



Perceptions of Dietary Restrictions in the Altayeabaat Diet Among Nutrition Students: A Thematic Analysis

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تصورات طلبة التغذية حول القيود الغذائية في نظام الطيبات الغذائي: تحليل تيمي

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Abstract:

This qualitative analytical study explored nutrition students' perspectives regarding the dietary restrictions promoted associated with the Altayeabaat Diet, with particular emphasis on the perceived scientific validity, nutritional adequacy, and potential public health implications of the diet. Materials and Methods: A purposive sample participants consisted of nine female undergraduate students enrolled in the third year of the Nutrition Department at the Faculty of Medical Technology, University of Zawia, Libya. Participants were approximately 21–22 years old and were purposively selected based on their academic background in nutrition sciences and willingness to participate in the study. Data were collected through open-ended semi-structured responses and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurrent patterns, beliefs, and critical viewpoints related to the dietary recommendations of the Altayeabaat Diet. Results: The findings revealed that participants generally acknowledged the importance of nutrition in disease prevention and health promotion. However, substantial concerns were expressed regarding the exclusion of nutritionally valuable foods such as fruits, vegetables, eggs, garlic, and onions. Several students questioned the scientific evidence supporting certain claims, particularly those related to chronic disease management and discouragement of conventional medical treatment. Social media influence emerged as a major factor contributing to the popularity of the diet, while participants emphasized the need for evidence-based nutritional guidance. Although some respondents recognized that certain recommendations may encourage healthier eating habits, most attributed perceived benefits to overall dietary improvement rather than the specific framework of the diet itself. Conclusions: The study concludes that nutrition students demonstrated a critical and evidence-oriented perspective toward the Altayeabaat Diet. While acknowledging the central role of nutrition in health, participants expressed reservations about unsupported restrictions and medically sensitive claims. Strengthening public nutrition literacy and promoting scientifically grounded dietary communication are strongly recommended.

Keywords: Altayeabaat Diet, Nutrition Students, Dietary Restrictions, Evidence-Based Nutrition.

المخلص:

هدفت هذه الدراسة التحليلية النوعية إلى استكشاف تصورات طلبة التغذية بشأن القيود الغذائية المرتبطة بنظام الطيبات الغذائي، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مدى صحة الأسس العلمية للنظام، وكفايته الغذائية، وأثاره المحتملة على الصحة العامة. المواد وطرق البحث: تكونت عينة الدراسة القصدية من تسع طالبات جامعات يدرسن بالسنة الثالثة في قسم التغذية بكلية التقنية الطبية، جامعة الزاوية، ليبيا. تراوحت أعمار المشاركات بين 21 و22 عامًا، وتم اختيارهن قصدياً بناءً على خلفيتهن الأكاديمية في علوم التغذية ورغبتهم في المشاركة في الدراسة. جُمعت البيانات من خلال استجابات شبه منظمة مفتوحة النهاية، وتم تحليلها باستخدام تحليل الموضوعات لاستخلاص الأنماط المتكررة والمعتقدات ووجهات النظر النقدية المتعلقة بالتوصيات الغذائية لنظام الطيبات الغذائي. النتائج: أظهرت النتائج أن المشاركات أقررن عمومًا بأهمية التغذية في الوقاية من الأمراض وتعزيز الصحة. ومع ذلك، أبدت مخاوف كبيرة بشأن استبعاد أغذية ذات قيمة غذائية عالية مثل الفواكه والخضروات، والبيض، والثوم، والبصل. كما شككت عدة طالبات في الأدلة العلمية الداعمة لبعض الادعاءات، لا سيما تلك المتعلقة بإدارة الأمراض المزمنة والتقليل من أهمية العلاج الطبي التقليدي. وبرز تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي كعامل رئيسي ساهم في انتشار النظام الغذائي، في حين أكدت المشاركات على ضرورة الاعتماد على إرشادات غذائية قائمة على الأدلة العلمية. وعلى الرغم من أن بعض المستجيبات رأين أن بعض التوصيات قد تشجع على تبني عادات غذائية أكثر صحة، فإن معظمهن أرجعن الفوائد الملحوظة إلى التحسن العام في النمط الغذائي وليس إلى الإطار الخاص للنظام الغذائي ذاته. الاستنتاجات: خلصت الدراسة إلى أن طلبة التغذية أظهروا منظورًا نقدياً قائمًا على الأدلة تجاه نظام الطيبات الغذائي. فعلى الرغم من إقرارهم بالدور المحوري للتغذية في تعزيز الصحة، فقد أبدوا تحفظات بشأن القيود الغذائية غير المدعومة علميًا والادعاءات ذات الحساسية الطبية. وتوصي الدراسة بضرورة تعزيز الثقافة الغذائية لدى الجمهور وتشجيع التواصل الغذائي المستند إلى أسس علمية راسخة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظام الطيبات الغذائي، طلبة التغذية، القيود الغذائية، التغذية القائمة على الأدلة العلمية.

