



FOOD HABITS AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

INTRODUCTION

Education becomes a vague and informal process aiming at nothing but allowing the child uncontrolled freedom for arbitrary activities. Through such a process it is not possible to social, moral and spiritual values in children. Thus both the processes are one sided and emphasize the two extremes. The real concept of education is a synthesis of these two processes. Nutrition education helps to make many wise decisions about food. Education helps us to make informed food choices which will provide the necessary nutrients for a healthy body at a minimum cost. Education helps us to form certain food habits and change to others. For example, education can make us to decide to eat fruits at every meal because we have to learn about its nutritional benefits. Education can also make us to decide not to eat certain foods because of their harmful effect on our body.

FOOD HABITS

All human being eat food to survive. Food also produces immunity against disease. People are accustomed with the habit of eating three meals in a day. In general breakfast consist of lighter food as compare to lunch and dinner. Most of them don't pay much attention anymore to what they put into their bodies.

The term 'Food Habits' can be define as what and how people eat their selection of food their way of getting food. A good 'Food Habits' is necessary for man of all ages to maintain the proper nutrition which their body needs and to perform well. It is also important for man to take in the right amount and eat at the right time for the metabolism and energy consumption of the body to do their tasks. School students need the proper intake of food to improve their study skills, memory and thinking habits school students have habitual schedules to pass their studies and works on time that they sometimes forgot to eat properly and on time.

GOOD FOOD HABITS

Body needs food so that it can grow and stay healthy. And it is important to know what food eats as well as what

Food Habits to practice. Good Food Habits will help grow strong and healthy.

➤ *Fix a Time:*

We should not confuse our body by eating at a different time each day. The early we understand and adapt the habit, the better it is for us. The human digestive system needs proper gaps between each meal to digest and assimilate the food. Skipping meals and obnoxious eating timings will only lead to the eating between meals or those sinful mid-night snacks, adding an unwanted layer of fat to our belly.

➤ *Eating a Balanced Diet:*

Our favourite foods may not have all the nutrients which our body needs. Lack of some nutrients can cause some sickness. We need a balanced diet. A balanced diet has foods from the different food group in the proper amounts. We should drink fresh fruit juices and eat lots of vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are a very good source of nutrients and will keep a healthy immune system. We should avoid eating salty and fatty foods and drink milk every day.

➤ *Swear by Breakfast:*

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day as our body does not receive any nutrients post the previous night's dinner. "A healthy breakfast is the most important meal of the day", said that Dr.Jyothi Prasad, chief dietician, Manipal Hospital, Bangalore. "There's a nearly ten-hour long gap between dinner and breakfast, during which the body is on fast mode. As the name suggests, breakfast is the meal we eat to break that fast," explains Dr.Prasad, "It refuels our body with essential nutrients to kick-short our day. So we should not skip it."

➤ *Avoid Eating Junk Foods:*

Eating foods which are high in sugar, salt or fat does not do any good for our body. They can make us sick. Eating fatty foods and sweets often make us overweight and may cause other problems in the future such as heart problems, diabetes and cancers. Eating foods with too much artificial colouring is also not good for our body.

➤ **Drink Plenty of Water:**

As almost 75% of our body is made-up of water so we have to drink at least eight glasses of water a day.

➤ **Shift to Warm Water:**

Warm water is very helpful for the human digestive system. It removes the toxins out of our body which are responsible for acute headaches and body pain. They also clear our intestines, thus, keeping us safe from all the gastric diseases. Warm water also works wonders on our skin and makes us look hydrated and fresh.

BEST FOOD HABITS

- **Mixing it up:** Eating a large variety of different types of food is the best way to get all the vitamins and minerals which our body needs.
- **Eat 5 Small Meals a Day:** By eating frequently, the body never gets overly hungry nor does it get stuffed. This helps us avoid overeating at the next meal. Regular, small meals also keep blood sugar levels even and our metabolism burning.
- **Eat Fresh Produce:** Fresh fruits and vegetables are always a better choice than frozen or canned. Fresh products, especially the local, in season variety, has the highest amount of naturally occurring vitamins and minerals. Canned versions often contain extra sodium and may even contain the chemical BPA, found in the cans' plastic lining.
- **Take it slow:** It takes time for our brain to understand that our stomach is full, so the slower we eat the less we over indulge. Eating slowly is also more satisfying because we can take the time to really taste and enjoy each bite of food.
- **Avoid Red Meat:** Most red meat is packed full of saturated fat and artery clogging LDL cholesterol. Although a good source of protein, this nutrient can be found in other healthier options like fish, poultry or soy products. By avoiding red meat or limiting consumption to 1 to 2 times a month, we reduce our chances of developing heart disease.

