64.80%). This result may attribute to the fact that universities usually provide optional health education courses for students in various majors, also, this study provided the university student with information about sound health practices, Therefore, they are

health-educated but at the same time, they are not health conscious to benefit from the provided information about healthy behavioral practices. This result coincides with the result of (Harb,1019), which emphasized that health awareness is about transforming what an individual learns of health knowledge, information, and experiences into behavioral patterns. Personal health demonstrates the highest level of health awareness with a percentage of (67.84%). In this field, the item reads "I make sure to live in a clean and healthy environment with plenty of natural light and ventilation," occupied the first rank with a percentage of (82.00%).

The lowest level of health awareness field was for the field "Doing physical activity", with a percentage of (58.42%) and for the Item that reads "If I was tired, I avoid exercising," with a percentage of (44.60%). The reason for this is due to the lack of interest in health education at an early age, whether at the family or school level, and the basic aspects of the curriculum in developing health awareness. This result is consistent with the results of (Al-Hawari et al., 2018; Harb, 2019).

Concerning the differences in the level of health awareness among participants attributed to gender and type of college, the results of Tables (7, 8) revealed that the differences in the level of health awareness among Yarmouk University students attributed to college variables and were statistically significant at the level ($\alpha = 0.05$). The differences were in favor of the scientific faculties, and the researcher attributed this to the fact that students in the scientific faculties may have a healthier culture as a result of scientific materials and information acquisition, as well as their belief in the importance of healthy habits.

Regarding the gender variable, the differences were in favor of female students. The researcher believes that the reason is due to the fact that female students are more concerned about having a good body shape, avoiding obesity, and gaining agility more than male students. This leads them to seek a better lifestyle and that considerably will raise their level of health awareness. This result coincides with the study of (Harb, 2019,) while it differs from the results of (Al-Hawari et al.,2018), where the differences were in favor of male students.

Recommendations:

In light of the study objectives and results, the researchers recommend the following-:

1. Holding health seminars constantly, by calling doctors to discuss topics dealing with health awareness.

2. Conducting cultural and health activities and competitions for students to raise health awareness.

3. Preparing tailored courses in health awareness to be taught in universities.

4. Focusing on health awareness in all institutions of the country through various media (television, newspapers, and magazines) to raise health awareness.

5. Conducting a similar study on health awareness among other tracks at the university.

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