Introduction:

Nutrition plays a central role in the prevention and management of chronic diseases and is widely recognized as a cornerstone of public health practice. Dietary patterns have been strongly associated with the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, metabolic syndrome, and several cancers. Consequently, increasing public attention has been directed toward nutritional interventions and alternative dietary systems that claim to improve health outcomes or reverse disease processes [1,2]. In recent years, social media platforms have become a major source of nutrition information, where dietary advice is frequently disseminated by public figures, clinicians, influencers, and non-specialists alike. Although digital platforms may enhance public access to health information, they have also facilitated the rapid spread of nutrition misinformation, unsupported claims, and restrictive eating ideologies [3,4].

This issue has become particularly relevant in Arab-speaking communities, where locally popular dietary systems often gain widespread influence despite limited scientific scrutiny. One such example is the Altayeabaat Diet, a dietary approach promoted in Arabic media and online spaces, which advocates the exclusion of several commonly consumed foods including selected fruits, vegetables, eggs, onions, garlic, poultry products, and certain processed foods. Supporters frequently attribute improvements in chronic symptoms, weight control, and digestive health to adherence to the diet. However, concerns may arise when nutritionally valuable foods are restricted without individualized assessment or evidence-based justification. Restrictive diets have been associated with potential micronutrient inadequacy, reduced dietary diversity, disordered eating behaviors, and confusion regarding healthy food choices [5,6]. University students enrolled in nutrition programs represent an academically relevant population for evaluating such dietary claims.

As future nutrition professionals, they are expected to develop critical appraisal skills, interpret evidence-based dietary guidance, and recognize misinformation related to food and health. Previous studies have shown that nutrition students generally demonstrate higher nutrition literacy than the general population, yet they may still be influenced by social media narratives and emerging diet trends [7,8]. Despite the growing popularity of the Altayeabaat Diet, no peer-reviewed studies were identified that specifically explored perceptions of this dietary model among nutrition students or critically examined its food restrictions within an educational context. This represents an important knowledge gap, particularly in Libya, where evidence regarding student perspectives on popular nutrition trends remains limited.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no peer-reviewed studies have specifically examined the Altayeabaat Diet from a nutritional science perspective, nor have previous investigations explored how nutrition students evaluate its dietary recommendations and health claims. Consequently, the

current study represents an initial exploratory attempt to address this gap in the literature and provide preliminary evidence regarding professional perceptions of this increasingly discussed dietary model. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the perspectives of nutrition students at the University of Zawia regarding the dietary restrictions promoted in the Altayeabaat Diet.

Specifically, the study sought to examine students' views on the scientific validity, nutritional adequacy, and potential public health implications of the diet through qualitative thematic analysis. Emerging evidence has also highlighted the increasing popularity of restrictive dietary movements that are promoted through persuasive personal narratives rather than rigorous scientific evaluation. Many individuals are attracted to simplified dietary rules that promise rapid symptom relief, detoxification, or disease reversal. However, public health experts warn that such approaches may encourage unnecessary elimination of essential foods, nutritional imbalance, and confusion regarding evidence-based recommendations [9,10].