WORST FOOD HABITS

- **Soda Pop:** Soda and other flavoured drinks are packed with empty calories. Diet varieties are no better as they simply replace those calories with chemicals. Many beverages are made with high fructose corn syrup, an inexpensive sweetener that the body does not register as calories. Because of this, it's easy to drink tons of extra calories a day without feeling any fuller or more satisfied.
- **Car or TV Meals:** Eating in the car or in front of the TV robs attention away from the food, which makes it less satisfying when we don't think about what we are eating, it's easy to overdo it and still feel hungry.
- **Fast food:** Fast food is made to be cheap and tasty. The easy way to pack inexpensive taste into a meal is

to load it with fat, salt and sugar – the 3 leading culprits of heart disease, hypertension and diabetes.

- **Never Cooking:** If we ever wondered why the same dish we make at homes taste better in a restaurant, it's because steaks are finished with butter and sugar is added to salad dressing. If we eat all our meals outside the home or only eat packaged food, we are ultimately receiving higher calorie, higher sodium foods that compromise our health and our wallet.
- **Skipping Meals:** Skipping meals slows down our metabolism and sets we up for a binge the next time we eat. So be sure to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner.

HEALTHY FOOD HABITS

- Wait for the signs of true hunger
- Eat the same time every day. The stomach likes to be on schedule
- A simple glass of warm water twenty minutes before a meal can improve digestive function by as much as 24%.
- Relax while eating and for fifteen minutes afterwards.
- Eat simple food combinations
- Avoid cold drinks or food.
- Completely chew and mix food with saliva
- Fill stomach 1/3 full with food, 1/3 with water , and 1/3 empty
- Eat a simple breakfast, a hearty lunch, and a gentle dinner.

REPLACE OUR OLD HABITS WITH NEW HEALTHY ONES

We may have decided that snacking on candy towards the end of our workday as a pick-me-up is something we want to change. We could replace our old habit with a cup of herbal tea and eating small handful of almonds.

Some Other Ideas For Replacing Unhealthy Habits With Healthy Ones Are:

Eat Slowly:

- Eating too quickly leads to overeating. This is because the food we have eaten has not yet reached our stomach and told our brain we are full. We will know eating too quickly if we feel stuffed about 20 minutes after stop eating.
- Try putting down our fork between bites. Wait until we have swalled our mouthful of food before taking the next bite.

Eat Only When We Are Hungry.

- Eating when we are feeling worried, tense, or bored also leads to overeating. Try to do something like calling a friend or going for a walk to help we feel better.

- Our bodies and our brains need time to relax from the hustle and bustle of today's life. Taking a mental or physical break may be just what we need. Many of us don't plan on these breaks. Instead, when we desperately need them, we turn to food to get that feeling of relaxation or reward.

Plan our meals. This reduces the chance we will buy foods we did not plan to buy (impulse buying) or eat at fast-food restaurants. Planning dinners at the beginning of the week helps us to prepare healthy, well - balanced meals in the evening.

UNHEALTHY FOOD HABITS

Unhealthy eating is largely caused by bad eating habits. Eating a bag of potato chips while watching TV once in binging on food during a party will probably not cause we any harm. However, when these actions become repetitive, they develop into habits. If we wish to break our unhealthy eating habits, we need to determine what they are first. Here are some common bad eating habits that we should learn to avoid.

1. Breakfast is believed to be the most important meal of the day, but many people still seem to make a habit out of skipping it. When we have to rush for work in the mornings or get our kids ready for school, it's easy to neglect breakfast. Doing so not only drains of energy, but also makes it more likely that we will snack throughout the day. Skipping breakfast also disrupts our metabolism, causing to burn fewer calories. So, if we are trying to lose weight, skipping breakfast is not a good idea. A bowl of oatmeal, fruit or a healthy cereal can get our day off to a good start.
2. Food Binging or eating large amounts of food in one sitting is another unhealthy eating habit that we should avoid. We might want to train our self to eat several small meals in a day so we can avoid binging.

