



A Study On The Tendency of Skipping Breakfast Among Young Students And Its Association With Their Depressed Mood And Irritative Behavior

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ABSTRACT

Background - Irregular dietary habits may affect our health at various levels. Students often show reluctance towards the breakfast. There is need to study that how and at what level this habit affects the health. The present study addresses the impact of skipping breakfast on mental health of the students.

Objectives - The study was aimed to have a close look on the association between habit of skipping breakfast with depressed mood and tendency of anger among young students.

Material & Method - A survey was conducted in randomly selected sample of 598 young students selected from different government and private public schools. Students were asked the questions about their dietary habits, depressed mood and tendency of anger. The data collected and analysed for the study.

Result - In this study breakfast was found as the most irregular dietary habit among young students. On analysis it has been observed that those students who have habit of skipping breakfast show comparatively higher prevalence of irritative behavior and depressive thoughts.

Conclusion – The data of this study strongly support that taking breakfast daily is an essential component for promotion of mental wellness of the students. But still more researches and studies are needed to explain this fact on scientific ground.

Key words: Skipping breakfast, Depressed mood, Anger, Survey, Young students

INTRODUCTION:

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. In this study Breakfast is defined as the first morning meal (before 10 a.m.) of the day. After overnight fasting hours our body needs sufficient amount of energy and nutrients in the morning. Therefore our first meal must be rich in all the way. But a question arises here that how our body suffer if it don't get breakfast. No doubt that skipping breakfast adversely affects our physical health in many ways but whether it affects only on physical level or in any other way too. In fact in this study an effort has been made to find out any association of this habit on some selected parameters of our mental health like depressed mood and tendency of anger.

Skipping breakfast is very common habit among school going young students. According to UN/W.H.O. young is the age group from 10 to 24 years^[1]. Depressed mood and anger are again major psychological problems of this group of students. In Psychiatry under DSM-IV the symptoms of depression has been counted under major depressive disorder, minor depressive disorder, recurrent brief depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder, depressive disorder not otherwise specified and bipolar disorder.² All these disorders are

diagnosed on the basis of severity and duration of symptoms. Therefore the diagnosis of depressive disorders is a complicated task. Exact etiology of these diseases is unknown.^[2] This study addresses only the depressed mood by self evaluation of the students rather than clinical evaluation of any depressive disorder. In this study the depressed mood of the students has been evaluated by the self assessment of the students for which the students were asked the question about some of the common depressive thoughts of this age group. Depressed state is a state of low mood and aversion to activity that can affect a person's thought behaviour, feelings and sense of well being. Anger or irritation (both words are used synonymously in this article) is a common behavioral problem among young age group.

METHODS:

Present research work entitled "A study on the tendency of skipping breakfast among young students and its association with their depressed mood and irritative behavior" was conducted under following aims and objectives:

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH WORK:

- To study the prevalence of depressed mood among young students.
- To study the prevalence of tendency of anger among students.
- To study the tendency of skipping breakfast and its association with depressed mood and irritative behavior of young students.

PLAN OF STUDY:

The survey was conducted in randomly selected samples of 598 students from same cultural and social background from the area of Palampur and Baijnath Tehasil nearby R.G.G.P.G Ayurvedic College, Paprola Himachal Pradesh. These students were selected from class 11 and 12 from different government and private public schools whose details have been tabulated in the paper. Assessment of prevalence of depressed mood, anger and habit of skipping breakfast among young students has been made on the basis of survey.

The questionnaire was presented in both languages i.e. Hindi and English. The questionnaire used in conducting survey was in the form of a proforma which is as follows-

OBSERVATION AND RESULT:-

A total number of 598 students have been selected from five different schools which are tabulated in Table 1. 325 (54.34%) Students were boys and 273 (45.66%) were girls. All the students were day scholar because all these schools have no boarding facilities. Most of the students (77.68%) have reported that they are taking their breakfast as a regular habit whereas 3.52% students have no any habit of breakfast. The data are summarized in table 2. In table 3 on the question of the symptoms of depressed mood it was found that 61.59% students have reported these symptoms at sometimes whereas 2.7% daily in their life. Table 4 represents the tendency of anger in the students. About 15% students reported the anger tendency at daily or most of the time. All students have not attempted every question. All unanswered questions were not included in the calculation of the data.

