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**FEATURE**

**Capturing the Lifestyle Practices  
of University Students: A Case  
Study in Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract.** *Unhealthy lifestyle practices are fast becoming a global challenge and affecting most university students. A review of literature revealed that a relationship exists between lifestyle practices and academic performance. Identified related studies seem to lack a holistic approach. A qualitative case study was conducted in Zimbabwe to study holistically the lifestyle practices of university students in order to find its impact on academic performance. The theory of planned behavior and health belief model guided this study. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Saldana's inductive model was employed for data analysis. The findings showed that university students were engaged in both positive and negative lifestyle practices; several specific positive and negative lifestyle-related activities were identified. The prevalent lifestyle practices were attributed to both institutional and personal dynamics. Lifestyle practices had both positive and negative impact among students. The university is recommended to integrate lifestyle principles into the curriculum. A multiple case study can be conducted to shed additional insights in this area.*

**Keywords:** healthy lifestyle, university students, case study, Matebeleland North, Zimbabwe

**Introduction**

Lifestyle practices play a significant role in the cognitive functioning and general wellness of university students (Corbi et al., 2015). Unhealthy lifestyle practices are becoming a cause of concern, posing a global challenge in almost every

community, inclusive of university students, affecting their later life (Gore et al., 2011). The incidents of student vulnerability to unhealthy lifestyle practices are linked to various issues that result in lifestyle diseases. Scholars confirm that lack of sleep, physical activities, and unhealthy eating practices are linked with many health risks and low educational capability (Stea et al., 2014).

There seems to be a global epidemic of unhealthful lifestyle practices among university students, leaving them vulnerable to diseases resulting in poor academic performance (Gore et al., 2011). Literature asserts a link between a healthy lifestyle and cognitive functioning (Anderson & Hattie, 2013). Good health is significant in facilitating the proper process of learning (Basch, 2011). McIsaac et al. (2015) confirm that there is limited research that has analyzed the lifestyle practices of university students holistically. This study attempts to address this gap.

### **Review of the Literature**

Literature review revealed substantial information on related areas of the study. The specific areas probed include lifestyle practices, eating habits, physical activities, and work, rest habits, and academic performance. The following is a brief discussion of each of these topics.

#### **Lifestyle Practices**

Lifestyle is defined as a reflection of peoples' attitudes and values through their way of life (Lifestyle, 2020). Sparling and Redican (2011) add that lifestyle can either be positive or negative. Positive lifestyle practices are associated with the capability to enjoy life and to withstand challenges. A negative lifestyle is associated with illness, disease, and in extreme cases, leads to premature deaths. Lifestyle practices include nutrition, physical activities, healthy work-life balance, adequate sleep and rest, ideal body weight, stress management, and temperance with reference to abstinence from harmful drugs such as alcohol and tobacco (Handysides et al., 2014). Lifestyle is better considered in totality.

#### **Eating Habits**

Researchers have noted that university years are associated with poor eating habits (Deliens et al., 2014; El-Kader & Mohammad, 2013; Kwan et al., 2012). Eating habits are explained as a way an individual or group of people consume food considering the quantity, type, and time the food is eaten (Eating Habits, 2020). Rodriguez (2017) expounds that eating habits are influenced by the individual's social life, culture, religion, environment, and politics. These aspects are important to consider as they have a bearing on the type of food consumed by university students. The above aspects influencing eating habits can be grouped into two issues: religious beliefs and environment.

**Religious beliefs.** A person's religious beliefs play a major function in food selection. Some religious groups have guidelines on food selection (Tull, 2012). Tull (2012) explains that some religious groups, namely, the Hindu, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, and Christian, have rules that govern their selection of food. The bible encourages the consumption of a wholesome plant-based diet (Gen 1:29, 30).

**Environment.** The environment also plays a role in one's choice of food. However, some universities are surrounded by restaurants making the students more vulnerable to junk foodstuffs (Sages et al., 2013). The environment influences one's choice of food to a large extent. Some students may opt for fast, processed, convenient foods that are readily available (Stea & Torstveit, 2014).

