

Eating Behavior of Basic Level Students of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality

Tanka Prasad Poudel

ABSTRACT

Eating Behaviour refers to the regular patterns of eating and dietary choices that individuals or communities develop over time. People's eating behaviors are influenced by a variety of personal, social, cultural, religious, economic, environmental, and political issues. This study aimed to explore the existing food habits of the basic level students and to identify the knowledge and attitude of food habits of the students of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality province no 5. It was a quantitative research design in which the researcher used questionnaires as the tools of data collection. The study's findings revealed that although students are aware of healthy eating habits, a balanced diet, and good food behavior, they do not always choose healthy foods. A significant portion (61.5%) of participants demonstrated knowledge about macronutrients, indicating a solid grasp of the essential elements of a well-rounded diet. The low awareness about junk food's harms (16.5%) found in this study suggests a critical need for educational interventions to promote healthier dietary choices. Public health efforts targeted at basic level school students are helpful for understanding of healthy eating habits

Keywords: eating behavior, day meal, meat and fish

Introduction

Health is significant for human beings. Health encompasses various aspects of an individual's life and reflects their overall functioning and liveliness. WHO (1948) stated that "health is a state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The definition clarifies that a healthy person should be physically fit, mentally alert, and socially adaptable. It also shows the three dimension and positive aspects of health. Health is a relative state in which one can function well physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually to express the full range of one's unique potential within the environment in which one lives (Svalastog et.al. 2017). Physically fit refers to the body's overall condition and its ability to perform daily activities. It includes physical fitness, proper nutrition, regular exercise, and the absence of illness or disease. Mental health involves a person's emotional and psychological well-being. It encompasses aspects such as cognitive function, emotional stability, coping mechanisms, and the ability to manage stress. Social health relates to an individual's interactions and relationships with others. It involves maintaining healthy relationships, having a support system, and actively participating in social activities and it help to reduce the social inequality. Spiritual health encompasses an individual's sense of purpose, values, beliefs, and connection to something greater than themselves. It is subjective and

may vary based on personal beliefs and practices. Health is indeed a dynamic concept influenced by various factors, including genetics, lifestyle choices, socio-economic status, and environmental conditions. Environmental health plays a crucial role in determining an individual's overall well-being and quality of life. Health is an energetic concept that can vary from person to person and can change over time. Environmental health considers the impact of the environment on an individual's well-being. It involves factors such as access to clean air and water, safe housing, and a sustainable and healthy living environment.

Food is the first and most important basic need for people. It is anything solid or liquid that when swallowed, digested, and assimilated in the body provides it with essential substances called nutrients and keeps it well (Clydesdale, & Francis, 2012). It is essential for our survival and overall well-being beliefs (Park, 2007). Our bodies require a constant supply of nutrients and energy to function properly. Food provides us with the necessary nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals that are vital for growth, development, and maintaining good health (Millamena, 2002). Nutrients are needed for energy-yielding, physical development, repairing, treating disease, and protection of the body. According to chemical composition, foodstuffs can be classified into 6 groups which are carbohydrates, fats, protein, minerals, vitamins, water, etc. Carbohydrates supply energy to our bodies. A balanced diet refers to a way of eating that provides all the essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals necessary for optimal health. It involves consuming a variety of foods from different food groups in appropriate proportions to meet the body's nutritional needs. A balanced diet makes the body healthy and strong. If there is a balance between the need and its supply in a person, it is said to be a balanced food. A balanced diet provides the necessary calories to supply the required energy. Proteins and minerals help with the building and repair of body cells (Price, 2005). Vitamins and minerals supply protective materials. Food habit is the habit of people how they take, handle, prepare, and eat food. Food habits have deep psychological roots and are associated with love, affection, warmth, self, image, and social prestige. The diet of the people is different due to climate, religion, customs, and beliefs (Park, 2007). Upadhya, Sakia, and Patel (2018) state that eating habits have a significant impact on long-term health outcomes because they are known to contribute to a variety of health issues and nutritional deficiencies. Unhealthy eating habits include skipping meals, eating food that is low in nutrients, and eating irregularly. A balanced diet and the consumption of quality food can contribute to sustaining the physical well-being and mental stability of the individual. Basic Level Students are at risk for making poor dietary choices and being careless about their food habits which can cause significant health problems. Despite the strong emphasis on meeting nutritional requirements every day to achieve optimal health, many Basic Level Students tend to care less about or neglect their nutritional requirements. Many factors come into play as they transition to Basic Level Students. Eating a balanced diet and meeting nutritional requirements remain important in achieving one's health. It is very beneficial for basic-level students to formulate good eating habits that lead them to