For analysis and comparison of the data those are grouped in following way –

Regular and irregular habit of breakfast: Those students who take breakfast daily have been considered as having the habit of regular breakfast and those who take breakfast less than 2 or 3 days in a week or never have been kept under habit of irregular breakfast.

Positive and negative case of depressed mood and anger: Those students who feel depressed or angry daily or mostly have been assumed as positive cases for depressed mood or anger and those who feel depressed or angry at sometimes or never have been considered as negative cases for the same.

The table 5 reveals that the group of irregular habit of breakfast has shown 13.96% (19.35-5.39) higher prevalence of positive cases of depressed mood than that of other (regular) group and the difference was statistically significant for 5% standard level of significance. In table 6 again the group of irregular breakfast has shown 9.94% (24.19-14.25) higher prevalence of positive cases of anger in comparison to the group of irregular habit of breakfast. This difference too is statistically significant.

DISSCUSSION:

Habit of Skipping Breakfast (Table 2):-

The students were made informed before attempting the question about the definition of the breakfast mentioned in this article. About 78% students were found to take their breakfast as their regular habit. But about 22% students are here who are not regular in their breakfast. In this study the questions about lunch and dinner were also asked from the students and it was found that breakfast was the most skipped meal of the day. The reluctance of the students towards the breakfast may be due to various reasons most common among them like: wake up really late and ran out of time for school, don't have an appetite in morning, don't like food that is cooked in their homes, thought that if they eat breakfast then they feel laziness in class.

Prevalence of depressed mood and irritative behavior (Table 3 & Table 4):-

Life never walks in a straight line. Many ups and downs are the part of our daily life. Many times we have to face many undesired events and situations which may depress or irritate us. Youngsters' life is also not much different in this aspect. These factors may also be the cause of occasional symptoms of depression or irritation. In addition various physiological variations occur at hormonal or neurotransmitter level in adolescents' body which are the part of their normal development. These may also cause such type of psychological disturbances.^[3] Therefore the cases of depressed mood (61.59%) or anger (77.78%) for sometimes or occasionally should be considered as normal psychological fluctuations for this age group. But the cases of such psychological problems for daily or most of the time indicate the existence of some pathological factors behind this fact. These factors might be searched out from their life style habits, peer group activities, academic adjustments or familial issues. But these must be evaluated clinically to provide them needful guidance and support.

Habit of Skipping breakfast Vs Depressed Mood (Table 5):-

The table shows 13.96% (19.35-5.39) higher prevalence of positive cases of depressed mood among that group of students who are not regular in their breakfast. The chi square value for this difference is 16.25 and it is significant for standard level of significance at $p < 0.05$. This data indicates for being an association between the habit of skipping breakfast and depressed mood tendency. The exact etiology of depression is unknown. The pathophysiology of the disease is also not understood well. Therefore it is difficult to explain how lack of breakfast causes depressed mood. It may be hypothesized that lack of breakfast in the morning may bring low blood glucose level which make lethargic at physical and psychological level both and therefore affect the working capacity and performance in different fields. All these factors cumulatively make the mood depressed. Another factor may also work in this regard that in absence of breakfast the craving of the students towards junk food is increased. They fulfill their hunger with biscuits, snacks, tea or other easily available readymade junk foods. Junk foods may fulfill the need of immediate energy but they make the body deficient in vitamins, minerals and other essential elements. Some studies have also shown that continuous consumption of junk foods may cause deteriorating changes in brain and may have adverse psychological and behavioral impact.^[4,5]