### **Physical Activities**

Physical activities are explained as any body movements involving skeletal muscles that result in energy expenditure (Katch et al., 2011). Bherer et al. (2013) concur with the above-mentioned authors and add that physical activity is a component of daily routines and further classified them as planned or structured to improve physical fitness. Physical activities are essential determinants associated with a healthy lifestyle throughout the life cycle (Kohl & Cook, 2013). Yan and Cardinal (2013) assert that physical activities have psychological and physiological advantages.

### **Work and Rest Habits**

Many students do not have time to rest; hence, this practice may render them ineffective (El-Kader & Mohammad, 2013) in scholastics. It is important to have periodic rest and relaxation to enhance the effectiveness of work (Handysides et al., 2014). Some students may not have enough time to rest due to their school workloads (Deliens et al., 2014). Research has shown that some university students do not have adequate sleep time, and most of them sleep less than seven hours (Kabrita et al., 2014; Zeek et al., 2015). The above-cited scholars also assert that lack of enough sleep reduces the proper functioning of the mind.

### **Academic Performance**

Lifestyle practices seem to have a definite effect on the academic performance of university students. Unhealthy lifestyle practices are associated with poor class performance, while a healthy lifestyle is associated with increased academic performance (Stea & Torstveit, 2014). A link is seen between healthy lifestyle habits and increased cognitive functioning (Anderson & Hattie, 2013). Ill health impedes effective learning (Basch, 2011). On the other hand, university students are known to succumb to stress related to academic performance, which often results in unhealthy practices (Jafari, 2017). Studying the less known impacts of lifestyle practices of university students is important.

Therefore, this study explored the lifestyle practices of university students. Furthermore, this study also described the general healthy lifestyle practices of university students and its connection with academic performance. The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the typical lifestyle practices of university students?
2. What are the reasons for university students' current lifestyle practices?
3. What is the impact of lifestyle practices on university students?

### **Methodology**

This study used a qualitative perspective. A case study research design was used to establish the lifestyle practices of university students and their link to academic performance. The methodology of this study is explained in detail in the subsequent sections, which includes research design, research setting and participants, data collection, and analysis.

### **Research Design**

A single descriptive case study research design was employed in this study. A descriptive case study explains real-life situations such as the lifestyle practices of university students. Merriam (1998) underscores that a case study has the advantage of anchoring real-life situations and brings out a rich and holistic phenomenon. Yin (2009) and Stake (1995) suggest that a case should be bounded so that the study remains reasonable in scope. In this study, the case is the lifestyle practices of university students. The bounded system consists of university students, curriculum specialists, lifestyle experts, and university facilities, policies, and programs.

### **Research Setting and Participants**

This case study was conducted in a private university in Zimbabwe, in the region of Matebeleland North. Due to ethical considerations, the university has been assigned a pseudonym, Eagle University. The purposive sampling method was used to obtain a sample of the participants. Purposive sampling enabled the selection of participants who were able to answer the research questions, who had certain knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015). The participants were 34 in all, comprised of 29 university students, one curriculum specialist, two university administrators, and two health and lifestyle expert.

### **Data Collection**

In qualitative case studies, data collection involves multiple methods such as interviews, observations, documents, record analysis, and physical artifacts (Creswell, 2013). In this study, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and curriculum document analysis were used to collect data. An interview protocol pointing to the general areas and themes of the study guided the interviews. Additionally, an observation protocol and document analysis guide also guided data collection. In-depth interviews were conducted with six university students, four health and lifestyle experts, and three academic experts. Each interview session lasted for not more than one hour. Two audio recorders were used to record the interviews for transcribing. Additionally, some field notes were recorded during each interview session.