Furthermore, young adults and university students are considered particularly vulnerable to online nutrition trends due to frequent exposure to digital health content and peer influence. Studies have shown that social media engagement can significantly shape food beliefs, body image perceptions, and attitudes toward unconventional diets. At the same time, nutrition education has been associated with stronger critical appraisal skills and better resistance to misinformation, reinforcing the importance of academic training in this field.

Materials and Methods:

Study Design and Setting:

This qualitative analytical study was conducted at the Department of Nutrition, Faculty of Medical Technology, University of Zawia, Libya, to explore students' perspectives regarding the dietary restrictions promoted in the Altayeabaat Diet. The department was selected as an appropriate academic setting due to the participants' educational background in nutrition sciences and their ability to critically evaluate dietary claims. Data were collected over a two-week period from 1 April to 15 April 2025 through open-ended responses obtained from voluntarily participating students.

Justification for Identifying the Diet by Name:

The name of the (Altayeabaat) Diet and its publicly associated promoter were mentioned in this study solely for scientific clarity and contextual accuracy, as the dietary model is widely promoted in public media and social media platforms under this specific name. The purpose of naming the diet was not personal criticism or reputational evaluation of any individual, but rather to ensure accurate identification of the dietary framework being discussed by participants. The study focused exclusively on students' perceptions of the publicly communicated dietary recommendations and their nutritional implications.

Participants and Selection Criteria:

The participants consisted of nine female undergraduate students enrolled in the third year of the Nutrition Department at the Faculty of Medical Technology, University of Zawia, Libya. Participants were approximately 21–22 years old and were purposively selected based on their academic background in nutrition sciences and willingness to participate in the study. Eligible participants were those currently registered in the program and willing to voluntarily participate in the study. Participant recruitment continued until data saturation was reached, at which point no substantially new themes or perspectives emerged from additional responses. Inclusion criteria required students to provide informed consent, complete the interview, and respond to all open-ended questions relevant to the study topic. Students who declined participation or provided incomplete responses were excluded from the study.

Sampling justification:

Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was considered reasonably achieved, as no substantially new perspectives or recurring themes emerged from the final responses. Despite the relatively small sample size, the participants demonstrated considerable similarity in their academic background and depth of discussion, which contributed to sufficient thematic consistency across the collected data. Therefore, the responses obtained from the nine participants were considered adequate to address the exploratory aims of the study.

In qualitative research, sample size is determined primarily by the richness and depth of information rather than statistical representativeness. The purpose of the present study was exploratory in nature and focused on obtaining detailed perspectives from nutrition students regarding a specific dietary approach. Therefore, a relatively small purposive sample was considered appropriate for addressing the study objectives.

Data Analysis:

A thematic qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the perceptions of nine university students regarding the "Altayeabaat" diet. Participants' responses were carefully reviewed and

analyzed to identify recurring ideas and patterns within the data. Significant statements were extracted from the responses and assigned initial codes based on their meanings. Similar codes were then grouped together to form broader themes representing the dominant viewpoints shared by participants. The representative quotations included in the tables were translated into English to maintain consistency with the manuscript language while preserving the original meaning of the participants' perspectives. The final themes mainly reflected concerns regarding restrictive dietary practices, contradictory nutritional recommendations, lack of scientific evidence, social media influence, and the importance of balanced nutrition.

Data Collection Instrument:

Data were collected using an online asynchronous semi-structured interview administered through a messaging application.

Data Collection Procedure:

Data were collected through an online semi-structured discussion conducted via online App. A dedicated discussion group was created for eligible nutrition students. The interview questions were posted in written format within the group, allowing participants to review the questions at their convenience and voluntarily respond when ready. were informed that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that all responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. This flexible format enabled students to provide thoughtful and honest opinions in their own words without time pressure. To minimize peer influence, participants were encouraged to provide independent responses based on their personal perspectives. Students were informed that there were no correct or incorrect answers and that all responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were informed that their responses would be used only for research purposes. Each participant answered the open-ended questions individually through written responses in the online App discussion. The discussion remained open for a specified data collection period, during which students could join, read the questions, and submit their responses asynchronously.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Faculty of Medical Technology, University of Zawia, Libya, prior to data collection.

