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The Effect of Eating Behaviors of Generations Y and Z on Food Purchasing Decisions

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ABSTRACT: This research was planned in order to determine the eating and food buying behaviors of generations Y and Z. The research was carried out using descriptive/cross-sectional research model. The population of the study consists of individuals born between 1980 and 1999 living in a province of Turkey (generation Y) and individuals born in the year 2000 and later (generation Z). A total of 382 individuals were determined as a sample from among the individuals in the population by stratified sampling method. The study was completed with a total of 569 participants, including 241 from generation Y and 328 from generation Z. The data were collected with the "Information Form" and the "Adult Eating Behavior Questionnaire". Data analysis SPSS v26 (IBM Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) were made with the statistical package program. In the analysis of the data, descriptive statistics, independent t-test was used for binary group comparisons and One-Way ANOVA was used for multi-group comparisons. In the study a statistically significant difference was found between the scale scores of Y and Z generation participants and the gender variable (p=0.005, p=0.001, respectively). In the study, a statistically significant difference was found between the scale scores of generation Z participants and the "State of paying attention to whether the food is organic when buying", "State of paying attention to the content of the food to be bought" and "State of social media influencing food purchasing decisions" (p<0.05). A significant difference was found between the scale scores of the Y generation participants and the "Paying attention to the TSE stamp when buying food" (p < 0.05). There was no statistically significant difference between the total scale scores of generation Y and generation Z in the study (p>0.05). As a result, it was found that the eating behaviors of generation Y and Z were similar. However, it has been determined that food buying behaviors can show differences.

KEYWORDS: Generation Y, generation Z, eating behavior, food buying

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition is one of the most basic needs for the survival of life (1,2). In addition to being able to live a long and healthy life, having a high quality of life is closely related to the composition of the nutrients we consume (3). The factors affecting the purchasing situation of consumers differ depending on factors such as cultural structure, lifestyle, individual preferences, disease conditions and economic conditions. Hormones are biological molecules that play key roles in physiological processes (4). On eating behaviors; genetics, environment, hormones, current emotional state, sociodemographic factors, past experiences, cultural and religious beliefs, media, body perception, weight, appetite, etc. many factors are effective (5,6). Eating habits can affect food intake, leading to an increase in obesity and obesity-related diseases (7,8). Even if hunger is not felt due to the physical and emotional pleasure that food intake creates on individuals, it can exhibit eating behaviors from time to time (9).

As a result of developing technology, science and economy, people's social and cultural values and needs are also changing (10). However, age and generational differences can also be effective in food purchasing behaviors. In the current Turkish dictionary of the TDK, generation is defined as"a group of individuals forming age clusters of about twenty-five and thirty years, umbilical cord, generation, abdomen, generation" (11). In this context, individuals born between 1980 and 1999 are called generation Y, and individuals born 2000 and later are called generation Z (10). The events, changes and developments experienced during these periods constitute a turning point for generations (12). The shopping behavior of generations may vary according to the sociological structure and judgments of the period. Generation Y is a generation that stands out because it has the largest population and budget in the world. They are a consumption-oriented generationthat values education, is entrepreneurial, impatient, respect diversity, is result-oriented, overconfident, has different tastes and shopping standards (13).

The most noticeable characteristic of generation Z is that they were born at a time when technology was developing rapidly. This generation is a generation that is open to innovation, a researcher, curious about other cultures, a natural-born consumer (12,14). With the developing technology, consumers have started to attach importance to the search for healthy and safe food (15). However, many factors are effective in food preferences. In the study conducted by Akşit Aşık (12), it was determined which factors influenced

the food choices of X and Z generation consumers. In another study, the food purchasing behaviors of generation Y were evaluated (13). However, this generation has not been compared with other generations. Although there are studies related to food purchasing preferences in the literature review, there has not been any research aimed at determining the food purchasing preferences and eating behaviors of generations Y and Z. (16-19). For this reason, food purchasing preferences and eating behaviors between generations cannot be fully dont know. This research was conducted in order to compare the two generations by determining the eating and food buying behaviors of generations Y and Z.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Sample Selection and Data Collection: The population of the study consists of individuals born between 1980 and 1999 living in a province of Turkey (generation Y) and individuals born in the year 2000 and later (generation Z). The population of individuals born between 1980-1999 (generation Y) and individuals born after 2000 (generation Z) in the province where the study was conducted is 50,888 people according to the TUIK data for 2020 (20). Of this, 28,363 of them are individuals in generation Y and 22,525 of them are individuals in generation Z. Since it is not possible to reach the entire universe, a sample from the known universe was calculated. In the sample calculation, the formula for calculating the sample size with the equality proposed by Yamane (21) for epidemiological research was used, and a total of 382 individuals were determined as a sample by Decoupled sampling method from among the individuals in the population. The study was completed with a total of 569 participants, including 241 from generation Y and 328 from generation Z.