Cohen and Crabtree (2006) assert that focus group interviews increase the strength of the interviews. For additional data and triangulation, four focus group discussions (FGD) comprising of five to six participants were conducted. The first FGD consisted of male students, the second FGD consisted of married students, the third FGD consisted of first-year students, and the fourth FGD consisted of senior students. The FGDs were audio-recorded for transcription. Each focus group interview session lasted not more than an hour.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collection and analysis is a simultaneous activity in qualitative research (Merriam, 1988). Data was collected, transcribed, and coded. A member check was conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Data for this study generated 51 codes that were organized into 24 categories. The categories were displayed in a matrix form against the research questions to identify the level of abstraction to form suitable groups. Creswell (2007) concurs with Merriam (2009) on the reduction of categories into manageable themes. The categories in this study resulted in six themes that summarized the findings according to the research questions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The study was endorsed by our institutional ethics committee (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants who volunteered to participate signed the informed consent form. Confidentiality was assured and anonymity while reporting made possible, using pseudonyms for the participating entities. Power, coercion, and positionality were observed since only those participants who were willing to participate in the study were considered; no one was forced in any way to participate in this study. Precautions were taken to ensure that the participants were protected from physical, mental, and emotional harm throughout the study.

## Researchers' Reflexivity

Together as authors, we recognize that it is difficult to learn and also work for God when one is physically unfit. As educators, we also value good health, and our vision is to see students live a healthy life and enjoy the abundant life God has bestowed upon humanity. Education systems should provide learning environments for students to grow holistically, including their physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being.

## Results

The findings of this study are thematically presented to answer each research question. Literature findings from different sources were cited to add veracity to the discussion. Two themes emerged from research question 1: healthy lifestyle practices and unhealthy lifestyle practices. Six categories were derived from healthy lifestyle practices. These categories include (a) attending worship services, (b) welcoming Sabbath rest, (c) spending time in prayer, (d) engaging in exercises, (e) embracing a vegetarian diet, and (f) socializing with others. The categories for unhealthy lifestyle practices were (a) sleeping irregularly, (b) going for caloric bombs, and (c) engaging in a sedentary lifestyle.

## Healthy Lifestyle

Findings from this study revealed that some students at Eagle University practiced a healthy lifestyle through the following ways. A healthy lifestyle can also be defined as “all the behaviors believed and applied by individuals to be healthy, maintain health, and be protected from diseases” (Çelebi et al., 2017, p. 1). A healthy lifestyle is also regarded as a prerequisite for full human development, which leads to disease-free life (Biktagirova & Kasimova, 2016). The above-mentioned scholars seem to agree that a healthy lifestyle contributes to longevity and lessen peoples' susceptibility to diseases.

**Attending worship services.** Both students and administrators reported positive outcomes concerning attending worship services as illustrated by the quotation: “As a result of this convocation exercise, we have been able to create some interest in quite a number of non-Adventists who have been baptized” (AP Dr. Dan, IDI Folder 1, p. 2, ls. 23-25). Convocation helped the non-Adventist students to appreciate the Adventist message that led them to make decisions for baptism (AP Dr. Dan, IDI Folder 1). Both students and administrators reported that Eagle University excelled in the area of spiritual activities. All students were encouraged to attend church services as part of the school curriculum called *convocation*.

**Welcoming Sabbath rest.** All student participants expressed their excitement and joy for welcoming Sabbath rest. Most student participants pointed out that they really appreciated the Sabbath worship services and rest. One student said, “I love

the church because the Sabbath gives us rest from a busy week” (Faith, Folder 2, FGD 2.2, p.4, ls. 61). All married student participants concurred that they had come to a better understanding and meaning of Sabbath rest. Students looked forward to each Sabbath day with great excitement to rest, refresh, and revitalize (FGD2.2). According to White (1952), the Sabbath “is a sign of creative and redeeming power; it points to God as the source of life and knowledge; it recalls mankind primeval glory, and thus witnesses to God’s purpose to re-create us in His own image” (p. 250). Besides worshipping God as the creator, Sabbath rest refreshes and revitalizes the body.

**Spending time in prayer.** Most students reported that they connected with God through church services, prayer bands, and personal devotions. Findings also reveal that prayer bands (5 a.m. and 8 p.m.) had been a source of their strength (Folder 2, FGD 2.4). “I wake up every day at 5 a.m. for my personal devotions” (IDI Folder 1, SP Tim p.1 ln 7). Spending time in prayer and church services were appreciated and valued. Spending time in prayer has a biblical background. There are many Bible verses that encourage praying because God is always ready to hear and grant petitions according to His will (see Matt 7:7; Rom 12:12; Psalms 4:1). The university had recently opened a prayer garden for spiritual enrichment (AP Dr. Dan).