Proposed Interview Questions:

- What is your overall opinion about the Altayebaat Diet as a dietary approach?
- How do you evaluate the dietary recommendations promoted in this diet?
- What are your views regarding the inclusion or exclusion of certain foods within this diet?
- In your opinion, how might this diet influence nutritional status or overall health?
- How do you assess the scientific basis of the health claims associated with this diet?
- What role do you think nutrition professionals or healthcare providers should have when discussing such diets with the public?
- Why do you think some people are attracted to this type of diet?
- How do social media platforms influence public perceptions of diets such as this one?

Results:

A thematic qualitative analysis was conducted to explore the perceptions and opinions of nine university students regarding the "Altayebaat" diet. Participants were selected from students with backgrounds and interests related to nutrition and health sciences, allowing for more critical and informed reflections on the dietary approach. The analysis focused on identifying recurring ideas, concerns, beliefs, and attitudes expressed by the participants toward the diet and its associated health claims. The collected responses were carefully reviewed, coded, and organized into major themes and subthemes. Similar statements and viewpoints were grouped together to identify patterns across participants' perspectives.

Thematic analysis revealed several dominant themes, including concerns regarding restrictive dietary practices, contradictions within the dietary recommendations, lack of scientific evidence, the influence of social media, and the importance of balanced nutrition. To present the findings more clearly, the results were divided into two thematic tables. Table 1 summarizes the thematic analysis of the first five students, while Table 2 presents the analysis of the remaining four students. Each table includes key statements, assigned codes, representative quotations, and the corresponding overarching themes identified during the analysis process.

Table (1): Thematic Analysis for the First Five Students (Students 1–5)

Studet	Key Statement	Code	Representative Quote	Main Theme
Studet 1	Rejection of excluding nutritious foods	Rejection of food exclusion	"Milk, cheese, and eggs are excellent sources of calcium and protein."	Contradiction with nutritional science
Studet 1	Criticism of allowing processed foods while banning healthy foods	Nutritional inconsistency	"How can healthy foods be banned while Nutella is allowed?"	Contradictory dietary recommendations
Studet 1	Defense of onion and garlic benefits	Recognition of medicinal foods	"Many people use them as a form of medicine."	Importance of natural foods
Studet 2	The diet lacks balance and logic	Rejection of restrictive diets	"It is an illogical approach that lacks balance."	Lack of dietary balance
Studet 2	The diet is influenced by media promotion	Media-driven persuasion	"It is more of a media phenomenon than a scientific reality."	Social media influence
Studet 2	Fear of nutritional deficiencies	Concern about nutrient deficiency	"It may lead to muscle loss and nutritional deficiencies."	Health risks of exclusion diets
Studet 3	Scientific claims are unsupported	Lack of scientific evidence	"These claims lack support from strong clinical research."	Weak scientific foundation
Studet 3	Improvement may result from avoiding processed foods	Symptom-based improvement	"Some individuals may feel better because they stopped consuming processed foods."	Temporary health improvement
Studet 3	Concern regarding gut microbiota	Gut health awareness	"It may negatively affect the diversity of the gut microbiome."	Long-term physiological effects
Studet 4	Some dietary recommendations may be beneficial	Partial acceptance	"Reducing ultra-processed foods can be beneficial."	Positive dietary behaviors
Studet 4	Food should not be classified as entirely good or bad	Rejection of extreme food labeling	"Food is rarely completely forbidden."	Dietary moderation
Studet 4	Nutritional needs vary among individuals	Personalized nutrition	"Nutritional needs differ according to age and health status."	Individual differences
Studet 5	The diet is highly restrictive	Restrictive dietary pattern	"It is an extremely exclusionary diet."	Restrictive diets
Studet 5	Social media contributes to misinformation	Digital misinformation	"It is mainly social media trends and misinformation."	Influence of online platforms
Studet5	Modération is Heather than restriction	Moderation principle	"Modération is always the healthiest approche."	Balance nutrition philosophy