Habit of skipping breakfast Vs Anger (Table No 6) :-

On analysing table no. 8 we get here that the students who are not regular in their breakfast have about 10% (24.19-14.25) higher prevalence of positive cases of tendency of anger. The difference was again found to be significant with chi square value 4.14 at significance level of $p < 0.05$. Anger is an emotion which may generate when any of our concern is found to be beyond our comfort zone. Absence of breakfast gives a continuous feeling of hunger. Remaining in fasting state for a longer is stressful and makes the body work harder and we are also apt to get angry more easily. This may provoke the tendency of irritation among the students.

Annexure:-

Table 1- School wise distribution of students –

Sr. no.	School name	No. of students
1.	BhartiyaVidyapeeth, Baijnath	159
2.	Vishuddha Public School, Baijnath	123
3.	KendriyaVidyalaya,Army Campus, Alhilal	20
4.	Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Averi	177
5.	Govt. Sr. Sec. School, Banuri	119
	Total	598

Table 2 - Do you take your breakfast?

Answer options	No. of students	% of students
Daily	463	77.68% (463/596)
3-4 days in a week	71	11.91% (71/596)
1-2 days in a week	41	6.87% (41/596)
Never	21	3.52% (21/596)
Not Attempt the question	02	
Total	598	

Table 3 - Do you feel sad/hopeless/lack of interest in everything/lonely/inferiority complex?

Answer options	No. of students	% of students
Everyday	16	2.7% (16/591)
Mostly	27	04.569% (27/591)
Sometimes	364	61.59% (364/591)
Never	184	31.13% (184/591)
Not Attempt	07	
Total	598	

Table 4 - Do you feel angry?

Answer options	No. of students	% of students
Everyday	22	03.71% (22/592)
Mostly	71	11.99% (71/592)
Sometimes	461	77.87% (461/592)
Never	38	06.41% (38/592)
Not Attempt	06	
Total	598	

Table 5 - Habit of skipping breakfast Vs Depressed mood

Frequency of taking breakfast	% of positive cases of depressed mood	Chi Square value	p value	Result
Daily(regular)	5.39% (25/463)	16.25	p<0.05	Significant
1-2 days in a week or never(Irregular)	19.35% (12/62)			

Table 6 - Habit of skipping breakfast Vs Anger -

Frequency of taking breakfast	% of positive cases of anger tendency	Chi Square value	p value	Result
Daily(regular)	14.25% (66/463)	4.14	p<0.05	Significant
1-2 days in a week or never(irregular)	24.19% (15/62)			

Survey proforma

- Name of Volunteer -
- Father's name -
- Father's Occupation -
- Age -
- Gender -
- Address with mobile no. -
- Class -
- School Name -
- Day Scholar/Hosteller -

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Do you take your breakfast?
 - A. Daily
 - B. 3-4 days in a week
 - C. 1-2 days in a week
 - D. Never.
2. Do you take your lunch?
 - A. Daily
 - B. 3-4 days in a week
 - C. 1-2 days in a week
 - D. Never.
3. Do you take your dinner?
 - A. Daily
 - B. 3-4 days in a week
 - C. 1-2 days in a week
 - D. Never.
4. Do you feel depressed (sad/ hopeless/ lack of interest in everything/lonely/inferiority complex)?
 - A. Everyday
 - B. Mostly
 - C. Sometimes(occasional)
 - D. Never.
5. Do you feel angry?
 - A. Everyday
 - B. Mostly
 - C. Sometimes(occasional)
 - D. Never.

CONCLUSION:

This study concludes that breakfast is an important meal of the day. Habit of skipping breakfast is seemed to adversely affect the mental wellness of the students. But it needs more work to explain the exact scientific explanation of the fact. The students along with their parents should make aware about it so that they may encourage their children for regular consumption of breakfast. This may improve the mental health status of the students.

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