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FOOD HABITS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to assess the food habits among Kashmiri adolescents with an objective of gaining knowledge about their food habits and liking and disliking for various food stuffs, the data was collected through survey method with the help of a questionnaire. Keeping the objectives in view, hundred adolescents 50 males and 50 females were selected from Srinagar and Shopian district. The study highlighted that adolescents do not follow a proper diet plan. Girls skip their meals as they want to maintain their figure and most of them consume junk food.

Key words: Adolescents, food habits, nutritional awareness, skip meals, junk food.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word adolescence comes from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means “to grow up” or “to grow to maturity” (Golinko, 1984). The period of adolescence is very crucial, involving a variety of physiological and psychological changes that usually affect eating habits. (Moreno et al,2007). Eating habits are generally formed right from childhood through to the adolescent years (Speek et al., 2001). Adolescents have the reputation of having the worst eating habits they usually skip a meal particularly breakfast. There are more skippers among girls than boys, and those who take breakfast may consume foods which are nutritionally inadequate. Missing breakfast may be due to eating disorders, peer pressure, lack of time and no nutritional awareness (Srilakashmi,2004). Girls are affected more by the media,they read fashion magazines that influence their decision to restrict calories or to take diet. Girls have more unhealthy eating habits than boys and they spend more time dieting than boys (Thomsen et al, 2002). Studies have revealed that the most frequent method adopted by boys to change their body is exercise rather than changing eating pattern as girls do (McCabe,2001) These factors represent great challenges for the public health and it is therefore important to focus on dietary habits in adolescence. Despite the necessity of healthy eating in this period, research has shown that as the individual enters adolescence, the dietary habits often get unhealthier (Rasmussen et al. 2006).

2. OBJECTIVES

1. To gain knowledge about the food habits among adolescents.
2. To study the awareness among adolescents about the Hazardous effects of junk food.
3. To study the likings and disliking of adolescents regarding various food stuffs.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bartheimv et al (1996) studied effects of age and gender on adolescents food habits and preferences in order to assess the food habits and tastes mostly related to age and gender. Girls pay more attention to snack than boys. Krebs et al (1996) found that one fourth of the vegetables that adolescents consume are French- fried potatoes. Shaw (1998) conducted a study on the breakfast eating habits of adolescents and reported that many adolescents skip essential meals. Various reasons for not eating breakfast given by teens were lack of time in the morning, not being hungry and love to consume junk foods like chips.

Kann et al (2000) found that eating at fast food restaurants has direct bearing on the nutritional status of adolescents because these are high in fat and low in fibre and nutrients. Siegel et al (2001) reported that dieting is a common and widespread practice among adolescents, especially girls. In 1999, 59% of high school girls and 26% of high school boys reported trying to lose weight. Almost 20% of girls had gone without eating for 24 hours or more to lose weight. Rozina et al., (2005) conducted a study on obesity, eating habits and nutritional knowledge among school children. Obesity among children was found to be associated with limited nutritional knowledge and unhealthy eating habits. Vereecken et al (2005) reported that girls are often exposed for such influence as they grow older, for instance through reading fashion magazines, which in turn might affect their self-esteem. Pratap (2007) studied dietary habits of Mauritian school adolescents and found that there is a strong need for nutrition education strategies that foster healthy eating from a young age in Mauritius, as the island has one of the highest rates of diet related diseases such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in the world. Foods that are high in fats, sugar or salt and low in dietary fibre was commonly consumed by adolescents. The most popular sources of nutrition information were parents. More than half of the adolescents (54%) regularly give dietary advice to their friends and relatives, and 41.2% prepared foods at home on their own. Chin & Nasir (2009) revealed that meal skipping particularly breakfast snacking and various weight loss dietary behaviours were some of the unhealthy eating disorders depicted by Malaysian adolescent girls. Ottesen *et al* (2010), studied dietary habits of Palestinian adolescents and associated socio-demographic characteristics in Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron governorates in order to describe food habits and associated socio-demographic factors. High standard of living index and residence in Ramallah were positively associated with intake of animal foods, western style foods, dairy products, fruits and vegetables, sweets and snacks. The majority of students i.e. boys and girls in similar preposition, consumed vegetables daily. Daily fruit consumption was also equally common among boys and girls. Daily intake of sweets and salty snacks was common among girls and daily intake of soft drinks was common among boys. The study by Kurubaran et al (2012) revealed that most of the students had healthy eating habits. More than half had regular meals and breakfast. Majority consumed fruits less than 3 times/week. More than half had fried food twice or more a week and 59.8% drank water less than 2 liters daily. Alexandra et al (2013) studied eating habits and factors affecting food choice of adolescents living in rural areas, Body image concerns, dieting, education about food, parental control, maternal education level and eating with family and peers were found to affect food choices. Regular family meals at home were frequent in this age group and 99% adolescents ate lunch daily at home. Eating out with peers and from the school canteen was related with higher consumption of junk food. Girls and young adolescents whose mothers had a high educational level seemed to make healthier choices.

4. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The present study was undertaken to find out the food habits among adolescents in the age group of 11-19 years. A self designed questionnaire was prepared to collect information from the respondents. The sample size was 100 respondents out of which 50 were males and 50 females and was selected randomly from Srinagar and Shopian districts.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Distribution of respondents as per regular meals.

Regular meals	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Yes	10	20%	2	4%	12	12%
No	40	80%	48	96%	88	88%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 1 reveals the majority of the adolescents ate improperly. 88% had irregular breakfast and 12% had regular light lunch. Most of them ate 3-4 meals per day. Contrary to the present findings Kurubaran et al (2012) in his study found that most of the students had healthy eating habits. More than half had regular meals and breakfast.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents as per their skipping of meals

Skipping of meals	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Yes	42	84%	39	78%	81	81%
No	8	16%	11	22%	19	19%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 2 depicts the distribution of respondents as per skipping of meal. The table reveals that overall majority (81%) of the adolescents (more females than males) skipped their meals and consumed junk food in their schools/collages. Study conducted by Shaw (1998) on eating habits of adolescents also revealed that many adolescents skip essential meals. Various reasons for not eating breakfast reported were lack of time in morning, not being hungry, love to consume junk food like chips.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents as per consumption of fast food

Consumption of fast food	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Often	42	84%	39	78%	81	81%
Rarely	8	16%	11	22%	19	19%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 3 gives the distribution of respondents as per their fast food consumption. It clearly indicates that majority (81%) of the adolescents love to consume fast food; the main reason sighted by the adolescents was for taste/ flavour of fast foods. However, only 19% of the respondents took fast food rarely and took meals with family or friends daily. Krebs et al (1996) found that one fourth of the vegetables that adolescents consume are French fried potatoes.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents as per their liking for home made food.

Skipping of meals	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Yes	48	96%	22	44%	70	70%
No	2	4%	28	56%	30	30%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 4 reveals that a huge majority (96%) of females prefer homemade food because they think that food prepared at home is cooked under hygienic conditions. Pratap (2007) reported that half of the adolescents (54%) regularly gave advice to their friends and relatives to prepare and consume food at home on their own.

Table 5: Opinion regarding hygiene of food served in restaurant.

Food served in restaurant	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Hygienic	-	0%	7	14%	7	7%
Unhygienic	39	78%	41	82%	80	80%
Can't say	11	22%	2	4%	13	13%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 5 reveals that more boys i.e. (82%) than girls (78%) feel that the type of food served in restaurant is unhygienic. The survey further revealed that most of the adolescents spend Rs 300 per week on junk food and 97% of them got money from their parents.

Table 6: Type of snacks liked

Type of snacks	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Pizza	10	20%	17	34%	27	27%
chips	16	32%	3	6%	19	19%
burger	4	8%	6	12%	10	10%
Ice cream	11	22%	10	20%	21	21%
Cold drink	9	18%	14	28%	23	23%
total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 6 reveals that 27% of the adolescents like to consume pizza, while as 23% like to consume cold drink, 21% adolescents have liking for ice-creams, 19% adolescents like to consume chips and 10% like to consume burgers. Thus it can be said that all adolescents have liking for 1 or other type of snacks. Bartheieme (1996) in his study has reported that girls pay more attention to snacks than boys

Table7: Liking for spicy food

Skipping of meals	Female respondents	%age	Male respondents	%age	Total	%age
Yes	32	64%	19	38%	51	51%
No	18	36%	31	62%	49	49%
Total	50	100%	50	100%	100	100%

Table 7 reveals that more females (64%) than males (38%) have liking for spicy foods. The survey further revealed that all of the adolescents have liking for Kashmiri wazawan and very few of them consume Kashmiri Dried vegetables seasonally. . Another study by Ottesen et al (2010) reveals that daily intake of sweets and salty snacks was common among girls and daily intake of soft drinks was common among boys.

6. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that most of the adolescent do not follow proper diet chart. More than half (54%) especially girls skip their meals as they want to maintain their figure. Adolescents usually consume tea bread and egg in their breakfast. Most adolescents skipped their meals and consume junk food from cafeteria. They think that food served in restaurant is unhygienic. Adolescents like snacks they normally prefer chips, pizza, burger etc Most adolescents have liking for spicy food and very few of them consume Kashmiri dried vegetables.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- Eat regular meals.
- Balance your food choices over time
- Eat breakfast every day so you are less likely to snack on junk food at morning tea.
- Eat a variety of nutrient-rich foods.
- Foods like green leafy vegetables, meat, chicken, pluses and egg to be consumed in abundance so as to improve health.

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