The findings from the first five students revealed a predominantly critical attitude toward the "Altayebaat" diet. Participants frequently questioned the scientific validity of excluding nutrient-dense foods such as dairy products, legumes, vegetables, and eggs while simultaneously allowing highly processed foods. This contradiction was consistently viewed as one of the major weaknesses of the dietary approach. Another important theme involved concerns regarding nutritional deficiencies and long-term physiological consequences. Students highlighted possible risks such as reduced protein intake, vitamin and mineral deficiencies, and negative effects on gut microbiota. Several participants also suggested that temporary improvements experienced by followers may result from reducing processed food intake rather than from the diet itself.

Despite the criticism, some students acknowledged a few potentially beneficial aspects of the diet, particularly reducing ultra-processed foods and promoting dietary awareness. However, they emphasized that healthy nutrition should be based on moderation, balance, and individualized dietary needs rather than rigid food restrictions. Social media was also identified as a major factor contributing to the popularity of the diet. Participants believed that emotional narratives, trends, and online testimonials played a stronger role in influencing public opinion than scientific evidence. Overall, the students demonstrated a relatively high level of nutritional awareness and critical evaluation of dietary misinformation.

Table (2): Thematic Analysis of Students 6–9 Regarding the “Altayeabaat” Diet

Student	Key Statement	Code	Representative Quote	Main Theme
Student 6	Balance is more important than deprivation	Dietary moderation	“Balance is more important than deprivation.”	Balanced nutrition
Student 6	Warning against exaggerated health claims	Misleading health claims	“Some promises and rapid results lack strong scientific evidence.”	Weak scientific evidence
Student 6	Social media idealizes restrictive diets	Idealization of diets	“Social media makes these diets appear perfect or miraculous.”	Social media influence
Student 7	The diet classifies foods into “good” and “bad” categories	Binary food categorization	“The diet divides foods into ‘pure’ and ‘harmful’ categories.”	Extreme food classification
Student 7	Temporary digestive relief may mislead followers	Misinterpretation of symptom relief	“Digestive relief may falsely convince individuals that the diet is healthy.”	Misleading short-term outcomes
Student 7	Restrictive eating may lead to unhealthy food obsession	Fear-based eating behavior	“It may contribute to an unhealthy obsession with healthy eating.”	Psychological impact
Student 8	The diet may only help certain medical conditions	Limited therapeutic role	“The diet may only be suitable for specific conditions.”	Limited applicability
Student 8	Improvement may result from fasting rather than the diet	Fasting-related benefits	“The improvement may mainly result from fasting itself.”	Alternative explanation for improvement
Student 8	Lack of long-term scientific evaluation	Lack of longitudinal evidence	“There are no long-term studies evaluating this diet.”	Insufficient scientific evidence
Student 9	The diet excludes major food groups	Food exclusion	“The diet excludes vegetables, legumes, and dairy products.”	Restrictive dietary pattern
Student 9	Processed foods are still allowed	Nutritional contradiction	“Processed sweets and snacks are still permitted.”	Contradictory recommendations
Student 9	Followers mainly rely on personal experiences	Anecdotal evidence	“Most reported benefits are based on personal experiences.”	Reliance on testimonials
Student 9	The diet should not replace medical treatment	Medical caution	“It should not be considered a substitute for medical treatment.”	Limits of dietary therapy

The second group of students continued to express skepticism toward the “Altayeabaat” diet, although their responses reflected a more analytical and balanced perspective. Participants acknowledged that some aspects of the diet, such as reducing processed foods or simplifying meals, may provide temporary digestive comfort or help regulate eating behaviors. Nevertheless, they strongly rejected the broader claims that the diet represents a scientifically validated therapeutic solution for multiple diseases.