obtain healthy and optimal functions (Abraham, Noriega, & Shin, 2018). It is significantly important to investigate basic-level students' eating habits and knowledge of a balanced diet, good food behavior, and nutritional requirements for health. The study aimed to explore the eating patterns, nutritional knowledge, and factors influencing food choices among these students. Two research questions what are the current food habits and dietary patterns of basic-level students in Suddhodhan Rural Municipality? What are the perceptions, attitudes, and preferences of these students towards different types of food? tried to address it. To answer these questions the researcher formulated the main objective of the study as to explore the food habit of Basic level Students in Suddhodhan Rural Municipality. The specific objectives of the study were to identify the knowledge and attitude of food habits and to assess the existing food habits of the Basic Level Students. The study was limited to Basic Level Students of selected schools of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality of Rupandehi and only focused on their food habits on breakfast, lunch, Day meal, and dinner. The study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the food habits of basic-level students in Suddhodhan Rural Municipality and provide insights that can inform interventions and strategies to promote healthier eating behaviors among this population.

Methodology

This study was a quantitative descriptive study design. It was applied to assess the food habits of Basic Level Students. The population of the study was the Basic Level Students of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality. There are 17 community schools in Suddhodhan Rural Municipality. Among them 11 basic-level schools run up to class 8. 200 students were selected from 10 Basic level schools for the study. This study was based mainly on a primary source of information. The researcher selected 10 basic-level schools of Suddhodhan Rural Municipality by using the purposive sampling method. From each school, 20 students (10 girls and 10 boys) were selected by using a simple random sampling method. A questionnaire is used as a tool for data collection. The questions were closed and open-ended which included knowledge and attitude, and existing food habits. Researcher established the rapport building with school headmaster and health teacher and research mentioned the studied objective in polite manner. He took consent form orally then he entered into the classes. He mentioned friendly manners his study purpose and objectives among the students. The questionnaire consisted four sections with twenty questions. Then the researcher requested the students to fill out the questionnaires. The researcher collected the information from the respondents. The raw data were cleaned and analyzed by presenting in various tables as per needs. The information was arranged in numbers and converted into percentages while presented in tables.

Results of the Study

After collecting the data, they were tabulated and kept in sequential order to the need of the study the analysis and interpretation were made with the help of

tables. This section included into five section: knowledge about different aspects of eating behaviour, habit and eating behaviour, day meal practices, street food practice and behaviour and practice of eating meat, fish, iodized salt which are described as following .

Knowledge about Different Aspects of Eating Behavior

Eating behavior is a complex and multifaceted aspect of human life, influenced by a variety of factors, including physiological, psychological, social, and environmental causes. Knowledge about different aspects of eating behavior includes a balanced diet, nutritious food, body-building food, energy-giving food, protective food, macronutrients, micronutrients, and junk food.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by their Knowledge about Different Aspects of Eating Behavior

Area of Knowledge	Known		Unknown	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Balance Diet	142	61.0	58	39.0
Nutritious Food	196	78.0	4	2.0
Body Building Food	195	97.5	5	2.5
Energy Giving Food	122	61.0	78	39.0
Protective Food	94	47.0	106	53.0
Macro Nutrients	123	61.5	77	38.5
Micro Nutrient	88	44.0	112	56.0
Junk Food	33	16.5	167	83.5

The food that supplies all the necessary substances needed for the body is known as a balanced diet. The study found that most of the respondents i.e. 61 percent know about a balanced diet whereas 39 percent of the respondents don't know about a balanced diet. Nutritious food is food that contains many of the substances that help the body to grow. Similarly, the majority of the respondents know nutritious food i.e. 78.0 percent of respondents know nutritious food. Whereas only 2.0 percent of respondents don't know nutritious food. Body-building foods are those foods that help the body to grow. The study found that most of the respondent's 97.5 percent know body-building foods. They gave accurate answers on this i.e. they said milk, meat, poultry fish, and eggs are body-building food. However, 2.5 percent of respondents don't know about body-building food. Energy-giving foods are those foods that provide energy for our bodies. The following table shows the knowledge about the energy-giving food of respondents.