The research was carried out using descriptive/cross-sectional research model. Quantitative research method was used as the data collection method in the research. The data were collected with the "Information Form" and the "Adult Eating Behavior Questionnaire". The research data were collected face-to-face by taking written or oral consents from the people who voluntarily agreed to participate in the research and stating that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Information Form: The information form consisting of a total of 20 questions is aimed at revealing the food buying behaviors of the target groups with sociodemographic characteristics (date of birth, gender, marital status, place of residence lived for the longest time, educational status, family type, average monthly income).

Adult Eating Behavior Questionnaire (AEBQ): Adaptation, validity and reliability study of the scale to Turkish by Yücel et al. it was made by (22). reliability and validity analyses were performed for the 35 item scale and its suitability for Turkish society was tested. The 8-factor 35-item form of the Higher Education Educational institution was tested by explanatory and confirmatory factor analysis; the number of factors was determined as 7 and the number of items in these factors (dimensions) was determined as 26. The scale is of 5-point likert type. The scale items are scored between 1 and 5 (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Decider, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree), There are no inverse items on the scale. while the reliability analysis of the 7-factor 26-item scale was being tested, the Spearman Brown coefficient was found to be 0.71 by dividing by half. The Cronbach α value was calculated as 0.76. According to all the analyses conducted, it has been concluded that AEBQ is a valid and reliable tool that can be used to measure eating behavior in adult individuals (22). In the current study, the Cronbach α value was found to be 0.74.

Ethical Consideration: This study was approved by the ethics committe of a state university (Date:25.11.2022/Decision no:229/12). Written informed consent was obtained from the individuals. Before the data were collected by the researchers, the participants were informed about the study and their verbal/written consents were obtained. Volunteers were included in the study.

Statistical Analysis of the Data: Data analysis SPSS v26 (IBM Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) were made with the statistical package program. Whether the data were distributed normally or not was evaluated by the Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients being in the December range (-2) - (+2) (23). In the analyses, descriptive statistics, independent t-test for binary group comparisons and One-Way ANOVA test were used for multi-group comparisons. Statistical significance values were used as p<0.01 and p<0.05 significance levels.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The average age of the participants was 24.25 ± 6.131 (min-max: 17-44) and the total scale scores were found to be 82.21 ± 12.57 . 241 (42.4%) of the participants were in the Y generation and 328 (57.6%) of the participants were in the Z generation. The total score averages of generation Y (born in 1980-1999) were found to be 81.24 ± 10.10 , and generation Z (born in 2000 and later) were found to be 82.92 ± 14.09 (not shown in the table). The comparison of the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants with the scale scores is given in Table 1. In the study, a statistically significant difference was found between the scale scores of Y and Z generation participants and the gender variable (p=0.005, p=0.001, respectively). In both generations, women's scale scores were found to be higher compared to men.

Sociodemographic variables	Generation Y		Generation Z	
	n (%)	Mean±SD	n (%)	Mean±SD
Gender				