A major concern among participants was the rigid classification of foods into “good” and “bad” categories. Students argued that this type of thinking oversimplifies nutritional science and may encourage unhealthy psychological relationships with food, including excessive fear of eating certain natural foods. Some participants also associated restrictive eating patterns with psychological distress and obsessive food-related behaviors. Several students proposed that the positive outcomes reported by followers may be more closely related to fasting, reduced food intake, or temporary elimination of digestive irritants rather than to the nutritional validity of the diet itself. This indicates an effort by participants to critically distinguish between correlation and causation.

Additionally, social media was consistently viewed as a powerful factor in promoting the diet. Participants emphasized that emotionally persuasive testimonials, before-and-after transformations, and influencer marketing often overshadow scientific evidence. Overall, the findings across both tables suggest that students generally favored evidence-based, balanced, and individualized nutrition approaches over highly restrictive dietary systems.

Discussion:

The findings of the present study revealed that most participants expressed critical attitudes toward the “Altayebaat” diet, particularly regarding its restrictive nature, contradictory recommendations, and lack of strong scientific support. Because no previous peer-reviewed studies were identified that directly investigated perceptions of the Altayebaat Diet, direct comparison with existing literature was not possible. Therefore, the present findings were interpreted in relation to broader evidence concerning restrictive dietary patterns, nutrition misinformation, and evidence-based dietary recommendations.

Across both thematic tables, students repeatedly questioned the exclusion of nutritionally important foods such as dairy products, legumes, vegetables, and eggs while simultaneously permitting certain processed foods. Many participants considered this contradiction one of the major weaknesses of the dietary approach. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that restrictive dietary patterns may contribute to nutritional imbalance and unhealthy dietary behaviors [5,6].

Interestingly, despite the overall criticism, several participants acknowledged that some individuals may experience temporary improvements while following the diet. Students suggested that these benefits may result from reducing ultra-processed food consumption, controlling eating habits, or practicing intermittent fasting rather than from the dietary philosophy itself. In many respects, this distinction is very important because many individuals may attribute symptom relief to the exclusion of specific foods without recognizing the broader behavioral changes occurring simultaneously. Similar findings have been reported in studies examining restrictive diets and perceived health improvements among young adults [9,10].

Another important finding was the participants’ skepticism toward the scientific validity of many claims associated with the diet. Students frequently emphasized the absence of strong clinical evidence supporting statements related to “toxins,” inflammation, or the harmfulness of natural foods such as vegetables and legumes. For the most part, the students demonstrated a relatively high level of nutritional awareness by critically evaluating unsupported health information and emphasizing the importance of evidence-based nutrition. Previous research has similarly shown that university students with greater nutritional knowledge tend to be more resistant to dietary misinformation and misleading online trends [7,11,12].

Moreover, health literacy has been identified as an essential factor influencing individuals’ ability to recognize misinformation and make informed dietary decisions [14]. Concerns regarding the long-term consequences of restrictive diets also emerged strongly throughout the analysis. Participants mentioned potential risks including nutritional deficiencies, muscle loss, poor gut health, and unhealthy psychological relationships with food. Some students even referred to the possibility of developing obsessive healthy eating behaviors or excessive fear of certain foods. This finding may suggest that restrictive dietary approaches affect not only physical health but also psychological well-being and eating behaviors. Previous literature has similarly demonstrated that severe dietary restriction may contribute to micronutrient inadequacies, anxiety related to food choices, and disordered eating patterns [14].

Social media appeared to play a major role in shaping public perceptions of the “Altayebaat” diet. Participants repeatedly described how platforms such as TikTok and YouTube amplify emotionally persuasive content, personal testimonials, and dramatic before-and-after experiences that may appear more convincing than scientific evidence. In reality, this reflects a broader issue related to the spread of nutrition misinformation through digital platforms. Studies have shown that health

misinformation is highly prevalent on social media and that dietary trends online often prioritize sensationalism and audience engagement over scientific accuracy [3,4].