3. Emotional eating:

Emotional eating or stress eating is another common unhealthy habit that we should avoid. This occurs when we are driven by certain emotions to eat even though we're not hungry. Perhaps we munch on candy bars when we're stressed about a deadline at work, or perhaps we indulge in a tub of ice cream when we are feeling depressed. If we're like most people who are emotional eater, then we probably reach for unhealthy junk food in order to cope with our emotions. To solve this, try to find another channel for our stress for negative emotions. Take up a hobby or spend quality time with a friend.

4. Eating during other activities:

If we eat while watching TV, while working, while reading or even while cooking then we are also developing an unhealthy eating behaviour. When we eat while doing other activities, we become unable to measure how much we eat. As a result we tend to overeat without knowing it. Try to have a specific schedule for eating. In the house, have a designated place exclusively for eating.

For instance, we can make sure that we only eat in the kitchen and not in the other place of the house.

5. Eating late at night:

Having an occasional late night snack is fine, but if we can't go to the bed without having a plate of cookie or a slice of pie first, then we could be setting our self up for weight gain. Eating too close to bedtime will also give sleeping difficult since our body will be busy digesting food.

BREAKING BAD FOOD HABITS

- Start each day with a nutritious breakfast.
- Get 8 hours of sleep each night, as fatigue can lead to overeating.
- Eat our meals seated at a table, without distractions.
- Eat more meals with our partner or family.
- Teach our self to eat when we're really hungry and stop when we're comfortably full.
- Reduce our portion sizes by 20% or give up second helpings.
- Try lower-fat dairy products.
- Make sandwiches with whole-grain bread and spread them with mustard instead of mayo.
- Switch to cafe au lait , using strong coffee and hot skim milk instead of cream.
- Eat a nutritious meal or snack every few hours.
- Use non-stick pans and cooking spray instead of oil to reduce the fat in recipes.
- Try different cooking methods, such as grilling, roasting, baking, or poaching.
- Drink more water and fewer sugary drinks.
- Eat smaller portions of calorie-dense foods and larger portions of water-rich foods.
- Flavour our foods with herbs, vinegars, mustards, or lemon instead of fatty sauces.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is concerned with the health of one's mind and it functioning in the same way as the physical health is concerned with the health of one's physical organs and their functioning. A mentally healthy person is supposed to possess an integrated personality and balanced behavior identified on the basis of the level of his adjustment to his self, others and environment. However, there is nothing called perfect mental health. Therefore, it is always better to strive for the optimum mental health in place of perfect mental health.

A mentally healthy individual can be distinguished from others easily through his mode of living, behavior and personality characteristics typically associated with a good mental health. Attainment of good mental health occupies a very important place in one's life. His overall adjustment to his self and the environment essential for leading a

happy and contented life depends upon the acquisition of his mental health. One has to observe certain basic principles for the attainment of good mental health specifically meant for seeking adjustment with one's self and environment.

CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH

1. **Nothing called perfect mental health:** It is difficult to see a person who is mentally healthy in all the aspects. Truly speaking, perfect mental health is a fiction and not reality. Hence, it is always better to talk of optimum mental health in place of perfect mental health.
 2. **Mental health is a dynamic concept:** Mental health denotes a state of balance or equilibrium of our mind. This balance is not static, it is quite dynamic. The circumstances in our life are never static and since they are changeable, so is our adjustment. The adjustments we have achieved at any point with our self and the environmental forces may not be helpful in future and so one's mental health is always in a state of dynamics. For example, suggestibility at the age of two may be a normal trait of personality but not so after attaining maturity.
 3. **Mental health can't be achieved without physical health:** The saying that "a sound mind lives in a sound body" is quite true. For achieving an optimal level of mental health, one has to first acquire adequate physical health.
 4. **Mental health and efficiency are not the same thing:** It is not essential for the successful and efficient men to be mentally healthy as well. One may be quite efficient and successful at his work or profession but he could be most unhappy, full of anxiety, etc. otherwise.
 5. **Mental health and Social ability are not the same thing:** While a mentally healthy person is sociable, it is not necessary for a sociable or socially adaptable person to be healthy minded. One may be sociable but extremely anxious to please everybody. Similarly he may be amenable because of an inherent feeling of insecurity or inferiority.
 6. **Mental health differs from ethical Standards:** Mental health differs from ethical standards. Morality does not guarantee mental health. There exist many individuals who are very moral but suffer from serious abnormalities like phobias or sex perversions.
- wholesome, well - balanced and integrated personality. Such individual maintains a proper balance between his self and the environmental situation, his needs and the needs of the society and provides an example of an integrated personality instead of the splitter one.
2. **Helps in proper emotional development:** There is a close relationship between one's mental health and emotional behavior. The individuals who enjoyed good mental health are supposed to demonstrate proper emotional maturity in their behavior. On the other side, those who are tense, disintegrated and mentally unhealthy demonstrate sudden emotional outburst and emotional immaturity.
 3. **Helps in proper social development:** One's mental health helps one in becoming sociable and establishing proper social relationships in the society. One who is not in conflict with oneself has sufficient time and energy available for attending others and it helps one in one's proper social behavior and adequate social adjustment.
 4. **Helps in proper moral development:** The individuals who enjoy sound mental health are usually found to behave as a man of integrity and character by following the ethical standards of the society. The proper functioning of their intellect guards them against the immoral and unsocial behavior. They are able to exercise reasonable control over their emotions and channelize their energy to the noble task.
 5. **Helps in proper aesthetic development:** Proper mental health helps the individual in the development of appropriate aesthetic sense, artistic taste and refined temperament. A mind free of any tension, conflict, frustration, inferiority, guilt or hostile feelings, may have better chance of drifting towards aesthetic, artistic and creative channel than the mind torn between complexities and conflicts.
 6. **Helps in actualizing one's potentialities:** Every one of us has a fund of natural abilities and potentialities that can be actualized through proper efforts. Exercising such efforts and striving towards the actualization of one's potentialities depend, to a great extent, on the state of one's mental health. While the children having good mental health can strive well for the actualization of their potentialities, the mentally unhealthy children fail to do so on account of the malfunctioning of their intellectual powers, disintegrated personality and maladapted behavior.
 7. **Helps in seeking proper adjustment:** A mentally healthy is an adjusted person. He is able to seek adequate adjustment with his self and his environment. He is able to adjust his needs as per the demands of the situations and well being of the society. Hence mental health helps the individual to seek a harmonious relationship with his self and his environment.

IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Health is rightly called as wealth. It involves one's physical as well as mental health. As said earlier, mental health has much wider scope than physical health as it aims for the development of wholesome balanced and integrated personality. The acquisition of such personality is indeed a great asset and privilege for a normal individual.

1. **Helps in the development of desirable personality:** Mental health helps in the development of a

- 8. Helps in seeking goals of life:** Mental health helps the individual to strive properly for the realization of the goals of his life. These goals may differ from person to person depending the individuals to divert his energies in full capacity for the realization of these goals and live a life to his satisfaction aiming towards happiness to his self and others.
- 9. Helps in the progress of the society:** Mental health helps the individuals to develop as well – balanced useful citizens who are conscious not only of their rights but also of their responsibilities. They take essentials from the society for their proper development and living but are also ready to give something to the society is linked with the health, particularly the mental health, of its members. The desired peace, progress and happiness in the society can only be possible when its members enjoy the same in terms of their sound mental health.
- 10. Helps in the prevention of mental illness:** Mental health helps an individual in protecting him against abnormalities of behavior, maladjustment, illness and mental diseases in the same way as physical health is helpful in saving him from the physical illness, ailments and diseases. A sound mind and balanced personality has enough resistance to fight against the odds of life and bear the accidental stresses strains of life in comparison to those with impaired mental health. Therefore, adequate preservation of mental health by the individual and proper education about it may help in a big way in reducing the cases of mental illness and diseases in the society.

