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Research Article

AWARENESS OF BALANCE DIET AMONGSCHOOL CHILDREN OF LAHORE

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Abstract:

Introduction: There has been a dynamic shift in the eating patterns of the people especially children of school going age are more tempted towards the junk food nowadays. Malnutrition is a term broadly applied for the unhealthy eating habits deficient or in excess macro and micro nutrients. This may lead to a weakened immune response, cognitive and developmental delay. [1]

Although the incidence of obesity is increasing under nutrition still remains the prevalent among the younger age group. Obesity has a multifactorial etiology. [2,3]. A more inquisitive approach of why rather than what shall be conducted to identify the associated triggers. [3,4]. A basic understanding regarding the healthy life style habits and patterns such as balanced diet, physical activity, stress management and hand and sleep hygiene has been overlooked in the literature review. There exist an evident lack of self-constraint leading to binge eating. The purpose of this study is to assess the awareness of balanced diet among school children of Lahore.

Methods: A descriptive study was conducted among 200 school going children of Lahore. A self-structured survey questionnaire was used to record the responses from the participants. Data was

analyzed by SPSS 21. **Results:** The findings of the study revealed that most of the respondents had heard the term balanced diet early in their lives (73.0%), while (27.0%) had not heard it before. About (77.0%) participants agreed to the fact that it is healthy to comply to a balanced diet plan on regular basis. Most of them (78.0%) knew the value to include whole grain cereals and roughage in their diet chart. About participants (75.0%) were aware of the natural and artificial sources of carbohydrates and (25.0%) of them were not aware of their origin. Only 32% knew the correct abbreviation of DASH diet. **Discussion:** Although majority of the participants (73.0%) have heard about balanced diet, there are still a few of them who do not follow diet plan themselves frequently at home [5]. According to Juma Al-Kaabi et al (2008), consuming healthy food is a major component for managing all forms of diabetes mellitus, occurring either due to the lack of production insulin resistance, and preventing the serious complication. The aim of dietary modifications is to restore quality of life, caloric management, and preventing long standing hazardous outcomes. [6]. According to a study conducted by Rivellese A A (2007) in Italy concluded that compliance to a comprehensive diet plan is not merely the tuning of dietary components but also the interpretation of the importance of balanced diet. [7] **Conclusion:** Despite being educated for modern subjects the school going children lack adequate awareness and practical approach regarding balanced diet.

Keywords: metabolic disorders, health-promoting behaviors, balanced diet, physical exercise

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INTRODUCTION:

The incidence of noncommunicable, metabolic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemias has transformed into an epidemic in general population. [1] School going children are the index of the nation's future and they need to be properly educated regarding healthy lifestyle patterns so that they can adopt a balanced diet, regular physical activity, sleep hygiene, stress management, tobacco and alcohol abstinence. Despite having knowledge regarding modern subjects, the children lack awareness regarding to incorporate their knowledge in their practical lives. The following study encompasses school going children who are struggling to practice healthy life style patterns despite their hectic schedule.

Health of nurses has been a point of focus in many researches [3]. It has become evident that not only do nurses themselves lag behind in adopting healthy behaviors, but also the environments play an antagonist role. [4] Nurses ought to engage in health promoting activities regarding approach to preventable diseases at individual and collective level under the supervision of their mentors to impregnate health and wellbeing.

While analyzing a demarcation between *health risk behaviors* and *health screening behaviors* must be

made [5] Health risk behaviors include smoking, substance abuse, and alcohol intake. Smoking is as common in nurses as general public. [6] Similarly drug abuse has transformed into a serious issue among nurses in the last few decades. [7]

Health screening behaviors comprises of being physically active and undergoing routine screening for common diseases for timely intervention. [8, 10] Stress and social support can together influence health screening behaviors. Su et al. [9] Health promotion behaviors improves endurance health. [11] These behaviors are critically important in reversing the epidemic of obesity and obesity-related diseases currently afflicting our country.

MATERIALS AND METHODS:

A descriptive study was conducted among 200 children belonging to different schools of Lahore. A self-structured questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic details and knowledge regarding adhering to healthy eating and engaging in sports/physical activity was designed to record the response. A formal approval was taken from the ethical review committee.

Confidentiality and privacy was maintained. Statistical data was analyzed by SPSS 21.

TABLE.1 KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES OF HEALTHY DIET AND EXERCISE AMONG PARTICIPANTS(N=200)

Knowledge and Awareness of Balanced Diet	Yes n(%)	No n(%)
Have you ever heard about the term balanced diet?	146 (73.0%)	54(27.0%)
Do you it is important to consume balanced diet daily?	154 (77.0%)	46 (23.0%)
Do you know the portion of fruit/vegetable one should eat everyday?	134(67.0%)	66 (33.0%)
How important fruits and vegetables are in daily diet?	196 (98.0%)	4 (2.0%)
How essential are fats to be consumed daily?	34 (17.0%)	166 (83.0%)

