

# ANTHROPO-MEDICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF AN OVO-LACTO-VEGETARIAN SAMPLE AS COMPARED WITH AN OMNIVOROUS ONE

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This paper compares the nutritional behaviors of an ovo-lacto-vegetarian sample that eliminated meat from alimentation and an omnivorous one, while stating some social, cultural and anthropo-medical parameters of the two samples. 105 ovo-lacto-vegetarians were selected (70 women and 35 men) and 113 omnivorous (67 women and 46 men). Data concerning age, educational level, civil status, religion, daily meals regularity, daily meals number, the existence of some additional behavior (fasting, diet, etc.) and weight and height for body mass index computation, were taken. Most ovo-lacto-vegetarians declared that the arguments that convinced them to adopt this diet were health status improvement (31.15% for women and 35.19% for men) and psychical and spiritual status improvement (35.25% respectively 37.04%). Data show that the ovo-lacto-vegetarians have a body mass index (BMI) value, in both women and men (21.70 kg/m<sup>2</sup> respectively 23.70 kg/m<sup>2</sup>) smaller than the omnivorous (23.72 kg/m<sup>2</sup> respectively 24.95 kg/m<sup>2</sup>).

Data also attest that there are no important differences between the two samples concerning the nutritional behaviors and the persons who became ovo-lacto-vegetarians do not have a cultural or social, distinctive pattern or typology.

In medical anthropology nutritional behaviors are often studied, especially concerning their possible effects on the health status. It is known that many of the health problems are caused by inadequate, excessive nutritional behaviors that lead to obesity, severe deficiencies or are aggravating factors in many chronic diseases.

In the world there are a variety of nutritional behaviors, according to economic, regional, climatic or cultural factors. The nutritional types, specific for some countries or population, have been studied and the existence of some associations between certain traditional diets and some specific health problems have been discovered. A high incidence of stomach or lip cancer is known in Asian Countries, important consumers of hot spice and salted fish [5, p. 69] and of obesity in countries that adopted the specific American nutritional diet, fast-food type, with many lipids and calories [5, p. 45]. Instead, the Greek traditional diet, rich in fruits, vegetables and olive oil is recognized as a healthy nutrition, with many beneficial effects on the health status. [4]