

Lifestyle Patterns and Health Perception of Young Adults in Delhi

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I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced urban environment, the lifestyle patterns and health perceptions of young adults are undergoing significant transformations. Delhi, as the capital city and a rapidly growing urban hub, reflects both the opportunities and the pressures of modern living. Young adults, typically ranging from 18 to 30 years, are at a critical life stage marked by transitions educational, occupational, and social. The choices they make regarding diet, physical activity, sleep, mental health, and substance use have long-term implications for their well-being. Understanding these patterns is essential not just from a public health standpoint, but also for designing youth-oriented interventions that address evolving health needs (Patel et al., 2016).

Studies suggest that urban youth in India are increasingly adopting sedentary lifestyles, irregular eating habits, and high levels of stress, which contribute to rising rates of obesity, anxiety, depression, and lifestyle-related illnesses such as diabetes and hypertension. The pressure to succeed academically or professionally, coupled with social media influence and peer expectations, shapes how young people perceive health and define a "healthy lifestyle." In cities like Delhi, where pollution, long commute hours, and hectic schedules are part of daily life, maintaining a balanced lifestyle becomes challenging. Many young adults find themselves caught between convenience and health, often choosing fast food over nutritious meals, or screen time over physical activity (Patel et al., 2016).

When it comes to daily habits, three key areas stand out: diet, physical activity, and sleep. According to a 2020 study by ICMR-NIN, many urban youth have

unhealthy eating patterns, often depending on processed or ready-to-eat foods. Regular meals are frequently skipped, either due to time pressure or lack of interest. Physical activity is similarly neglected—college responsibilities, jobs, and digital distractions often take precedence, leaving little room for even 30 minutes of daily exercise (WHO, 2019). Sleep also poses a significant challenge. Irregular sleep patterns, late-night binge-watching, and stress related to academics or work contribute to sleep deprivation, which negatively impacts focus, mood, and energy the following day (Kumar & Tiwari, 2020).

Health perception how individuals view and assess their own health plays a significant role in shaping behaviours. For instance, a young adult who perceives themselves as "generally healthy" despite frequent fatigue, irregular meals, or anxiety, may not seek timely care or adopt preventive measures. Cultural norms also influence these perceptions. In India, health is often associated with physical appearance or body weight, while emotional and mental well-being remains under-discussed and sometimes stigmatized (Kumar & Tiwari, 2020). These attitudes contribute to delayed health-seeking behaviour, particularly around issues like depression, reproductive health, and substance use. The COVID-19 pandemic further altered health behaviours, triggering both increased awareness and heightened anxiety among youth. While some individuals embraced healthier habits like home workouts or mindfulness practices, others reported increased screen time, disturbed sleep, and mental health issues. The post-pandemic phase offers a unique moment to study how young people are redefining health in their personal lives and how sustainable these changes are in the long term (Gopalan & Misra, 2020).

This study focuses on young adults residing in Delhi,

aiming to explore their everyday lifestyle habits diet, exercise, sleep, digital media use, substance use, and stress management and how they perceive their own health status. By collecting primary data through direct interaction with 39 individuals from diverse educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, this research aims to highlight the subjective experiences, health choices, and barriers they face. Special attention is given to how gender, class, and access to information influence these lifestyle decisions and perceptions. Understanding these patterns is vital for shaping health communication strategies, university wellness programs, and community interventions that are both relatable and effective for urban youth. It is hoped that the findings from this research will contribute to a broader dialogue on youth health, encouraging policymakers, educators, and healthcare providers to adopt more youth-centred approaches (Patel et al., 2016).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Young adulthood is a unique phase of life full of transitions, ambitions, and growing responsibilities. In a fast-moving city like Delhi, young people are constantly balancing studies, work, social life, and personal goals. These everyday pressures deeply affect their lifestyle choices what they eat, how much they sleep, whether they find time to exercise, and how they deal with stress. This review looks at what existing research says about how these lifestyle patterns are shaping the health and well-being of young adults, especially in urban India. Many studies have pointed out that the urban lifestyle brings both opportunities and challenges. Young adults in cities often find themselves stuck in packed schedules, long commutes, and constant digital engagement. This leaves very little time or energy for things like cooking healthy meals or getting regular physical activity. The fast-food culture, late-night snacking, and increased screen time have now become the norm for many. What starts as a convenient option slowly becomes a habit, even when it's not the healthiest choice (Kalra & Bughra, 2013).

When it comes to daily routines, three things stand out diet, physical activity, and sleep. A study by ICMR-NIN (2020) showed that a large number of urban youths have poor eating habits, relying heavily on

processed or ready-to-eat foods. Regular meals are often skipped due to either time constraints or disinterest. Exercise, too, takes a backseat. With college work, jobs, or online content taking priority, many young people do not get even 30 minutes of physical activity a day (WHO, 2019). Sleep is another major issue. Irregular sleep schedules, binge-watching at night, or anxiety about work or academics lead to sleep deprivation, which in turn affects concentration, mood, and energy levels the next day (Kumar & Tiwari, 2020).