Female	121 (50.2)	83.06±10.67	237 (72.3)	84.46±13.43
Male	120 (49.8)	79.41±9.16	91 (27.7)	78.92±15.02
		t=2.845		t=3.234
		p=.005*		p=.001*
Marital status				
Married	97 (40.2)	80.98±7.29	4 (1.2)	84.00±9.12
Single	144 (59.8)	81.42±11.63	324 (98.8)	82.91±14.15
		t=722		t=.878
		p=.506		p=.473
Family type				
Nuclear family	184 (76.3)	80.78±10.50	237 (72.3)	83.57±14.43
Extended family	57 (23.7)	82.75±8.59	91 (27.7)	81.23±13.08
		t=-1.289		t=1.352
		p=.198		p=.177
Educational status				
Primary/Secondary School graduate	25 (10.4)	81.96±7.53	0 (0.0)	-
High school student	2 (0.8)	85.50±9.19	1 (0.3)	81.00±-
High school graduate	33 (13.7)	81.27±6.28	6 (1.8)	93.33±8.43
University student	90 (37.3)	82.13±12.77	317 (96.6)	82.71±14.18
University graduate	61 (25.3)	81.59±8.45	3 (0.9)	87.33±11.54
Master student	12 (5.0)	74.91±11.42	1 (0.3)	77.00±-
Master's degree graduate	18 (7.5)	78.38±6.79	0 (0.0)	-
		F=1.240		F=958
		p=.427		p=.431
Income status				
Low	36 (14.9)	81.38±10.69	90 (27.4)	82.03±17.07
Middle	109 (45.2)	82.40±10.17	99 (30.2)	83.02±11.49
Good	96 (39.8)	79.88±9.72	139 (42.4)	83.43±13.71
		F=1.598		F=.274
		p=.204		p=.807
The place that has been lived for the longest			1	
time				
Village	31 (12.9)	80.35±9.81	86 (26.2)	84.25±13.14
County	62 (25.7)	83.41±10.93	105 (32.0)	81.59±13.94
Provincial center	148 (61.4)	80.52±9.73	137(41.8)	83.11±14.77
		F=1.946		F=.866
		p=.145	1	p=.422

Table 1. Comparison of sociodemographic characteristics of participants with scale scores

*Independent Samples T test

Today, concerns about food safety are increasing the demand for organic foods. One of the most important reasons for choosing organic foods, which are not allowed synthetic agricultural chemicals in their production, is the desire to consume healthy foods (24). In the current study, a statistically significant difference was found between the scale scores of generation Z participants and the "Paying attention to whether the food is organic or not when buying" (p<0.05). In a study, low levels of agricultural chemical residues were detected in 21% of the food samples examined, which was associated with environmental pollution, fraudulent or improper use of synthetic agricultural chemicals (25). In a study conducted in New Zealand, more than 300 samples of 60 different types of certified organic fruits, vegetables, nuts and cereals were examined for the presence of 45 different chemicals, and chemical residues were not found in more than 99% of organic products (26). This result suggests that consumers' orientation towards organic foods may increase in the future due to their health benefits.

Günümüzde Nowadays, social media platforms can also be used both for purchasing purposes and for conducting research on nutrients before the purchase stage. When the literature is examined, it shows that social media is especially effective on the behaviors of generation Y (27). It can be said that generation Y who use social media frequently are influenced by ads and the health professionals and celebrities seen in ads. Fernando (28) states that generational differences cause different nutritional needs and preferences. In the current study, a statistically significant difference was found between the scale scores of generation Z participants

and "The state of social media influencing food purchasing decisions" and "The state of paying attention to the content of the food to be bought" (p<0.05). Practicality and variety are important in the food selection of generation Y. These individuals are interested in the composition and production of nutrients and prefer snacks more than previous generations. In the current study, a significant difference was found between the scale scores of the generation Y participants and the "Paying attention to the TSE stamp when buying food" (p<0.05). For generation Z, on the other hand, it is important that foods have natural content and that they buy affordable foods (28). In a study, it was stated that one of the important factors in the food preferences of generation Y is mood. If stress continues for a long time, it suppresses the immune system and negatively affects growth and development and plays a role in the emergence of chronic diseases (29). They prefer foods that reduce their stress levels, make them happy, taste delicious, and provide value for money (30). There was no statistically significant difference between the scale scores of the participants in generations and other variables (p>0.05), (Table 2).

