



EVALUATION OF EATING PATTERNS OF CHILDREN IN RURAL BURHANPUR (MADHYA PRADESH) AGED 6 TO 12 YEARS

Nutritional Science

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ABSTRACT

Introduction- Good nutrition and dietary behaviours are essential during childhood to achieve full growth potential and appropriate body composition, promote health and wellbeing, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases in adulthood. **Aim-** The aim of this study was to investigate the eating habits of school children of age 6-12 years in rural areas of Burhanpur District of Madhya Pradesh. **Methodology-** Through the use of the purposive sampling method, 150 children in rural Burhanpur between the ages of 6 and 12 were chosen. As a means of gathering data, a self-made structured interview schedule was employed. The information was gathered from the mother and the kid using a questionnaire. The mothers' prior consent was obtained. **Result-** Breakfast was frequently skipped by these children. The daily consumption of milk and dairy products was deficient, as was the consumption of pulses, vegetables, and fresh fruits, while the consumption of carbonated drinks, chips, friams, kurkure, biscuits, toasts, and buns was relatively high. **Conclusion-** Nutrition intervention programs should be launched among school children of rural Burhanpur district.

KEYWORDS

School aged children, Eating habits, Skipping breakfast

INTRODUCTION

Human health and wellbeing are greatly influenced by nutritional intake, which plays a more prominent and concerning role in children. Children's dietary intake has a special direct impact on their health because of their physical, mental, and cognitive development. Furthermore, by establishing lifelong eating patterns in youngsters, it has long-term consequences on general health. Developing healthy eating habits at this age aids in the prevention of complications.

The school years are a time of rapid growth and development that lay a solid basis for a healthy and fruitful adult life. A balanced diet is essential for developing healthy eating habits and for supplying the nutrients required for development, long-term health, cognition, and academic success. School-age children constitute a sizable proportion of the global population, with more than three-quarters of these children living in developing countries. Nutrient requirements for school-age children are higher. School children's health, physical growth, development, and academic performance are all heavily reliant on proper nutrition. Because of the synergy between malnutrition and infections, undernourished children are predisposed to poor health. Snacking, skipping meals, and consuming junk and packaged foods are common features of children diets in developed countries.

Despite the fact that it is likely that a high percentage of school-aged children are malnourished, national surveys like the District Level Household and Facility Survey (DLHS) and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) on children have not been able to collect information on the nutritional status of children aged 6 to 12 years. Considering this fact, the current study's goal was to evaluate children's eating patterns. Hence this study was carried out in rural areas of Burhanpur District, to study the dietary patterns and preferences of school children in the age group six to twelve years.

METHODOLOGY

In the present study systematic purposive random sampling technique was used for the sample selection. 150 children in the age group of 6 – 12 years old in rural Burhanpur were selected through purposive sampling (Volunteering) method. A self-prepared structured interview schedule was used as a data collection tool. A questionnaire was used to collect the data from child as well as mother. A prior consent was taken from the mothers. The questions were asked about the type of food consumed, meal pattern and details of breakfast. The dietary pattern assessment included data collection on food frequency consumption of various foods like whole grains, dals and pulses, green leafy vegetables, other vegetables, fruits, milk and milk products, flesh foods, nuts and seeds etc. It also included the snack and fast food consumption frequency of children like biscuit, toast, buns, chocolates, candies, friams, chips, kurkure, carbonated drinks, kachori, samosa, vada, maggi noodles, pasta and packaged foods. The

mothers were also asked about the amount spent by her child on packaged foods on a daily basis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 - Pattern of eating habits of children

S.No	Pattern of eating habits	Category	No. of students	Percentage
1.	Habit of Having a breakfast Regularly	Yes	61	40.7
		No	89	59.3
2	Dietary habits	vegetarian	22	14.7
		Non vegetarian	121	85.3
3.	Meal pattern	2 meals	85	56.7
		3 meals	64	42.7
		4 meals	0	0
		More than 4 meals	1	0.7
4.	Money spent for eating packaged food items Everyday	< 5	17	11.3
		5 -10	41	27.3
		10 -20	39	26
		< 20	53	35.3