**Engaging in sports.** Findings revealed that various activities were conducted on sports day. The university had one day per semester, where all students were encouraged to participate in different sporting activities throughout the day. No classes were conducted on sports day. Kohl and Cook (2013) assert that physical exercises are essential components of a healthy lifestyle. These activities were not only physical, but some demanded mental and social capabilities hence instilled values (AP Dr. Dan). AP Dr. Dan further stressed that “those activities were meant to instill some values such as honesty, perseverance, determination, integrity, faithfulness, sympathy, respect, dignity, and faith” (IDI Folder 1, p. 2, ls. 10-11). Bendíková (2014), expounds that physical activities play a major role in shaping student attitudes and values, and preventing diseases. However, the male and female FGD participants shared that they were engaged in irregular exercises when they did not have too much work. The other three women pointed out that walking to school every day was their form of exercise since classrooms were built away from the residential quarters.

**Embracing a vegetarian diet.** Most Eagle University students embraced and appreciated the vegetarian diet, including those who were not vegetarians (SP Ethan; SP Tim; FGD2.3; FGD 2.4) while few freshman students were indifferent. Some students noted significant advantages of a vegetarian diet, including health improvement (Folder 2, FGD 2.4, p. 4, ls. 24). One freshman student participant narrated that the doctor told her not to eat meat because of her condition. She shared that she used to eat little meat at home, but her health challenges worsened. Her health improved drastically when she moved to a vegetarian diet (Folder 2, FGD

2.3, p. 9, ls. 97). A study conducted by Tonstad et al. (2013) revealed that vegetarians had a lower incidence of diabetes. Diehl et al. (2016) assert that a vegetarian diet that is low in fat and high in fiber prevents 80% of adult cancers, heart diseases, and diabetes mellitus.

**Socializing with others.** Eagle University offered a few social activities. Students were encouraged to have rich and fulfilling social relationships (AP Dr. Todd). Both student and administrative participants concurred that Eagle university encouraged students to have healthy relationships as reflected in a written code of conduct. People are social beings; thus, no human is an island. In a study related to physiological recovery, Morhenn et al. (2012) concluded that relationships promote good health. Healthy lifestyle cannot be complete without the social aspect. People who maintain close relationships and assist others are healthier and happier (Handysides et al., 2014).

### **Unhealthy Lifestyle**

Most students were living unhealthy lifestyles. These unhealthy practices included sleeping late, pressure of work, busy and tight class schedule, sedentary lifestyle, eating unbalanced diets, skipping breakfast, eating refined and junk food, and eating between meals. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016), unhealthy lifestyle practices increase one's vulnerability to chronic diseases. Rhodes, Kramer, Whitlock, and Cox (2016) stress that unhealthy lifestyle practices greatly contribute to the world's disease challenge.

**Sleeping irregularly.** The student participants reported that they went to bed late although they wanted to sleep two hours before midnight (FGD2.1; FGD 2.2; FGD2.3 & FGD 2.4). Kabrita et al. (2014) and Zeek et al. (2015) confirm that some university students do not have enough seven hours of sleep. All in-depth interviews with students revealed that they slept late due to the pressure of school work. The married and single student participants expressed that the tight and busy class schedule made it impossible to spare adequate time to relax or sleep early (FGD 2.2; FGD 2.4). All the married student participants shared that they had to sacrifice their sleep to meet their class requirements. Some scholars stress that most university students sleep late (Deliens et al., 2014). Some scholars lament that "sleep disturbance and short sleep duration are linked with academic failure" (Titova et al., 2015, p. 87). Irregularity in sleep seems to affect academic achievement negatively, as found in these studies.