In the same way, the majority of the respondents know about energy-giving food. 61 percent of them said that cereals fruits, and milk are energy-giving food. Whereas 39 percent of the respondents don't know energy-giving food. Protective foods are those kinds of foods that help our body protect from different diseases. It was found that the majority of the respondents don't know protective food. Only 47

percent of the respondents know protective food. They said vegetables, fruits, and milk are protective food, and 53 percent of the respondents don't know the protective food. Macro Nutrients are those nutrients that form the main bulk of the food. Proteins, fats, and carbohydrates are macronutrients. The following table shows the knowledge about macronutrients of respondents. Similarly, 61.5 percent of the respondents know about protein, fats, and carbohydrates which are macronutrients whereas 38.5 percent don't know about macronutrients. Micronutrients are those nutrients that are required in small amounts which may vary from a fraction of a milligram to several grams. The following table shows the knowledge about the micronutrients of respondents. Most of the respondents don't know about micronutrients. Only 44 percent of the respondents know micronutrients they said vitamins and minerals are micronutrients but the majority 56 percent of the respondents don't have knowledge about micronutrients. The study found that most of the respondents don't know junk food only 16.5 percent of respondents know junk food. They said noodles, chips, and crisps are examples of junk food. Mostly noodles are used as junk food. However, 83.5 percent of the respondents don't know junk food.

Habit and Eating Behaviour

Habit and eating behavior are closely intertwined concepts that play a significant role in our daily lives and overall health. It includes washing hands before eating, eating habits per day, breakfast habits, lunch habits, and dinner habits.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by their Habit and Eating Behaviour

Area of Habit of Eating and Behaviour	Habit	Number	Percent
Washing Hands before Eating	Soap and water	184	92.0
	Water only	14	7.0
	Ash and water	2	1.0
Eating habits per day	Two times	104	52.0
	Three times	96	48.0
Breakfast Habits	Tea, bread	103	51.5
	Only tea	77	38.5
	Daal, rice, curry	12	6.0
	Tea & Biscuits	8	4.0
Lunch Habits	Daal, rice, curry	149	74.5
	Rice and curry	42	21.0
	Bread and daal	9	4.5
Dinner Habits	Daal, rice, curry	124	62.0
	Daal, roti (Chapati)	69	34.5
	Other (roti, curry, milk)	7	3.5

Hand washing before taking any food items is very important to avoid germs and other foreign bodies stuck in your hands. In this context, most people use only water while washing their hands but due to the development of awareness people are using soap while washing hands, they can use soil, ash, etc. while washing hands. Most of the respondents use soap while washing their hands. 92 percent of the respondents use soap and water while washing their hands before eating food. In the same way, 7 percent of respondents wash their hands only with water. 1 percent of respondents use ash on the water while washing their hands before eating. The frequency of eating also determines the food habits of the people. In this context, most people eat food twice due to improper knowledge of food habits. Similarly, it is found that 52 percent of the respondents eat food two times a day and 48 percent of the respondents eat food three times a day. And no one found to eat one time per day. Breakfast plays an important role in maintaining the good health status of the people. People must eat a variety of meals for breakfast. Table no 2 shows the breakfast habits of respondents. Most of the respondents take tea and bread i.e. 51.5 percent of the respondents take tea and bread as breakfast. 38.5 percent of respondents drink only tea as breakfast, 6 percent of respondents eat daal, rice, and curry and 4 percent of the respondents take other food like tea and biscuits. Lunch is a meal eaten in the middle of the day. Table no 2 shows the lunch habits of respondents. It was also found that most of the respondents eat daal, rice, and curry as lunch i.e 74.5 percent of the respondents eat daal, rice curry and 21 percent of respondents eat only rice and curry whereas 4.5 percent of the respondents eat bread and daal as lunch. Table 2 shows that most of the respondents eat daal, rice, and curry for dinner I.e. 62 percent of the respondents eat daal, rice, and curry for dinner. 34.5 percent of respondents eat daal, and roti as dinner and 3.5 percent of respondents eat other food like milk, roti, curry, etc.

Day Meal Practices

A day meal is a special snack that is eaten for the fulfillment of short hunger. Day meals are often enjoyed in between breakfast, lunch, and dinner to provide a quick source of energy and keep you feeling satiated until your next main meal.