Mental health is just as important, but unfortunately still not openly talked about in many households. A report by NIMHANS (2021) highlighted that a large number of young Indians face stress, anxiety, or depression, but hesitate to speak about it or seek help. The reasons range from fear of judgment to not having access to affordable support. Many turn to temporary coping mechanisms smoking, drinking, or even just scrolling endlessly on social media. But these are often distractions, not solutions. As Gopalan & Misra (2020) note, the pandemic intensified many of these struggles, bringing more uncertainty and emotional exhaustion into the lives of young people (NIMHANS, 2021).

Health is often misunderstood as just being physically fit or having a certain body type. But real health includes emotional stability, balanced routines, and a sense of peace. Many young adults, influenced by social media trends, think being healthy means having a toned body or following the latest diet fad. But behind the filters and wellness reels, there's often stress, disordered eating, and self-doubt. There's a gap between how health is portrayed and how it's actually experienced in real life (Choudhury et al., 2020).

On the bright side, awareness around health is slowly improving. The pandemic made many people pause and reflect on their lifestyles. Some started working out at home, trying yoga, or exploring mental wellness practices. There was a noticeable shift towards self-care. However, as Banerjee & Chauhan (2021) point out, not all of these changes lasted especially once life began returning to "normal." The challenge now is to find long-term, realistic ways to help young people stay healthy not just physically, but mentally and

emotionally too (Banerjee & Chauhan, 2021).

III. OBJECTIVES

- To identify common lifestyle habits (diet, physical activity, sleep) among young adults in Delhi.
- To assess young adults' perceptions and awareness regarding their physical and mental health.
- To analyse the impact of lifestyle choices on perceived well-being and health outcomes.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research approach to understand the lifestyle patterns and health perceptions of young adults living in Delhi. The goal was to explore how young people view their health, what habits shape their daily lives, and what factors influence their overall well-being.

To get real and honest insights, I focused on directly interacting with individuals through primary data collection. A total of 39 young adults from different parts of Delhi participated in the study.

The participants were selected using convenience sampling, which means I approached people who were easily accessible and willing to take part in the research. This included friends, classmates, acquaintances, and young adults I connected with through social media or college networks.

Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. This included a mix of multiple-choice questions, rating scales, and a few open-ended questions. The idea was to not only get measurable data but also to understand their thoughts and feelings in their own words. I asked about their daily routines, eating habits, physical activity, mental health, sleep patterns, and how they perceive their own health.

Throughout the process, I ensured that ethical guidelines were followed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their consent was taken before collecting any data. Their responses were kept confidential, and their names or any personal identifiers were not shared in the final report.

V. RESULTS

The present study involved a survey of 39 young adults residing in Delhi, aimed at understanding their lifestyle patterns and health perceptions. Among the respondents, 44% were females while 55% were males, indicating a slightly higher male representation. A majority of the participants, around 69%, were students, followed by 17% who were employed, and 12% who were currently unemployed. When it came to substance use, 53% of the participants reported smoking, with 48% identifying as frequent smokers, suggesting a significant inclination towards regular tobacco use among the respondents. Similarly, alcohol consumption was reported by 59% of the individuals, while the remaining 30% did not consume alcohol, highlighting the presence of both risk and resilience factors in lifestyle choices.

In terms of sleep health, although a large portion (84%) stated that they receive an adequate amount of sleep, only 41% maintained a consistent sleep schedule, indicating a disparity between perceived and structured sleep habits. Physical activity levels also varied considerably: 41% of the respondents admitted to not engaging in any form of physical activity, whereas the remaining participants reported being either frequently or moderately active. Dietary habits revealed that 43% of the young adults regularly consumed junk food, while the rest opted for healthier dietary choices.

Overall, the data paints a complex picture of the lifestyle behaviours of young adults in Delhi— while some respondents demonstrate positive health practices such as adequate sleep and physical activity, a significant portion still engages in risky habits like smoking, alcohol consumption, and inconsistent sleep or diet patterns. These insights underline the need for increased awareness and targeted interventions to promote healthier living among this age group.

The health-related data gathered from the respondents reveals important insights into the self-reported health status and coping mechanisms of young adults in Delhi. A significant majority 62% reported no clinically diagnosed diseases or chronic health issues, suggesting a general perception of physical well-being

within the group. However, 38% of the participants admitted to experiencing frequent sickness, while 61% reported otherwise, indicating that despite the absence of clinical diagnoses, many still encounter recurring minor health problems. Notably, 85% of the respondents reported experiencing common health complaints such as headaches, fatigue, digestive disturbances, and anxiety conditions that, while often overlooked, can severely affect quality of life. Among these, 61% specifically linked their fatigue to academic stress, underscoring the psychological and physiological toll that educational pressure exerts on this demographic.

In terms of mental and emotional well-being, the data shows a relatively proactive approach: 61% of the participants practice some form of stress management techniques, which may include activities like meditation, exercise, journaling, or seeking social support. These coping strategies reflect an awareness of mental health and a willingness to engage in self-care. When asked to self-assess their overall health, 78% described it as excellent, good, or fair largely correlating with an absence of major health concerns. Conversely, the remaining respondents categorized their health as poor or reported dealing with chronic problems, which calls attention to a smaller but significant portion of young adults who may be in need of medical or psychological support.

