

# A Study on Nutritional Knowledge and Dietary Awareness Among Youth

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**Abstract-** Youth is a critical period in life when nutritional practices are important in physical development, cognitive and health outcome in the long-run. Nevertheless, the shift in lifestyles and intake of processed and convenience foods, has cast doubt on the issue of dietary awareness among the youths. The current research seeks to determine the levels of nutritional understanding and awareness among the young population with special emphasis on the eating habits of the youths. Quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used whereby 79 youth respondents aged 16 years and above took part in the study by use of structured, closed-ended questionnaire, which was employed as a data collection instrument, in a random sampling fashion. Microsoft excel was used in analysis of the data collected by making use of the descriptive statistical tools like frequency and percentage. The analysis showed that most of the respondents were in the 18 -19 years age bracket. The patterns of consuming breakfast and evening snacks were characterized by food products with high energy content and low nutritive values that included paratha, tea and biscuits whereas

less healthy foods like fruits and nuts were eaten by a smaller percentage of the respondents. These findings depict partial and incongruent nutritional awareness in the young population, especially on quality of breakfast and healthy snacking habits. The research findings provide that effective nutrition education and awareness programs are necessary to advance balanced dieting habits and enhance the nutritional awareness of young people.

**Keywords:** Youth, Nutritional Knowledge, Dietary Awareness, Eating Habits, Nutrition Education.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Youth is one of the most important stages of human development, which is marked by significant physical growth, psychological transformation, and slow development of attitudes and behavior patterns that are likely to continue even during adulthood (Bhuiyan et al., 2020). This is the period when the body experiences greater nutritional needs to aid growth,

brain development, hormonal changes and the immune system. Healthy eating in the youthful stages does not only guarantee physical growth (Huang & Hua, 2020), but also leads to improved cognitive functions, emotional satisfaction, and life quality in general. The nutrition habits adopted in this age decisively influence the future health prospects as well as prevention of nutrition-based disorders and deadly diseases in future (Fadare et al., 2019).

During the recent decades, the dietary pattern of young population has tremendously changed with the urbanization, modernization, evolving family setup, school and studies related stress, as well as the rapidly growing and busy lifestyle (Ivanova et al., 2018). With accessibility of fast food, processed meals, packaged snacks as well as beverages that are sweetened by sugar, there has been a move away towards traditional and nutritious diets. Most young people avoid eating- especially breakfast, eat irregular meals and make use of convenient foods rich in calories, fats, sugar, and salt yet with low levels of essential nutrients (Kalkan, 2019). There is also the increasing trend of unhealthy snacking habits, which have substituted nutrient-based foods with processed foods like fruits, nuts, whole grains, etc. to wafers, chips, chocolates etc.

This is because such bad dietary habits could lead to lack of sufficient nutrient intake, lack of energy, loss of concentration, low immunity and low academic or work performance (Kamanu, 2019). These over time eating habits, makes a risk predisposing one to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and other lifestyle related health of disorders (Kyilleh et al., 2018). The rising rates of these health problems among the youths underscore the need to know more about their eating habits and the nutritional knowledge. Although there is growing awareness of healthy eating in society, a number of the youths still base their food choices on tastes, convenience, peer pressure, but large exposure to media instead of considering nutrition (Pirouznia, 2001).

Despite the high access to nutrition related information from schools, colleges, healthcare systems, and the digital media, a significant percentage of youths are still not well informed or knowledgeable about the concept of balanced diets, nutrient intake, and healthy foods (Sethia et al., 2022). However, despite the fact that simple nutrition information may exist, it may not be translated into reality on the diet. Such discrepancy in knowledge and action suggests that knowledge or awareness does not necessarily suffice to practical

knowledge and action (Taleb & Itani, 2021). The gap is further increased by factors like inadequate nutrition education, cooking ability, time and advertising of unhealthy food.

#### A. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of nutritional knowledge among youth.
2. To examine the dietary habits and food consumption patterns of youth, with special reference to breakfast and evening snacks.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Chen et al., 2020) investigated how parents' education, health knowledge, and children's health behavior are related in a large Wuhan survey of 8,446 families. The researchers found that parents with greater education had better health information, which helped their children adopt healthier habits.