Table 3

Distribution of Respondents by their Day Meal Practices

Practice at school	Area	Number	Percent
School's Day Meal preparation place	school	74	37.0
	Home	126	63.0
Bringing Day Meal in school from different Place	Shops	105	52.5
	Home	52	26.0
	Canteen	43	21.5
Sanitary Condition of Canteen	Healthier	137	68.5
	Unhealthier	63	31.5

A day meal is a special snack that is eaten for the fulfillment of short hunger. The study found that 37 percent of the respondents eat day meals daily in school and 63 percent of the respondents don't eat day meals in school. The respondents bring day meals from different places. The following table shows where they bring the day meal. The majority of the students buy day meals from the shop i.e. 52.5 percent of the respondents buy day meals from shops. Whereas 26 percent of respondents bring their day meal from home and 21.5 percent of the respondents eat day meal from the canteen. Dinner is the main meal of the day, eaten in the evening. The study found all schools have their canteen Cleanliness of the canteen shows the cleanness of the food available there. The majority of the respondents think that their canteen provides healthier food for them but one third of respondents s think that their canteen doesn't have healthier food. They think that their canteen is not clean and it provides unfiltered water. Day means practices hygiene condition is very few sanitary conditions

Street Food Practice and Behaviour

Street food refers to ready-to-eat food and beverages that are sold by vendors on the streets and in public places. Nepali street food reflects the diverse cultural influences and traditional flavors of the region.

Table 4

Distribution of Respondents by Street Food Practice and Behaviour

The practice of Street Food	Area	Number	Percent
Eating Practice of Street Food	Fulki	73	36.5
	Chaumin	71	35.5
	Chatarmatar	56	28.0
Reason for Liking Street Food	Cheap	19	9.5
	Sweet and delicious	116	58
	Early available	65	32.5
Effect of Eating Street Food	Affected/ uneasy	137	68.4
	Not- affected	63	31.6
Care of Eating Street Food	Test	9	4.5
	Health	94	47
	Sanitation	97	48.5
Healthiness of Street Food	Healthier	12	6.0
	No-healthier	188	94.0

The food that is available on the side of the road is called street food. This type of food is not so healthy and hygienic. Most people like street food because of its easy access and cheap price and deliciousness. Table no 4 shows that 36.5 percent of the respondents eat *fulki*, 35.5 percent of the respondents eat *chaumin* and 28 percent of the respondents eat *chatarmatar*. So the majority of respondents eat *fulki* because it is tasty and adolescents like it more because of its variety in taste. Most people like street food because they are cheap, easily available, and readymade. Table 4 shows that most of the respondents eat street food because

they are sweet and delicious, 58 percent of the respondents think that street foods are delicious, 32.5 percent of the respondents eat street food because they can get it easily and 9.5 percent of the respondents think that street foods are cheap. So there are different reasons behind eating street food among them the reason of sweet and delicious is most common. Most people feel uneasy after eating street food. The above table shows the effect of eating street food on the respondents. 68.4 percent of the respondents felt so, whereas 31.6 percent of the respondents don't feel uneasy after having street food. They felt stomach pain, diarrhea, and vomiting after having the street food. People must care about different things while eating street food. The following figure shows the respondents' care for eating street food. It is found that most respondents care about sanitation while eating street food i.e. 48.5 percent of respondents care about sanitation while eating street food. Then 47 percent of respondents care about their health and 4.5 percent of respondents care about taste while eating street food. Many people think that street foods are not healthier. Street food may cause different diseases like diarrhea, vomiting, dysentery, etc. The above table shows the healthiness of street food. The study shows that the majority of the respondents think that street foods are not healthier. They are unhygienic. They create health problems i.e. majority 94 percent of respondents think that street food is unhealthier.