Food buying preferences	Gener	Generation Y		ration Z
	n (%)	Mean±SD	n (%)	Mean±SD
Do you prefer promotional products when				
buying food?				
Yes	174 (72.2)	81.32±9.62	211 (64.3)	83.85±12.75
No	67 (27.8)	81.04±11.31	117 (35.7)	81.24±16.15
		t=.194		t=1.610
		p=.846		p=.108
Do your concerns about your health affect the				
way you buy food?				
Yes	191 (79.3)	81.47±10.37	242 (73.8)	83.26±14.26
No	50 (20.7)	80.40±9.02	86 (26.2)	81.98±13.63
		t=.667		t=.718
		p=.506		p=.473
Do you pay attention to whether it is organic				
or not when buying food?				
Yes	173 (71.8)	81.34±10.24	175 (53.4)	84.35±15.72
No	68 (28.2)	81.01±9.78	153 (46.6)	81.29±11.80
		t=.225		t=2.008
		p=.822		p=.046*
Do you have a brand obsession with food?				
Yes	124 (51.5)	81.62±9.77	123 (37.5)	84.65±16.43
No	117 (48.5)	80.84±10.46	205 (62.5)	81.89±12.40
		t=.600		t=1.721
		p=.549		p=.086
Do you look at the expiration date when				
buying food?				
Yes	205 (85.1)	81.11±10.32	260 (79.3)	83.11±14.11
No	36 (14.9)	82.00±8.78	68 (20.7)	82.22±14.10
		t=483		t=.464
		p=.630		p=.643
Do you pay attention to the content of the food				
you will buy?				
Yes	155 (64.3)	81.86±10.79	194 (59.1)	84.27±14.74
No	86 (35.7)	80.13±8.66	134 (40.9)	80.97±12.89
		t=2.272		t=2.100
		p=.205		p=.036*
Does social media affect your food buying decision?				
Yes	110 (45.6)	82.38±10.20	165 (50.3)	84.89±14.85
No	131 (54.4)	80.29±9.95	163 (49.7)	80.93±13.02
		t=1.600	100 (1917)	t=2.561

		p=.111		p=.011*
Does the practical preparation of the product affect your purchase?				
Yes	133 (55.2)	81.42±11.23	212 (64.6)	83.02±14.37
No	108 (44.8)	81.02±8.54	116 (35.4)	82.74±13.62
		t=.314		t=.176
		p=.754		p=.860
Do you pay attention to the TSE stamp when buying food?				
Yes	111 (46.1)	79.61±11.40	177 (54.0)	82.24±15.27
No	130 (53.9)	82.64±8.64	151 (46.0)	83.72±12.57
		t=-2.296		t=943
		p=.023*		p=.346
Does the fact that the packaging of the food is impressive affect your purchase?				
Yes	106 (44.0)	82.19±10.48	195 (59.5)	83.26±14.03
No	135 (56.0)	80.50±9.76	133 (40.5)	82.43±14.22
		t=1.294		t=.520
		p=.197		p=.603
Do the storage conditions of the food affect your purchase?				
Yes	164 (68.0)	81.29±11.04	244 (74.4)	82.54±14.38
No	77 (32.0)	81.15±7.79	84 (25.6)	84.03±13.22
		t=.098		t=836
		p=.922		p=.404
Would you spend more money on healthy and fresh foods?				
Yes	190 (78.8)	81.53±10.21	234 (71.3)	82.97±14.79
No	51 (21.2)	80.19±9.68	94 (28.7)	82.80±12.24
		t=.838		t=.096
		p=.403		p=.923
Do you pay attention to calories when buying food?				
Yes	71 (29.5)	81.97±12.16	193 (28.4)	84.27±15.46
No	170 (70.5)	80.94±9.12	235 (71.6)	82.39±13.50
		t=.639		t=1.094
	1	p=.524		p=.304

Table 2. Comparison of scale scores with participants' preferences in food purchase

*Independent Samples T test

According to Table 3, there was no statistically significant difference between the total scale scores of generation Y and generation Z in the study (p>0.05). This shows that the eating behaviors of both generations are similar. Since the ages of these two generations are close to each other, we can assume that their eating behaviors are similar.

Groups	n (%)	Total Score of the Scale	
Generation Y	241(42.4)	81.24±10.10	
Generation Z	328(57.6)	82.92±14.09	
		t=-1.654	
		p=.099	

Table 3. Comparison of the total scale scores of generation Y and ZIndependent Samples T test

CONCLUSION

As a result of the study, it was determined that the eating behaviors of generation Y and Z are similar, but their food buying behaviors may show differences. Currently, the food choices of individuals are influenced by various factors such as age, lifestyle, habits, healthy eating preferences, the price of food, the composition of nutrients and food preparation. Therefore, the food consumption habits of individuals from different generations may also vary. One of the most important common reasons for the nutritional orientations of different generations is the protection of health. In this context, the orientation to organic foods that do not contain chemicals is also increasing. With the development of technology, social media platforms can influence consumers, especially generation Y and Z, to buy food. With the influence of developing food technology, more studies are needed to evaluate the factors that will affect the food preferences of generations Y and Z in the coming years and their relationship with health.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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