How essential is to consume low fat diet/products?	148 (74.0%)	52 (26.0%)
Do you know the names of types of fats?	140 (70.0%)	60 (30.0%)
Do you prefer lean meat?	130 (65.0%)	70 (35.0%)
Are unseasoned ground nuts good to eat?	172 (86.0%)	28 (14.0%)
Do you know what a starchy food is?	164 (82.0%)	36 (18.0%)
Is it healthy to eat starchy food?	134 (67.0%)	66(33.0%)
Is your diet based on the starchy food item?	68 (34.0%)	132 (66.0%)
Is it essential to add cereals/whole grains/roughagein your diet?	156 (78.0%)	44 (22.0%)
How much sugar should be consumed in a day?	96 (48.0%)	104 (52.0%)
What is the proportion of carbohydrates that make upour daily requirement?	104 (52.0%)	96 (48.0%)
Do you know natural edible sources of carbohydrates?	150 (75.0%)	50 (25.0%)
What is DASH diet?	64 (32%)	136 (68%)
How much salt should be taken each day?	124(62%)	76 (38%)
Do you smoke?	12 (06%)	188 (94%)
Do you do brisk walking at least30 mins/day or 150mins/ week?	94 (47%)	106 (53%)

RESULTS:

The total numbers of participants in the study were 200 belonging to different schools of Lahore. The mean age was 13.5+/-2.5 years The demographic data of the participants shows that among the 200 participants majority were females 116 (58.0%) and males were 84 (42.0%) in this study. 63% were studying in primary level of schooling and 37% belonged to the secondary education. The students included were above 12 years of age and less than 18 years with a BMI of less than 25 kg/m²

Table.1 shows the response to the survey questionnaire on awareness of balanced diet. Majority of the participants have heard about balanced diet 146 (73.0%), while 54 (27.0%) have never heard about this term before. About 154 (77.0%) participants think that it is important to consume balanced diet daily.

There were 134 (67.0%) who knew how much

portions of fruits and /or vegetables should be taken every day. About 196 (98.0%) participants were aware that it important to eat fruits and vegetables in daily diet. 34 (17.0%) of them responded that fats essential to be included in daily diet. There were 148 (74.0%) participants who were aware that it essential to choose low fat products, and 52 (26.0%) were not aware of it. 140 (70.0%) know about the three kinds of fat. The numbers of participants who opted for lean cut of meats or remove visible fat were 130 (65.0%). A majority of the participants 172 (86.0%) are aware that unsalted nuts and seeds are good to be included in their diet. About 164 (82.0%) knew about starchy foods. Whereas, only 134 (67.0%) were aware of its healthy effects. About 68 (34.0%) of them responded that the meals should be based on starchy food items. Only 64 (32.0%) knew the correct abbreviation of DASH diet. A majority of them 156 (78.0%) were aware that it is essential to include whole grain cereals and pulses in their diet. More than half of the participants 96 (48.0%) are not aware on how much of

sugar should be consumed in a day. The participants who knew the daily requirements of carbohydrate were 104 (52.0%). 12 (6.0%) participants stated that they were actively smoking and only 74 (37%) admitted that were walking or performing physical exercise/sports for at least 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes a week.

DISCUSSION:

Although majority of the participants 146 (73.0%) have heard about balanced diet but only 94 (47%) admitted that were walking or exercising /doing sports for at least 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes a week to burn their extra calories. There are still a few of them who have not heard and understood the importance of balanced diet. As per a study conducted in Bijapur, Karnataka (2010), it was seen that the diet was considered to play an important role by 90.68% of the respondents. Khattab MS *et al* (1999) conducted a study in a Saudi Arabian community, and discovered that only 40% of diabetic patients had good adherence to their diet plan [8]. In the study done by Raj P& Angadi MM (2010), 80% of the respondents reported that they were conscious about their intake but the rest were consuming high carb beverages [9]. The study results are corresponding with Jingran Cao *et al*, which shows that only 54.10% diabetics were aware that about the diet to be balanced and reasonable [4]. Though 98 % of the participants realised the weightage of including fruits and vegetables in diet, 66 (33.0%) of them were not aware of the portions to be taken daily. 60 (30%) were not aware of the three kinds of fat, 104 (52.0%) did not know the daily requirement of carbohydrates, and 146 (73.0) were not aware of the food sources of carbohydrates. Only 32% knew the abbreviation of DASH diet and 62% knew the daily salt requirement. These results highlight the fact that there is still a deficiency of knowledge and awareness among the school going children of Lahore regarding balanced diet.

Balanced diet and physical activity go hand in hand for promoting health lifestyles and combat metabolic disorders. [12] A sedentary lifestyle increases the risk of mortality and morbidity. [13] Americans spend almost one third of their 24 hours day sitting in front of screens. [14]

The American Heart Association's recommends a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate (or 75 minutes of intense) physical activity per week, in addition to a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fiber and whole grains, and low in trans fats and sugar. [12]

CONCLUSION:

A physically and mentally fit youth is an unprecedented asset of a nation. Despite attaining modern world knowledge. An unhealthy preface of school going children can be detrimental to the morale, efficiency, adaptability, productivity, and quality of a student's life. School teachers and administration can supervise the compliance and the practices towards the attainment of healthy lifestyle patterns so that their students engage in physical exercise, sports, adhere to a balanced diet, combat stress, and improve interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, parents and faculty members should identify cues and barriers that prevent their children from consuming junk and high carbonated drinks.

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