Practice of Eating Meat, Fish, Iodized Salt

Meat is a good source of essential nutrients, such as protein, vitamins (B12, B6, niacin), and minerals (iron, zinc). It can be an important part of a balanced diet for many people. Fish is an excellent source of lean protein and contains beneficial omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to various health benefits, including improved heart health and brain function. Iodized salt is table salt that has been fortified with iodine, an essential trace mineral that plays a crucial role in thyroid function and the production of thyroid hormones

Table 5

Distribution of Respondents by their Practice of Eating Meal Fish and Iodized Salt

Practices	Area	Number	Percent
Eat meat and fish	Eat	187	93.5
	Not eat	13	6.5
Eat of Meat and Fish Frequency	4 times a month	96	48.0
	2 times a month	82	41.0
	1 time a month	22	11.0
Use of Salt	Iodized	196	98.0
	Noniodized and opened	4	2.0

Meat and fish are essential to our healthy body. It is necessary to eat meat and fish from time to time. But it should be fresh, clean, and properly cooked. They should eat meat, fish, and eggs from time to time. 93.5 percent of respondents eat meat and fish whereas 6.5 percent of the respondents don't eat meat and fish.

Eating meat and fish also determine the food habit of any individual. The frequency of eating meat and fish also shows the existing food habits of the people. The following table shows the frequency of eating meat and fish of the respondents. Similarly, 48 percent of the respondents eat meat and fish 4 times a month whereas 41 percent of the respondents eat meat and fish 2 times a month and 11 percent of the respondents eat meat per month. Iodized salt is most important for our body. It protects from different diseases like goiter. 98 percent of the respondents use iodized salt. But 2 percent of the respondents use both iodized and non-iodized salt. This proves that most of the respondents are careful about iodized salt and its importance.

Discussion, Finding and Conclusion

Knowledge about Different Aspects of Eating Behavior

Food is life for all living beings because no living beings can live without food. Healthy food makes us healthy and promotes our health. Basic Level Students need a balanced diet and nutritious food because they are in a period of rapid physical and mental change. Dhakal, (2015) states that good food behavior helps them to keep fit. Unhealthy or imbalanced food may lead to different health problems. To maintain good health, they must care about their eating habits. It is necessary to have balanced and nutritious food at the right time with good quality and quantity (Sherchan, 2008). Eating behavior is a crucial aspect of human health, encompassing various dimensions such as diet composition, nutrient intake, and awareness of different food categories. The study aimed to assess respondents' knowledge regarding different aspects of eating behavior, including balanced diet, nutritious food, body-building food, energy-giving food, protective food, macronutrients, micronutrients, and junk food.

The findings revealed that a majority of respondents (61%) were aware of what constitutes a balanced diet. However, it is concerning that a significant proportion (39%) lacked this basic understanding. This knowledge gap could potentially lead to imbalanced dietary habits and associated health issues. A substantially high percentage (78%) of respondents demonstrated knowledge about nutritious food, indicating a commendable understanding of the importance of consuming foods rich in essential nutrients for overall health and well-being. The study found an overwhelmingly high awareness level (97.5%) regarding body-building foods among the respondents. This suggests a widespread understanding of the role of proteins and other nutrients in supporting muscle growth and repair. While a considerable portion (61%) of respondents correctly identified energy-giving foods, it is noteworthy that nearly 40% lacked awareness in this area. This underscores the need for increased education on the sources of dietary energy to promote optimal energy intake and overall health.

The findings indicated a concerning lack of awareness regarding protective foods, with only 47% of respondents demonstrating knowledge in this domain. Given the crucial role of protective foods in bolstering the immune system and preventing diseases, efforts to enhance public awareness in this area are warranted. A majority (61.5%) of respondents exhibited familiarity with macronutrients, highlighting a decent level of understanding regarding the primary components of a balanced diet. Nonetheless, the remaining 38.5% lacking knowledge about macronutrients underscores the importance of nutrition education initiatives. The study revealed a significant knowledge gap regarding micronutrients, with only 44% of respondents correctly identifying them. This lack of awareness about essential vitamins and minerals could have implications for overall health and underscores the need for targeted educational interventions. The findings indicated a relatively low level of awareness (16.5%) regarding junk food among respondents. Given the detrimental effects of excessive junk food consumption on health, there is a clear need for increased awareness campaigns to promote healthier dietary choices.

Habit and Eating Behaviour

The study reveals that a majority of respondents (92%) prioritize hand hygiene by using soap and water before eating, signifying a growing awareness of the importance of cleanliness in preventing the spread of germs and diseases. However, a small percentage (7%) still relies solely on water for handwashing, and an even smaller fraction (1%) utilizes ash, indicating a need for further education on effective hand hygiene practices. The frequency of eating habits among respondents shows that a significant portion (52%) opts for two meals a day, possibly due to reasons such as time constraints or cultural practices. Conversely, 48% adhere to the more conventional pattern of three meals a day. Notably, no respondents reported eating only once a day, suggesting that regular meal consumption is prevalent among the study population.