The eating patterns and dietary habits of a sample of young children from rural Burhanpur, aged 6 to 12, are shown in the table above. 40.7 percent of students were found to miss breakfast, whereas 59.3 percent reported eating breakfast on a regular basis, as seen in the table. Out of 150 people surveyed, 85.3% were not vegetarians, while 14.7% were only vegetarians. The table reveals that the selected rural youngsters frequently consumed packaged foods. The startling data in the table showed that 35.3 percent of all respondents were found to spend more than 20 rupees per day, 26 percent of students were found to spend 10-20 rupees per day, 27.3 percent of students were found to spend 5-10 rupees per day, and only 11.3 percent were found to spend less than 5 rupees per day on packaged food items consumed outside the home. From the table above, it can be seen that 56.7% of young children in rural Burhanpur, aged 6 to 12, only ate two meals each day, increasing the likelihood that they may suffer from nutritional deficiencies. 42.7 percent of pupils ate three meals a day, and very few or no kids ate four or more times daily.

Table 2 - Frequency of consumption of various foods

S.No	Consumption of food	Daily	Once in 2-3 days	Once a week	Occasionally	Total
1.	Cereals	150	0	0	0	150
2	Pulses and legumes	37	99	11	3	150
3	Green leafy vegetables	15	106	20	9	150

4	Other vegetables	65	70	9	6	150
5	Fruits	20	70	41	19	150
6	Milk and milk products	75	23	15	37	150
7	Fleshy foods	18	47	56	0	121
8	Kachori /samosa/ wada	16	40	58	36	150
9	Chocolates /candies	94	21	26	9	150
10	Carbonated drinks	55	26	39	30	150
11	Biscuits/toasts/ buns	129	12	3	6	150
12	Maggi,Noodles /pasta	6	33	40	71	150
13	Friams /chips /kurkure	93	29	16	12	150

From the above table, it can be inferred that all children were found to eat cereals every day, however only 37 children were found to consume pulses on a daily basis while maximum number of children found to consume pulses and legumes once in 2-3 days. 106 students were discovered to eat green leafy vegetables every two to three days, and only 15 of 150 kids consumed them every day. In case of other vegetables 65 students were found to take daily while 70 students were found to take once in 2-3 days. Only 20 out of 150 kids were found to regularly take fruits, compared to 70 who did so once every two to three days and 41 who did so only once per week while 19 students were found to take fruits occasionally demonstrating an imbalance in young children's eating habits.. The table above shows the consumption of milk and dairy products. 75 children out of 150 were found to consume milk or dairy products on a regular basis, while 37 children were found to consume milk on an occasional basis. In terms of flesh food consumption maximum number of children that is 56 children out of 121 were found to eat once in a week and 47 children were found to eat once in 2-3 days while only 18 children were found to eat daily.

The shocking data comes from the consumption of Friams, chips and Kurkure among children; 93 of 150 children were found to consume friams, chips and kurkure on a daily basis, while 29 were found to consume once every 2-3 days. Only 6 students were found to consume Maggie and packaged food on a regular basis in rural Burhanpur, whereas 71 children were found to consume Maggie occasionally, 33 were found to eat once every 2-3 days, and 40 were found to eat on a weekly basis. Carbonated drinks were preferred by children showing 55 children found to take everyday while 30 were found to take occasionally. Kachori/samosa/sev consumption among young children reveals that 16 out of 150 were found to consume Kachori samosa daily, 40 alternately, 58 weekly, and 36 occasionally. The table shows that biscuits, toasts, and buns are highly preferred among young children; 129 out of 150 children were found to eat biscuits and toast on a regular basis, which is cause for concern; 29 were found to eat on alternate days, 16 weekly, and 12 rarely or infrequently.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding of our study is that the vast majority of children do not adhere to a healthy meal and snack schedule, with many skipping breakfast on purpose. Food habits formed in childhood continue into adulthood and serve as the foundation for either good or bad health in the coming years. As a result, there is a need to educate parents about proper dietary habits for their children in order for them to live healthy and productive lives as adults.

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