Review Paper

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EATING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

This paper is about different gender might have different eating behavior. Gender is determined from the sex-based categories of female and male. They always behave differently and have different consumptions pattern. Thus, the eating behaviour of female and male will be different. Males are more likely to be masculine and will consume more calorie foods compare to females which are more likely to have the characteristics of femininity. Women tend to prefer diet to lose down weight and this may cause some health problems such as anorexia nervosa by having disordered eating behaviour. Nowadays, there are many people from developed countries are suffering from obesity and overweight. Healthy eating behaviour is important for both male and females. There are few factors that can affect the both gender to develop healthy eating behaviour. Food pyramid and balance diet are the ways to engage in healthy eating behaviour. Besides, eating out behaviour is increasing among females and males. This would affect their healthy eating behaviour due to some factors that can influence the behaviour of both gender to eat healthily. Further research is needed for different gender in eating behaviour.

Key Terms: Gender, male, female, eating behaviour, healthy eating behaviour, eating out behaviour

1. Introduction

Gender refers to a social construct that is determined from the sex-based categories of female or male (Kolyesnikova, Dodd and Wilcox, 2009). The way to differ between female and male by roles, behaviour and attitudes. Male and female always behave differently and have different consumptions pattern (Solomon, 2013). Hence, gender differences will impact on consumer behaviour. Gender differences in eating behaviour will not always be the same. The food preferences and eating styles are different between male and female. For example, female consume less calories than male which shows that females tend to eat in a more feminine style (Rolls, Fedoroff and Guthrie, 1991). This shows the behaviour of different gender will affect the pattern of consuming food. Nowadays, there is a trend to be thin in body sizes to have a better physique in society. Women have more concern about their body weight and the way to control their food choice (Glanz, et al., 1998). They try to avoid foods that contain a lot of fats that results in disordered eating behaviour and dieting behaviour in females. This is because females have more dissatisfaction with their body size compare to males (Johnson and Wardle, 2005). Besides that, the people who are suffering from obesity and overweight are increasing. Thus, healthy eating behaviour is very important to all the gender. Women are more concerned about...
healthy eating behaviour compared to men (Gough and Conner, 2006). Role of parents, teachers and friends can influence the person in healthy eating. Behaviour control is one of the ways to ensure healthy eating. Eating out behaviour is increasing among women and men. This may have an impact on their healthy eating behaviour (Bhuyan, 2011). Therefore, further studies of gender and eating behaviour are very important for understanding the eating styles and behaviour between male and female.

2. Literature Review

There are some differences between masculinity and femininity in eating behaviour. Femininity and masculinity are associated with certain personality traits. The males being masculine will eat anything to fulfil their hunger (Monge-Rojas, et al., 2015). They prefer to eat very fast and eat large quantities. Likewise, they do not care too much about becoming fat and consume high-energy foods such as junk food and all kinds of oily food. Males have higher standard body weight and metabolic rate; usually need higher energy consumption than females (Caine-Bish and Scheule, 2009). Thus, males prefer to consume fish and meat but females prefer to eat vegetables and fruits. If the men eat less and slowly, they are considered to be less masculine (Monge-Rojas, et al., 2015). The women who are having strong femininity will eat lesser amount and eat slowly compare to males. They use longer time to eat than men due to the fact that they take more bites compare to them (Hill and McCutcheon, 1984). For a woman who eats a lot and does not care about what she eats is considered manly or unfeminine. The variety in the diet will affect more on the food intake of females than males. According to Beatty (1982), the females will increase their consumption on variety of flavours of ice cream but not in males.

Furthermore, women are more likely to eat low calorie foods and evade eating too much (Chaiken and Pliner, 1987). This is because they are strongly connected to self-care via diet to keep their body shape. They are more concerned about better looking and appearance. Hence, women prefer to eat smaller meals compare to men (Rolls, Fedoroff and Guthrie, 1991). The numbers of female who have dieting behaviour and disordered eating behaviour are increasing to acquire ideal body shape (Silverstein, Peterson and Perdue, 1986). This is because they are not satisfied with their body sizes and need diet to lose weight. For the women who are involved in dieting behaviour because of their body being not thin enough but for the men who have high BMI scores only involve in dieting behaviour (McCreary and Sasse, 2000). This is because they need to raise their weight for physical appearances that conform to the societal norms (McCreary and Sasse, 2000). There is a difference between women and men to achieve weight loss. Women tend to consume less but men prefer to do exercise to reduce weight (Yates et al., 1983). Skipping breakfast is one of the unhealthy ways of dietary habit for the person to put down weight (Al-Hazzaa et al., 2011). Women always try the incorrect methods of dieting for reducing weight such as vomit and take diet pills.