Breakfast, considered the most important meal of the day, reflects varied preferences among respondents. While a considerable proportion (51.5%) opt for a simple combination of tea and bread, a notable fraction (38.5%) consumes tea alone. The presence of respondents (6%) consuming a traditional meal like daal, rice, and curry for breakfast underscores diverse dietary choices, while a minority (4%) prefer alternative options such as tea and biscuits. The lunch and dinner habits predominantly feature consumption of daal, rice, and curry, indicating the prominence of this staple meal in the diet of the respondents. For lunch, a significant majority (74.5%) opt for this traditional combination, while a notable portion (21%) choose rice and curry without daal. Similarly, for dinner, the majority (62%) prefer daal, rice, and curry, followed by a substantial proportion (34.5%) consuming daal and roti. A small fraction (3.5%) deviates from these patterns by opting for other food combinations.

Day Meal Practices

Regarding day meal practices at school, a significant proportion of respondents (37%) consume day meals within the school premises. This suggests that there is demand for such snacks during the school day. However, the majority (63%) opt not to eat day meals at school, indicating potential variations in preferences or access to alternatives. In terms of sourcing day meals, a considerable portion of respondents (52.5%) purchase their snacks from external vendors such as shops. This highlights the convenience and accessibility of such options for students. Meanwhile, a quarter of respondents (26%) bring day meals from home, emphasizing the role of home-prepared snacks in meeting dietary needs. Additionally, a notable proportion (21.5%) relies on the school canteen for their day meals, indicating the significance of on-campus food services. The cleanliness and hygiene of the canteen emerge as critical factors influencing food choices. While the majority of respondents perceive their canteen to provide healthier food options, a significant minority (31.5%) express concerns about the cleanliness and quality of the food. Issues such as unfiltered water and overall sanitation standards raise questions about the adequacy of hygiene practices in school food facilities.

Street Food Practice and Behaviour

Street food is a prevalent aspect of Nepali cuisine, reflecting the rich cultural diversity and traditional flavors of the region. The findings from Table 4 shed light on various aspects of street food practices and behaviors among respondents. The popularity of specific street food items is evident, with fulki, chaumin, and chatarmatar being among the most commonly consumed items. Fulki appears to be the most favored, with 36.5% of respondents indicating consumption. This preference can be attributed to its taste variety, particularly appealing to adolescents. The reasons for liking street food primarily revolve around its affordability, accessibility, and taste. The majority of respondents (58%) expressed a preference for street food due to its sweet and delicious nature. Additionally, 32.5% highlighted the convenience of street food availability, while 9.5% appreciated its affordability. These factors collectively contribute to the popularity of street food as a convenient and satisfying option for many individuals.

Despite its popularity, the consumption of street food appears to have adverse effects on a significant portion of respondents. A notable 68.4% reported feeling uneasy or affected after consuming street food, experiencing symptoms such as stomach pain, diarrhea, and vomiting. This indicates potential health risks associated with street food consumption, likely stemming from issues related to hygiene and food safety practices among vendors. Concerns regarding the safety and hygiene of street food are further emphasized by respondents' attitudes towards care while consuming street food. A significant proportion prioritize factors such as sanitation (48.5%) and health (47%), indicating awareness of the potential risks associated with unhygienic food practices. However, it is notable

that a smaller percentage (4.5%) prioritize taste, suggesting that while taste is a significant factor in street food preference, health and hygiene considerations are also important to many students.

Practice of Eating Meat, Fish, and Iodized Salt

The majority of respondents recognize the importance of incorporating meat, fish, and iodized salt into their diets. Meat and fish are rich sources of essential nutrients such as protein, vitamins, and minerals, while iodized salt provides a crucial trace mineral necessary for thyroid function. It is encouraging to see that 93.5% of the respondents reported consuming meat and fish, indicating a widespread acknowledgment of their nutritional benefits. This suggests that the community is generally aware of the importance of these food items in maintaining a healthy diet. The frequency of meat and fish consumption among respondents varied, with 48% consuming them four times a month, 41% consuming them twice a month, and 11% consuming them once a month. This diversity in consumption patterns reflects individual preferences and dietary habits. It is worth noting that regardless of frequency, incorporating meat and fish into one's diet can contribute to meeting nutritional requirements. Regarding salt consumption, the survey reveals that 98% of respondents use iodized salt, indicating a high level of awareness regarding its importance in preventing iodine deficiency disorders like goiter. However, it is concerning that 2% of respondents reported using both iodized and non-iodized salt. This suggests a need for further education and awareness campaigns to promote the exclusive use of iodized salt among the population.