**Going for caloric bombs.** In this study, caloric bombs were unhealthy practices that involved dietary practices such as eating junk foods, snacking, irregular meals, and skipping breakfast. Student participants reported that if they eat breakfast, it was mainly convenience foods (FGD2.1; FGD2.3 & FGD 2.4). Most students indicated that they did not eat breakfast at all but ate convenience foods such as noodles, instant cereals, and other instant foods for either lunch or supper (FGD2.1; FGD 2.2; FGD2.3 & FGD 2.4). Most convenience foods are refined and are low in



fiber and vitamins, and they do not give satiety value, so they encourage snacking (Mitchell, 2010). Twenty student participants indicated that they visited the cafeteria irregularly for either lunch or dinner. Some married student participants indicated that they prepared food for their family but sometimes did not have time to eat the meal (SP Emily; FGD 2.2). According to Garg et al. (2014), poor eating habits may result in malnutrition. El-Kader and Mohammad (2013) confirm that skipping breakfast renders one of the energy losses that negatively affect the daily duties, and one is likely to eat between meals.

**Engaging in a sedentary lifestyle.** The results reflected that senior students sit for many hours doing their assignments since some indicated that they sit between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and sleep around 2 a.m. or 3 a.m. after sitting for nine to ten hours class (SP Ethan; SP Noah; FGD2.2; FGD2.4). Most students pointed out that they did not have time to spare for physical activities. In-depth interviews reflected that walking to school from hostels was their main form of exercise, although they spent many hours sitting (SP Emily; SP Noah). El-Kader and Mohammad (2013) testify that a sedentary lifestyle is more prevalent among office workers and university students due to the many hours spent sitting and working on the computer.

### **Reasons for Current Lifestyle Practices**

This section discusses Research Question 2 which looks at the reasons for university students' current lifestyle. Scholars confirm that there are various causes for the lifestyle practices of university students (El-Kader & Mohammad, 2013; Kwan et al., 2012). In this study, reasons for student's current lifestyle practices have been divided into two themes: (a) institutional factors and (b) personal factors.

#### **Personal Factors**

Findings confirm several personal factors that hamper a good healthy lifestyle. These personal factors include the following; lack of knowledge, lack of finances, and busy academic schedules due to lack of time. The personal factors significantly contributed towards unhealthy practices of university students.

**Lack of knowledge.** EP Dr. Grace affirmed that knowledge is power that influences one's choice of lifestyle practices. One of the administrative participants pointed out that some of the students were not eating well and not involved in physical activities because they did not know that it was helpful to them (AP Dr. Todd, IDI Folder 1, p. 3. ls 6-7). EP Dr. Grace concurred with EP Mrs. Amon that some students lacked knowledge on healthy lifestyle practices. Thus, lack of knowledge may contribute to poor lifestyle practices. Gan et al. (2011) confirm that lack of knowledge is one of the causes of unhealthy lifestyle practices.

**Lack of finances.** All student participants, both married and single, stressed that lack of money was one reason that contributed to poor eating habits. Sages et al. (2013) assert that students may resort to junk foods due to lack of finances

because wholesome food is more expensive than empty calories. EP Dr. Grace underscored that economic challenges exposed students to a negative lifestyle leading them to eat what is available and affordable at that moment. Deliens et al. (2014) also confirm that financial challenges may drive students to buy the food they can afford leading them to go for cheap unbalanced meals. Students and university administrators shared that lack of money forced some students to skip certain meals in the university cafeteria. The administrator participants acknowledged that students sacrifice their meals due to lack of money, thus few students visited the cafeteria (AP Dr. Todd, AP Dr. Hall, & AP Dr. Dan).

**Lack of time.** Most college students do not have enough time to prepare healthy meals leading them to opt for convenience foods that took less time to prepare and eat (EP. Dr. Grace). All the student participants lamented that they had a busy academic schedule that made it difficult to spare time for physical activities and meals. Scholars acknowledge that university students have busy academic schedules that leave them with limited or no time for other activities (Deliens et al., 2014).

### **Institutional Features**

There were institutional features that were indicated by participants to be contributing to the students' current unhealthy lifestyle. These features included a lack of variety of sporting activities and equipment, lack of experts on lifestyle programs, and the university's financial challenges. The institutional features are discussed in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

**Lack of a variety of sporting activities.** All student participants reported that the university did not have a variety of sporting activities, facilities, and equipment. AP Dr. Todd shared that there were quite a few sporting activities. He explained that aerobics and jogging were done as part of a healthier living class session. AP Dr. Hall expounded that health excellence was not part of the university's strategic planning; thus, sporting activities were of less value because they were not mandated by the school policy. The sporting activities were rather students' self-initiated activities; therefore, many students were not part of them.