Furthermore, social media has become one of the primary sources of nutrition information among young adults, increasing their exposure to misleading dietary content [11]. Another noteworthy finding was the participants' preference for moderation and individualized nutrition rather than rigid food classification systems. Many students rejected the idea that foods should be categorized as completely "good" or "bad," emphasizing instead that nutritional needs differ according to age, medical condition, and lifestyle factors. In my view, this perspective reflects a mature understanding of modern nutritional science, which generally focuses on balance, dietary diversity, and sustainability rather than strict exclusion.

This interpretation aligns with broader evidence supporting balanced dietary approaches and personalized nutrition strategies for long-term health promotion [1,7]. Additionally, several participants suggested that the popularity of the "Altayebaat" diet may be influenced by emotional, cultural, and religious factors. The use of terms such as "pure" and "impure" foods may create a sense of moral or spiritual authority that increases public trust in the dietary message. Risk communication research has shown that emotionally framed nutrition information may strongly influence public beliefs even in the absence of strong scientific evidence [14].

Therefore, the popularity of restrictive diets may be shaped not only by nutritional concerns but also by psychological and sociocultural influences. Overall, the findings suggest that the participating students demonstrated relatively strong critical awareness regarding dietary misinformation and restrictive nutrition trends. Although some temporary benefits associated with reduced processed food intake were acknowledged, most participants rejected the broader scientific claims of the "Altayebaat" diet and emphasized the importance of evidence-based, balanced, and individualized nutrition approaches. These findings highlight the urgent need for improved nutrition education, digital health literacy, and stronger professional communication strategies to counter the spread of nutrition misinformation on social media platforms.

Study Limitations:

This study has several limitations. First, the findings were based on a relatively small purposive sample drawn from a single academic institution, which may limit the transferability of the results to other student populations. Second, all participants were female nutrition students, and perspectives from male students or individuals outside nutrition-related disciplines were not represented. Third, the study explored perceptions rather than actual health outcomes associated with the diet. Nevertheless, the qualitative design provided valuable insight into how future nutrition professionals critically evaluate dietary claims and restrictive eating practices.

Conclusions:

The present study explored university students' perceptions and critical evaluations of the "Altayebaat" diet through thematic qualitative analysis. Overall, the findings demonstrated that most participants viewed the diet as a highly restrictive nutritional approach characterized by contradictory dietary recommendations, insufficient scientific evidence, and heavy reliance on social media promotion and personal testimonials. Although some participants acknowledged that certain aspects of the diet such as reducing processed food intake or improving eating discipline may provide temporary benefits, the majority emphasized that these outcomes do not necessarily validate the diet itself. Instead, students frequently associated such improvements with general lifestyle modifications, reduced consumption of ultra-processed foods, or fasting-related effects rather than with the exclusionary philosophy promoted by the diet.

Participants also expressed substantial concern regarding the potential long-term consequences of eliminating major food groups, including nutritional deficiencies, negative effects on gut health, unhealthy psychological relationships with food, and unsustainable eating behaviors. At the same time, the findings revealed a relatively high level of nutritional awareness among the students, as many participants emphasized the importance of moderation, individualized nutrition, and evidence-based dietary recommendations rather than rigid food classifications. Furthermore, the study highlighted the influential role of social media in shaping public perceptions of dietary trends. Emotional testimonials, simplified health messages, and influencer driven content appeared to contribute significantly to the popularity of the "Altayebaat" diet despite the absence of strong scientific support.

This finding underscores the growing challenge of nutrition misinformation in the digital era and the need for stronger health literacy and critical evaluation skills among young adults. In conclusion, the findings suggest that while restrictive dietary trends may attract public attention through promises of rapid health improvement, sustainable nutrition should remain grounded in scientific evidence, balance, dietary diversity, and individualized health needs. Given the absence of direct scientific

investigations evaluating the Altayeba Diet, further research involving larger and more diverse populations is needed to examine both the nutritional characteristics of the diet and its potential health implications using rigorous scientific methodologies.

The study also reinforces the importance of the role played by nutrition professionals and public health educators in promoting accurate nutrition information and helping individuals critically evaluate popular dietary claims.

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