Conclusion:

This study could help parents, nutritionists, and healthcare professionals working with basic level students by providing information on their eating habits and nutritional status. . Additionally, the findings underscore the diversity in dietary preferences, with variations observed in meal frequency and food choices for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The study sheds light on the diverse practices and preferences surrounding day meals among school students. While a notable portion of respondents consume day meals at school, there are variations in sourcing preferences, with external vendors, home-prepared snacks, and canteen offerings being popular choices. The perception of cleanliness and hygiene in the school canteen emerges as a key concern, indicating the need for improved sanitation standards to ensure the provision of safe and nutritious food options for students. Street food remains popular due to its affordability and taste, concerns regarding its safety and hygiene persist among students. The findings suggest that there is a general understanding among the basic level students regarding the importance of consuming meat, fish, and iodized salt for maintaining a balanced and healthy diet. However, it is necessary for improvement in ensuring consistent and exclusive use of iodized salt among the population.

Public health initiatives and education campaigns can play a vital role in raising awareness about the benefits of these dietary practices and addressing any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge. It is important to run health and awareness campaigns to help school students form healthy eating habits. The day food should be brought from home, as should be encouraged by all students because it can be more affordable and hygienic. Students shouldn't leave the school grounds by leaving the canteen, which the administration should handle properly. All students should wash their hands before and after eating, and there should be a proper drinking water facility at the school. Students in schools and family members alike should get health and nutrition education. Schools should offer health promotion programs with the assistance of skilled health professionals. Students should be discouraged from eating fast food because of its drawbacks. Teachers, parents, and kids should raise awareness against about the dangers of eating street food. The canteen owner needs to go through a training program to keep the place tidy and clean and the food hygienic. Parents and teachers should be concerned about their children's eating habits Students need to learn about many food-borne illnesses like cholera, dysentery, diarrhea, gastric, etc. that are either communicable or non-communicable. Further research could explore the underlying factors influencing these behaviors and assess the effectiveness of educational initiatives in fostering positive dietary practices.

References

- Abraham, S., Noriega, B. R., & Shin, J. Y. (2018). College students' eating habits and knowledge of nutritional requirements. *Journal of Nutrition and Human Health, 2*(1). Retrieved from <https://scholar.google.com/>
- Clydesdale, F. M., & Francis, F. J. (2012). *Food nutrition and health*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Dhakal, S. (2015). Basic health science, Vidharthi Publication, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Millamena, O. M. (2002). The essential nutrients: Energy. In *Nutrition in Tropical Aquaculture: Essentials of fish nutrition, feeds, and feeding of tropical aquatic species* (pp. 41-44). Aquaculture Department, Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center.
- Park, K. (20017). Preventive and Social Medicine, Banarsidas Bhanot, Prem Nagar, India.
- Price, S. (2005). Understanding the importance of the health of a balanced diet. *Nursing Times, 101*(1), 30-31.
- Sherchan, L. (2008). Review of completed research in health and physical education, Dikshant Prakashan, Kritipur, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Svalastog, A. L., Donev, D., Kristoffersen, N. J., & Gajović, S. (2017). Concepts and definitions of health and health-related values in the knowledge landscapes of the digital society. *Croatian medical journal*, 58(6), 431.

Upadhyaya, E., Sakia, H. & Patel S.H. (2018) A Study on The Eating Habits of The College Students, Remarking An Analisation 3,(9) Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/>

WHO (1948) Constitution. World Health Organization, Geneva Retrieved from [Google Scholar](#)

Tanka Paudel is a campus chief and assistant professor of health education. He is involved in research activities, local curriculum development, and textbook writing. He is currently affiliated with Yagyodaya Dudhnath Tharu Multiple Campus as campus chief. Mr. Poudyal holds an M. Ed in Health Education from Tribhuvan University. His research interests include health education, especially on food health.