The dieters are more susceptible to develop disordered eating behaviour compare to non-dieters (Antoniazzi, Zivian and Hynie, 2005). Women that have eating disorder will tend control their food intake more rigorously to lose weight. There are some problems that are faced by females who have disordered eating behaviour because of focus too much on their weight. According to Rayar and Davies (2015), eating disorder will lead to problems like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa among the females. This type of eating behaviour can affect the ability of the body to get sufficient nutrition. Besides that, disordered eating attitude will impact the emotions of women. They have difficulties in emotion regulation which means that they find it hard to identify emotions and respond to it in an adaptive way (Lafrance Robinson, Kosmerly and Mansfield-Green, 2014). In addition, eating disorder will cause the person to have low self-esteem. They expect themselves to not be able to perform well and try to avoid failure or embarrassment (Solomon, 2013).

There are reasons why women want to be thin and have a nice body shape. The first reason is women link slimness to physical attractiveness; hence they will make themselves to be
more attractive if they are thin (Antoniazzi, Zivian and Hynie, 2005). So, they will try very hard to make sure they are thin. Next, female believes that having thin body will lead them to be wealthy, social desirability and successful (Lundhol & Littrell, 1986). Their looks are very important for them to be accepted or rejected by others. For example, some of the positions in certain companies require their workers to have good appearances. The third reason is women being thin are a representation of a perfectly regulated self (Polivy and Herman, 1987). This kind of perspective is supported by the social media, that women want to achieve thin body can be completely controlled by themselves. On the other hand, there are also some reasons for males who have diet and desire to lose weight. The first reason is they want to be more attractive on physical appearance (Rolls, Fedoroff and Guthrie, 1991). This can increase their self-confidence by feeling better about themselves. Besides that, males want to have diet because it can help them to keep healthy (Rolls, Fedoroff and Guthrie, 1991). Being obese can easily cause diabetes and heart disease. Third reason is they want to have muscular bodies to look like they have more energy and feeling fit.

Recently, people who suffer from obesity and overweight are increasing especially in developed countries (Grønhøj et al., 2012). It brings the serious health problems for all the age of genders. Overweight people will have the problem of body dissatisfaction and slowly involve in disordered eating behaviour (Chan et al., 2009). People have the problem in understanding eating healthily, thus, they need to develop healthy eating behaviour among themselves. Healthy eating means an eating behaviour that allows an individual to prevent any disease and achieve physical and mental health (Chan et al., 2009). There are some reasons to develop unhealthy eating patterns among females and males. According to Power et al. (2010), people always depend on fast food and junk foods. They have difficulties in refusing those foods, hence, developing unhealthy eating attitude. These types of food contain high levels of cholesterol and often results in health problems. Base on Chan et al. (2009), unhealthy eating habits are usually developed by females and males who want to lose weight. Besides that, the different mood of individuals can also affect the eating choices in an unhealthy way (Power et al., 2010). The nature of foods that existing around women and men can influence them in dietary practices (Grønhøj et al., 2012). According to Sun, Horn and Merritt (2015), women are more likely to be healthy eaters than men. This is because they have better understanding of nutrition and higher awareness than men. They have positive attitude and high control towards healthy eating. Women prefer to eat healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits compare to men (Morin, Turcotte and Perreault, 2013).

There are few factors that can affect the general females and males to develop their healthy eating behaviour. First, the family members are the most influential people to develop healthy eating behaviour among females and males (Chan et al., 2009). This is because the credibility of family members is high. They will be more willing to trust their own families compared to other people. Family members play an important role to communicate and influence their food preferences. For example, parents are the role model for their children and able to influence them directly in eating behaviour. For those friends who have a positive attitude regarding about eating healthily can also influence them (Chan et al., 2009). Healthy eating behaviours are created through socializing with families and friends. The second factor is media that can significantly influence people about healthy eating. Television is one of the media that is used by everyone and it can encourage them to develop healthy eating behaviour (Grønhøj et al., 2012). Besides television, mobile phone and internet also are the famous media nowadays. In addition, behavioural control is the most effective way to influence the intention of females and males towards healthy eating (Fland Smith, 2006). They have the ability to control themselves and have positive attitudes towards eating healthily. Females and males will have discipline to involve in healthy eating. Governments also are one of the factors that play an important role to affect the healthy eating behaviour on females and males (Grønhøj et al., 2012). They launch healthy eating campaigns to promote healthy eating to people.