Overall, the findings reflect a complex interplay between perceived health, minor recurring symptoms, and stress-related conditions, highlighting both resilience and vulnerability in the health experiences of young adults. While many consider themselves generally healthy and actively manage stress, a notable proportion still grapple with issues that warrant greater attention in public health initiatives and youth wellness programs.

VI. DISCUSSION

The responses collected from young adults in Delhi paint a very real and relatable picture of what it means to navigate health and lifestyle in today's fast-paced, pressure-filled world. Most of the participants were students or at the early stages of their careers, a phase of life that often comes with a mix of ambition,

confusion, and constant change. This emotional and psychological backdrop reflects clearly in their health habits and how they view their well-being.

One of the more striking findings is how common smoking and alcohol consumption have become. With over half of the respondents smoking and nearly 60% drinking alcohol, it's clear that these habits are not just occasional indulgences but part of many young people's everyday lives. What's concerning is that a large number of them are frequent smokers, which may suggest that they're using these substances as a way to cope with stress, peer pressure, or maybe just the weight of trying to figure life out. These choices might feel normal or even necessary in the moment, but they carry long-term consequences that are often overlooked at this age.

Sleep and physical activity show similar contradictions. While most participants felt they were getting enough sleep, only a small percentage actually followed a consistent sleep routine. And while many believed they were healthy overall, a significant number weren't engaging in any regular physical activity. It's a common situation: between classes, assignments, social life, and scrolling through social media late at night, it's easy for sleep schedules and movement to get pushed aside. But over time, these small habits shape our health in big ways.

What really stands out is how many young people are silently struggling with things like fatigue, headaches, anxiety, and digestive issues. These might seem like small problems, but when 85% of the participants report experiencing them, it's clear that something deeper is going on. Most of them don't have any diagnosed illnesses, but that doesn't mean they're feeling well. It's the invisible side of health the emotional exhaustion, the pressure to perform, the inner stress that builds up over time. For many, academic stress plays a huge role in this, with 61% linking their tiredness directly to their studies.

The fact that over 60% practice some form of stress management whether it's meditation, exercise, or talking to someone is encouraging. It shows that young adults are becoming more aware of their mental and emotional needs. But even then, it might not always be enough. The pace of life, the expectations, and the constant pressure to succeed make it hard to

feel truly at ease. Many are doing their best, but it's not always easy to balance everything.

What this all reveals is something we already sense deep down today's youth are doing a lot, feeling a lot, and carrying more than they show. On the surface, they may look healthy and happy. But underneath, there's often stress, exhaustion, and habits that need attention. Health isn't just about avoiding disease; it's about feeling good in your body, your mind, and your daily life. And right now, that balance seems fragile.

This discussion isn't just about pointing out problems it's about understanding where young people are coming from. It's a reminder that we need to create spaces where they can breathe, talk openly about their struggles, and be supported in making small, meaningful changes. Whether it's through better campus resources, peer support systems, or even just more honest conversations around health, the goal should be to help them feel seen, heard, and guided toward a lifestyle that supports both their goals and their well-being.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study sheds light on the intricate and evolving lifestyle patterns and health perceptions of young adults in Delhi, revealing a striking duality between outward perceptions of well-being and underlying health concerns. While a majority of respondents comprising mostly students and early-career professionals reported maintaining seemingly positive routines such as adequate sleep and stress management practices, the presence of unhealthy behaviours like frequent smoking, alcohol consumption, junk food intake, and sedentary lifestyles raises serious concerns. The coexistence of healthy and unhealthy habits indicates that although young adults may be aware of the importance of health, they may lack the necessary support systems or motivation to consistently adopt healthier choices.

Mental and emotional health emerged as a critical theme in the data. A large proportion of respondents reported frequent fatigue, headaches, anxiety, and digestive issues symptoms often linked to chronic stress and academic pressure. Despite the absence of clinically diagnosed diseases in the majority, these

psychosomatic symptoms point toward a silent burden of lifestyle-induced strain that can potentially escalate into long-term health issues if left unaddressed. Encouragingly, a notable number of respondents are already engaging in stress management techniques, suggesting growing awareness around mental well-being and self-care practices.

The perception of health among these young adults is generally optimistic, with many rating their overall health as excellent to fair. However, the underlying prevalence of stress-related complaints, poor dietary habits, inconsistent sleep schedules, and lack of physical activity reflect a disconnect between how health is perceived and the actual lifestyle choices being made. This gap signals an urgent need for holistic, youth-centred health interventions that go beyond basic physical health to address emotional resilience, time management, digital detox, and academic coping strategies.

In conclusion, the findings highlight the complexity of youth health today where aspirations, responsibilities, and urban pressures intersect. To promote sustainable well-being among this demographic, health policies, educational institutions, and community programs must adopt a more integrated approach. Awareness campaigns, mental health support, structured wellness programs, and accessible recreational activities can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between knowledge and practice, enabling young adults to truly thrive both mentally and physically.

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