(Roy & Saha, 2025) undertook a comprehensive study of nutritional awareness and adolescent health. In this study, adolescents with more nutritional awareness were more likely to eat a balanced diet, make healthier food choices, and be healthier.

(Grünthal-Drell & Veigel, 2015) explored young people's views on healthy eating and how nutrition information changed their diets. The study found that most young individuals knew healthy dietary choices but didn't always follow them.

(Barman et al., 2024) examined how a nutritional intervention program affected teenagers' knowledge and awareness in Kamrup Metropolitan, Assam, India. The intervention significantly increased nutritional knowledge and awareness, according to the study.

(Chandwani et al., 2025) undertook a scoping assessment to see how social media affects teen and young adult diets. The study concluded that social media food promotion and materials strongly influence young people's food preferences and consumption.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is meant to determine the degree of nutritional knowledge and diet awareness in younger children, especially on the dietary habits through breakfast and snacking. The cross-sectional, quantitative research design has been utilized because it is appropriate to investigate dietary habits and

awareness at one point and the systematic collection of data projecting the current nutritional habits could be made. The study targeted young people between the age of 16 years and over and 79 respondents were to be selected with the help of a random sampling procedure to ensure that there is equal representation and reduce selection bias. The data have been gathered using a closed ended and structured questionnaire formulated to achieve the study objectives. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first part has collected demographic details, including the age of the participants, whereas the second one involved the respondents and their diet habits and nutritional knowledge, which included the consumption of breakfast, eating habits at lunchtime, evening snacks, eating dinner, and the awareness of the healthy eating habits. The questionnaire was conducted using the survey approach and all the respondents were well informed of the intention of the study before they participated. The respondents were encouraged to participate on a voluntary basis and were assured of confidentiality, and all the information obtained would be utilized in the academic research. The obtained data were inputted and processed through Microsoft Excel, and descriptive statistical programs like frequency and percentage were used to obtain an interpretation of the results. The findings were in the form of tables and graphical representation to make it easier to interpret the results and discuss the results in a meaningful way.

#### IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of age are examined to comprehend the demographic constituents of the youth that are considered in the study because age is a key factor in determining the nutritional knowledge and dietary awareness (Table I).

Table I: Age Distribution of Youth Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
16–17 years	9	11.39
18–19 years	59	74.68
20–22 years	10	12.65
23+ years	1	1.26
Total	79	100

Table I shows the age distribution of the youth respondents. Most of the participants (74.68) are in the age bracket of 18-19 years, indicating the increased representation of the late adolescents especially those that would be pursuing higher education.

The percentage of respondents who are aged 16-17 years (11.39) and between 20-22 years (12.65) are lower. The proportion of the respondents who are 23 years or older is only 1.26% of the total respondents. This age group indicates that the study is more applicable to younger populations, and hence the results can be applicable to evaluate the nutritional knowledge and dietary awareness at a critical period of development. The food behavior of the respondents is also analyzed to determine their eating habits and knowledge about the need to have a healthy breakfast in the morning.

Table II: Breakfast Consumption Pattern of Youth

Breakfast Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Paratha with curd	32	40.5
Tea/Coffee only	21	26.6
Bread/Toast	15	19.0
Fruits/Sprouts	11	13.9
Total	79	100

The consumption pattern of the breakfast among the youth respondents is shown in Table II. The findings reveal that a significant percentage of the respondents (40.5) eat paratha with curd which is comparatively high in calories whereas 26.6% only take tea or coffee and that means that they skip eating a meal or do not get enough nutrients in breakfast.

Bread or toast is eaten by about 19.0 percent of the respondents but the proportion of those who eat healthier foods like fruits or sprouts is very low (13.9 percent). This trend suggests that the eating habits of breakfast among young people are highly characterized by the intake of energy-rich and nutritionally deficient food, which has been as a result of lack of knowledge on the need to have a balanced and nutritious breakfast meal in order to sustain the overall health and daily energy needs.

The food consumption trend of the respondents with respect to evening snacks is examined to learn about

the snacking habit of the respondents and their awareness about healthy snacks.

Table III: Evening Snack Consumption Pattern

Snack Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Tea and biscuits	52	65.8
Fried snacks	15	19.0
Fruits/Nuts	12	15.2
Total	79	100

The consumption pattern of the evening snack among the youth respondents is shown in table III and visual

reorientation in Figure 3. The findings show that most of the respondents (65.8) favored tea and biscuits in the evening time, which is an indication of consuming snack foods that are processed and highly nutritionally poor. 19.0% of the respondents also took fried snacks, which also added to the excessive consumption of fat and calories.