**Lack of physical activity experts.** The in-depth interviews with both university administrators and student participants revealed that the university did not have experts on physical activities. The university did not have professional coaches for extracurricular activities, and this could be the reason why students were not interested in physical activities (AP Dr. Hall). Teachers should be trained for extracurricular skills to enable them to transmit the same knowledge to their students (AP Dr. Hall). EP Mrs. Amon also expressed the need for a professional coach to organize and coach ladies into different physical activities. Lack of physical activity experts made it hard for student teachers to teach or be involved in extracurricular activities (SP Sharon).

**Financial challenges.** The administrative participants reported that the economic problems had affected student enrolment and university activities at large. All the school administrators pointed out that the lack of variety in the cafeteria and the university store were mainly a result of the country's economic challenges. Food was excluded from tuition to allow students to pay as they eat (AP Dr. Dan). However, this exclusion seemed to have encouraged many students to turn to junk food (AP Dr. Hall & AP Dr. Todd).

### **Impact of Lifestyle Practices**

This section explored answers for Research Question 3 that focused on the impact of lifestyle practices on university students. The results of the students' lifestyle have a negative and positive impact. Two themes were derived from the impact of the university lifestyle. These themes are (a) negative impact and (b) positive impact.

#### **Positive Impact**

Although the impact on university students had negative results, there were also positive results. The positive impact resulted in two categories that emerged from the findings (a) spiritual growth and (b) intellectual and professional development. These categories will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

**Spiritual growth.** The administrator and student participants agreed that the university spiritual activities had positively impacted students. The devotions, Christ-centered curriculum, and church activities had made students realize the importance of Christian education (AP Dr. Hall). AP Dr. Dan concurred with AP Dr. Hall and expounded that the Eagle University curriculum was meant to restore the image of God in students who pass through its corridors. Both administrative and student participants reported that some non-Adventist students were baptized and accepted Christ. Students from Eagle University learned better than students from secular universities regarding—values, morals, deportment, influence, and dress code, among other elements (AP Dr. Dan). Eagle University students were more preferred for internship than students from secular institutions because of their commitment to duty (AP Dr. Dan). The university's spiritual activities helped students to grow spiritually, including the class devotions (SP Emma, SP Sharon, & SP Ethan; FGD 2.2). SP Sharon testified that the spiritual activities molded her character into a better Christian.

**Intellectual and professional development.** Most student participants noted that the university had trained them to be productive and adapt to the world demands. In-depth interviews with students revealed that academic work had assisted them to be productive and refrained from unproductive work. SP Tim attested that the pressure caused by academic schedules had positively trained him to be productive and meet deadlines as demanded by the world. SP Sharon shared

that her degree program had positively impacted her despite the pressure involved. She disclosed that she had changed the way she used to handle her own children because she had learned the proper way to teach children. Education can be a powerful tool for positive change when rightly used.

### **Negative Impact**

Findings revealed that students slept late, skipped some of their meals, and led a sedentary lifestyle due to the pressure of their academic schedules. These unhealthy practices resulted in sickness, tiredness and exhaustion, difficulties in concentration, compromising academic quality, and lack of social and family time. Married female participants reported that they did not get enough time to groom their children.

**Getting sick.** Among the married women FGD participants, two reported having been sick due to the pressure of work, while three pointed out that they were always stressed as they tried to balance school work and family. Poole, Khan, and Agnew (2018) assert that high levels of stress affect mental health. Among the freshman student participants, three out of six stated that they had health challenges such as headaches and fever during the first semester when they were adjusting to the university lifestyle. Some of the male FGD participants indicated that they suffered physically due to a lack of physical activity. Four participants out of the six in-depth interviews reported that they fell sick due to their current practices (SP Emily, SP Sharon, SP Tim, & SP Noah IDI Folder 1). SP Emily shared that she was now suffering from stomach ulcers as a result of skipping breakfast and lunch due to the pressure of school work. SP Sharon reported having headaches because of pressure during the first semester when she was adapting to the university lifestyle. While SP Tim and SP Noah testified that they had some health challenges during exam time, that demoralized them. These students attributed these negatives to the pressure of their school work leading to a poor health lifestyle.