Influencing Factors on the Mental Health

Mental Health is susceptible to several causes. These can be as follows:

1. Family

A Child's development begins in family. The changed social opinions affect family. So, their effect on the nutrition of the child is in the form of a problem. The following can be the factors affecting family.

a) Family Disintegration:

Industrial revolution has disintegrated the ancient joint family system. Where both parents are employed the condition of the children is even worse. Disintegration occurs in family. It is natural for the child to be influenced by this situation.

b) Economic Situation:

About 80% mental illness in India is due to poverty. There is no death of such children who are scans means.

c) Parental Behaviour:

The homes in which the behavior of the parents is not good toward children, there the children become mal-adjusted children are overlooked in such families.

d) Tension in Family:

Indian families, especially the joint families have several relatives such as grand Parents, paternal uncles and aunts, brothers and nephews etc., who became differently with the child. Tension in the family can have adverse impact on the child.

e) Ideal of Discipline in Family:

Generally the parents from their opinion of high ideals without considering the individual differences of the children where the means to realize them too are absent. There is either complete freedom or unnecessary tough control. It enhances mental mal-adjustment.

Social factors

Man is born in family. He has to behave according to social customs and traditions. If the influence of society on the child is not favourable then he becomes mentally ill. The following can be factors influence mental health of the children in society.

a) Insecurity

There pervades struggle for existence in the modern life man generally feels insecure. The rate of national development is so slow that man finds it difficult to live life in the present times. It enhances mental tension.

b) Internal Tension

There are several communities and castes. These castes and communications fight with each other for fulfillment of narrow interests. The political rivalries make mutual relations bitter such situations enhance mental tension.

Influence of Education Institutions

Educational Institutions and related facts are responsible for influencing mental health, the prominent of which are as mentioned below:

a) School Environment:

School environment greatly affects mental health of the students. If the students insecure in school, their mind is always shadowed with anxiety and fear. Communalism, discrimination and misadministration cause various animosities which make the environment troublesome and it hinders development. These factors have adverse effect on the mental health of the students.

b) Unsuitable curriculum:

Because of maladjustment in educational objectives and curriculum, them arise several problems of development which cannot be remedied easily and which can create mental tension.

c) Maladjustment in class:

The class can also be responsible for mental illness. Mental ill students affect the working manner of the teacher, besides they have adverse impact on other children too several illustration of mental illness such as quarrel, fights, stuttering sleep, biting nails, complex behavior, sentimental immaturity, anti social behavior, use of abusive/ anguses and psycho – physical impediments can

be seen.

d) Examination systems:

If the examination system is such which does not evaluate a student properly and his ability is not known correctly, then his adjustment would become difficult. Sometimes a weak student is promoted and he lags behind in class for most times. Thus, examination system can affect mental health of the students.

e) Teacher's Behaviour:

Teacher's behavior continuously influences the personality of the set. Sometimes a teacher's behavior is despotic and the students are always frightened of him. They are not given opportunity to express themselves. This situation adversely affects mental health on the contrary; the students are not able to find the right direction.

FEATURES OF MENTAL HEALTH

The following criteria have been identified of mentally healthy students/ persons. It also known as positive mental health sign.

- Possesses socially adaptable behaviours
- He is emotionally satisfied
- He possesses adaptability and resilient mind.
- He desires are in harmony with socially approved normal.
- He is enthusiastic and reasonable.
- He possesses good habits and constructive attitude
- He has insight into his own conduct.
- He has own philosophy and values of life

It is a fact that healthy person is in conscious control of his life. There is consistency in his behaviour and conduct. A healthy person is aware about his own strength and weakness. Psychological healthy person does not live in the past but he always plan and thinks for future and acts according in the present. His future orientation is very realistic according to his own capacities and resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Food is necessary for growth and maintenance of body. If nutrition is received by any individual, his brain may develop to the optimum extent. Therefore, to have good mental health one should have nutritional vegetarian food. Healthy eating is essential for students to achieve their full academic potential, mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. When children are receiving proper nutrition they are able to reach their full potential. Schools need to educate parents and children on how to live a healthy lifestyle that includes proper nutrition. Schools can help school-aged children develop healthy eating habits by emitting a consistent health message by ensuring that healthy food choices are offered at school. School administrators need to provide opportunities for staffs to receive education on good nutrition and health in the school environment. Schools should establish committees

that include parents and community members to promote a healthy school atmosphere by focusing on nutrition and vending policies.

Making healthy food choices available to students is important as is educating students, parents, teachers, food service staff, administrators, and the community. Schools need to promote a healthy eating environment and seek out student input to be used when planning a healthy menu. The goal is to meet the dietary needs so that students are able to reach their potential physically and cognitively.

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