Healthy eating behaviour can be developed in few ways among females and males. First is following the food pyramid (Chan et al., 2009). Food pyramid is an effective way to guide people on how to eat healthily (Perelman, 2011). It contains various sorts of foods to supply a
healthy variety of nutrients that are required every day. Women and men should consume more grains, vegetable and fruits but consume less oil, salt and meat. Having a balance diet is good for women and men especially for those who want to lose weight (Chan et al., 2009). This is because they can consume all kind of nutrition to build a healthy body. Besides that, females and males should consume different type of foods and should not be choosy on foods (Chan et al., 2009). This is because different foods will provide different type of nutrition for a person. They can get some healthy information from magazines or newspaper about healthy foods and unhealthy foods. For example, microwave foods are unhealthy for everyone because it contains a lot of fat and little nutritious. Furthermore, women and men should not eat too fast (Chan et al., 2009). It is not healthy when they eat too fast as they will not realise that they are already full and continue to eat over limit. Women and men should not eat before bedtime. This is because the metabolic rate in our body slows down when we sleep. It is unhealthy when the extra calories cannot be digested and left in the body.

Eating out behaviour is increased among females and males. They tend to go out and try outside food rather than cook at home. They are trying to find healthy food in outside restaurants but not at home. According to Bhuyan (2011), people who are not concerned with healthy eating, they will tend to eat out more regularly. Hence, eating out behaviour will affect women and men healthy eating. This is because eating at home is healthier than eating out (Jones, 2010). The food choices at home are much healthier compared to that in outside restaurants. Therefore, the increase in the number of females and males who suffer from obesity and overweight are related to the increase in the number of people who have eating out behaviour (Chouinard et al., 2010). There are some causes that affect healthy eating behaviour because of people develop eating out behaviour. The first factor is cleanliness at restaurants (Choi and Zhao, 2014). The customers might not choose to go to the restaurant if they notice the environment there is dirty. This is because there is a higher possibility to consume dirty food at the particular restaurant thus affecting their health. Besides that, the menu of the restaurants is one of the important factors that affect the behaviour of people towards healthy eating (Bhuyan, 2011). If the restaurants always provide unhealthy foods, it might influence the individuals’ health. In addition, the services of the eating places weather is good or bad will influence the healthy eating behaviour of people (Choi and Zhao, 2014). This is because good services of the restaurants will attract more people to eat there frequently (Bhuyan, 2011). It will increase the frequency of people eating out and impact on their healthy eating behaviour.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, eating behaviour shows differences between males and females. It is controlled by social, biological and familial factors. Males are more likely to be masculine. They are taking care of themselves by making sure that they have healthy bodies. For a person who is less masculinity they will be taking care of their looks whether good or bad. On the other hand, females are more likely to have the characteristics of femininity. They are more concern about their weight and bodies shape. If a woman does not care about how she looks, she is considered less feminine which can be seen as manly. Thus, they have different patterns of eating behaviour among them. For example, females prefer to consume low calories foods which are fruits and vegetables while males are more likely to consume high calories foods which are fish and meat. Women tend to involve in disordered eating behaviour and dieting behaviour to lose weight. But men engage in dieting behaviour to gain weight and build a muscular body. Healthy eating behaviour is very important for both males and females. It can avoid them to engage in the problems of obesity and overweight. Family members, friends, media and behavioural control of individual are the main factors to develop healthy eating behaviour. There are some ways to engage in healthy eating behaviour which are following the food pyramid, have a balance diet and not being picky on food. Nowadays many people tend to eat out. This would affect their healthy eating behaviour. The cleanliness problems, menu and the services of the restaurants are the factors that influence the behaviour of people to eat healthily. Therefore, further research is needed for eating behaviour among females and males. It is important to know the
culture of the genders to develop their eating behaviour. This is because the cultural of the genders might influence their eating behaviour as well.

Reference