**Being tired and exhausted.** Both students and administrators reported that skipping meals and sleeping late resulted in tiredness and exhaustion. Scholars also stress that skipping meals result in a lack of energy hence tiredness and exhaustion (El-Kader & Mohammad, 2013). Students agreed that it was difficult to concentrate when they missed breakfast (SP Emily, SP Emma, SP Noah, SP Tim, FGD 2,1, 2.2; 2.3 & 2.4). Some students shared that they felt tired and exhausted and became unproductive if they sleep late (SP Noah and SP Tim). EP Dr. Grace also confirmed that students who sleep late are always exhausted, drowsy, and have less concentration span. Students who practiced unhealthy lifestyles were sleepy and passive in class (AP Dr. Hall). EP Mrs. Amon explained that students who missed meals, slept late, and failed to have time for physical activities were passive, sleepy, and tired. According to Moulin (2015), sleeping late affects student's day time alertness are resulting in compromised grades. Tiredness and exhaustion resulting

from lack of enough sleep affect cognitive functioning leading to poor class concentration (Kabrita et al., 2014; Zeek et al., 2015).

**Compromising academic quality.** The results of unhealthy lifestyle practices had a negative impact on the academic performance of many participants. Jafari (2017) underscores that academic pressure causes stress resulting in unhealthy practices. Some participants reported that they compromised on the quality of their school work due to the busy academic schedule. Working under pressure led to academic dishonesty because some students lacked enough time to execute their assignments faithfully; hence, students resorted to copy and paste (SP Ethan and SP Tim). SP Noah shared that he did not have enough time to go deeper into his work, creating challenges that resulted in compromised grades. Most students reported that academic pressure had forced them to compromise their academic work.

**Lack of social and family time.** All married female participants shared that they did not have time with their children. The results of the cohort study revealed that students faced challenges in their social life relating to balancing the needs of their family, especially spouses, children, and academic work (Stone & O'Shea, 2013). One of the married female student participants had to return her children back home in the care of her parents because she had no time to take care of them. Another married female student reported that she did not have time to play with her children due to the pressure of work. The other married female participant stated that most of the time, she finds her children asleep after visiting the library. One of the married female student participants shared that she was close to her three children, and she used to help them with their homework before she started studying. Another married female participant expounded that she had no time to instill her goals and values like how she groomed the other children before she was studying. The male participants commented that they did not have enough time to socialize with friends except during convocation and supper time.

## **Conclusions**

The results of this study revealed that university students practiced both healthy and unhealthy lifestyles. The healthy lifestyle included attending worship services, engaging in physical exercise, eating a vegetarian diet, socializing with others, embracing Sabbath rest, and spending personal time in prayer. However, many university students were engaged in unhealthy lifestyle practices. The unhealthy practices included sleeping irregularly, overworking, skipping meals, eating junk and refined foods, snacking, unbalanced diets, and being sedentary. Personal and institutional factors caused unhealthy lifestyle practices. A healthy lifestyle had a positive impact, while an unhealthy lifestyle resulted in a negative impact among university students, as reported in the study. Also, as related to the study, health and lifestyle experts assert that unhealthy lifestyle practices may result in lifestyle diseases and decreased academic performance among university students.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, students need to exercise discipline and choose to practice a healthy lifestyle. Awareness must be followed by practice. Some students were aware of the impact of unhealthy lifestyle practices, and yet they were not practicing good lifestyle practices. Family and friends are called to encouraged, support each other to practice a healthy lifestyle. The participant university is encouraged to integrate lifestyle principles into the university curriculum. Further studies can be conducted on a larger sample on lifestyle practices of university students in public universities. A multiple qualitative case study on lifestyle practices can be conducted in different universities to compare the results.

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