Conversely, the proportion of the respondents that chose healthier options like fruits or nuts has been very low at just 15.2 percent. Such a consumption mode shows very little awareness about healthy snacking options among young people and shows a tendency to prefer convenience, flavor, and not nutritional value when having an evening snack.

Fig. 1: Graphical Representation of Age Distribution of Youth Respondents

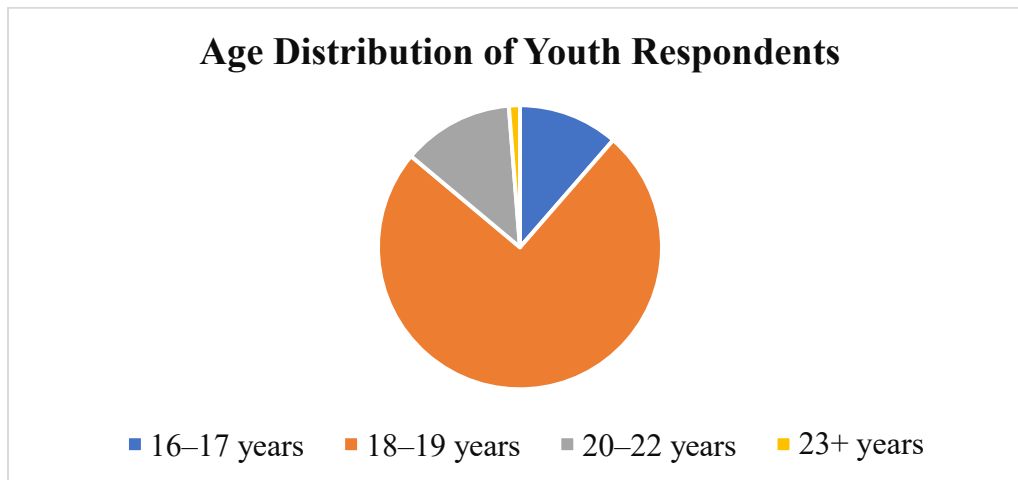


Fig. 2: Graphical Representation of Breakfast Consumption Pattern of Youth

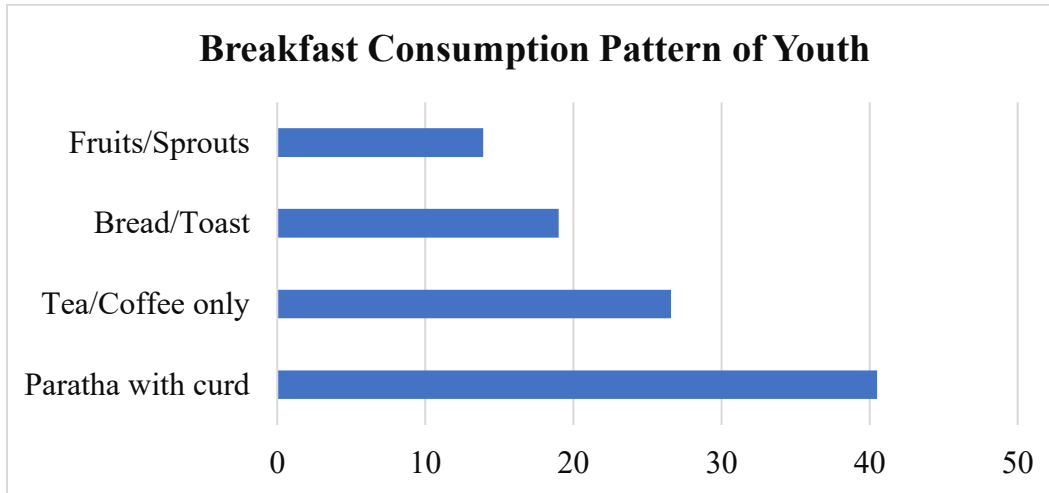
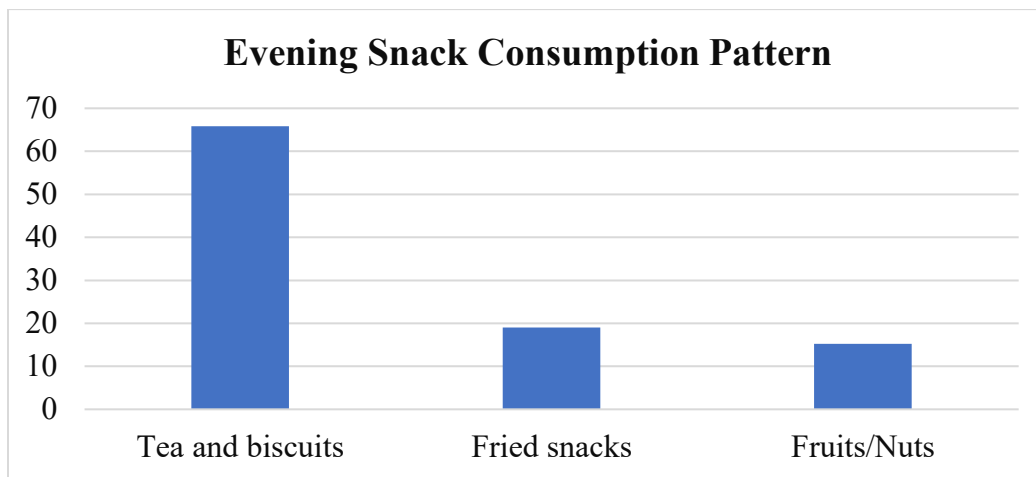


