
Title

Healthy Habits, Physical Activity, Stress, and Food Consumption Trends in Chilean Adults with Irritable Bowel Syndrome during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased stress levels in the population due to radical lifestyle changes caused by containment measures. Studies suggest that high levels of stress may be related to the development of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). This study aims to explain how quarantine habits and lifestyles acted as risk factors for the frequency of this syndrome during the COVID-19 pandemic. An observational study was conducted with 34 Chilean participants (average age 24.5 ± 3.85 years), of whom 21 (62%) were female. Surveys on consumption trends and lifestyles created by the authors were administered. Additionally, we used the global physical activity questionnaire (GPAQ) and the depression anxiety stress scales (DASS-21) to assess psychological stress and the Rome IV criteria to assess IBS. Significant differences were found between individuals with better healthy habits compared to those with poor healthy habits. The former showed lower sedentary activity (32%, $p = 0.005$), only 27% were fast eaters (vs. 44%, $p = 0.001$), had shorter nap intervals (14% vs. 28%, $p = 0.03$), and higher vegetable consumption ($p = 0.02$). There were 20 cases (59%) of IBS, with a strong association with the female sex ($p = 0.004$), where females were 15 times more likely to develop it compared to males ($p = 0.008$). Additionally, when alcohol consumption was added to females, there was a higher likelihood of developing this syndrome ($p = 0.009$), as individuals who consumed alcohol were 12 times more likely to develop it compared to those who did not ($p = 0.02$). Among other factors, it was observed that 57% of those with the syndrome consumed drinks more often ($p = 0.02$) but consumed fewer nuts ($p = 0.009$). In conclusion, IBS has a multifactorial etiology, and correcting individual

habits such as alcohol consumption could potentially prevent or delay its development. Therefore, it is important to maintain healthy lifestyles, regardless of non-modifiable factors such as gender, in order to better cope with this syndrome.

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