Fig. 3: Graphical Representation of Evening Snack Consumption Pattern



### V. DISCUSSION

The present research discusses the nutritional awareness and understanding of young people, particularly how they consume breakfast and evening snacks. The results show that there is partial and uneven dietary awareness amongst the youth despite evidence of some knowledge among them on the subject of balanced meals, especially at lunch and dinner. Having a higher number of younger respondents and in particular the age group of 18-19 years of age helps in bringing out the fact that the study is based upon dietary habits that are occurring during a critical transitional period when the lifelong eating habits are in the midst of being developed.

The observation of the eating habits of breakfast shows that most of the young population favors high-energy and dietarily restricted food like paratha with curd or takes only tea or coffee in the morning. This implies the lack of understanding of the significance of a healthy breakfast, which is needed to sustain the energy, concentration, and the balance of the metabolism level throughout the day. The minimal intake of fruits and sprouts also implies the insufficiency of the consumption of the vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. These results are in congruence with previous research studies that have shown a discrepancy between nutrition education and real nutrition behaviors in the young population and that convenience and taste are dominant factors compared to nutritional value.

On the same note, the results that pertain to the use of evening snacks illustrate that the people have a high preference in the use of tea and biscuits and fried snacks and by a small percentage the respondents prefer eating fruits and nuts as their healthier choice. This trend is the indication of the propensity to processed and energy-rich snack foods, which means that the issue of healthy snacking is less widespread. This kind of behavior can lead to excess calorie consumption and unbalanced nutrients consumption that can predispose one to lifestyle diseases with time. The findings are aligned with the available literature that emphasizes on the increasing use of convenience foods and unhealthy snacking behaviors by the young generation.

In general, the discussion shows a self-evident discrepancy between nutrition and dietary habits and awareness among young people. Although the simplest information on the healthy food could be available, it is not always translated into daily food preferences. Lack of practical nutrition education, busy lifestyles, choosing convenience foods and limited awareness of alternatives that are healthy seem to play roles in determining what one eats. These results highlight the importance of implementing effective nutrition education to date, which is not just delivering the knowledge but also fostering behavioral change and encouraging the adoption of efficient, affordable, and effective healthy eating practices among the youth.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The research concludes that despite the bare knowledge on balanced meals, the nutritional awareness and eating habits of the youth especially breakfast and healthy snacking habits are poor. The high intake of energy-rich and nutrient-density foods represents the disjuncture of the consciousness of nutrition and the actual eating practice. Nevertheless, the partial awareness suggests that the positive outcomes can be achieved with the help of specific and realistic nutrition education. Enhancing education and community-based awareness campaigns can be very instrumental in encouraging younger people to eat healthier food, which will aid in promoting long run health, well-being and the prevention of lifestyle diseases.

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