

Assessing the Effectiveness of Nutritional Education Programme in terms of Dietary Knowledge and Practices among School going Children in Selected Schools of Ambala, Haryana: A Pilot Study

RAHIL HAFIZ¹, POOJA JASWAL², SANASAM BANKIM CHANDRA SINGH³, JYOTI SARIN⁴

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nutrition plays a crucial role in the growth, development, and overall well-being of children. School age is a critical period for developing healthy dietary habits; however, unhealthy eating patterns, poor nutritional awareness, and increased junk food consumption have led to rising nutritional problems among children and adolescents.

Objective: To assess the effectiveness of a Nutritional Education Programme (NEP) on dietary knowledge and dietary practices among school-going children in selected schools of Ambala district, Haryana.

Materials and Methods: The pilot study conducted by using quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group pre-test post-test design. The study included 18 school-going children studying in classes VI to VIII selected from government schools of Ambala district through simple random sampling technique. The participants were equally divided into experimental and control groups. For experimental group two days NEP including balanced diet, food pyramid, hydration, healthy food choices and harmful effects of junk food. Content validity was assessed using Scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI) and Item Content Validity Index (I-CVI) methods. Data were collected using a Dietary Knowledge Questionnaire, Food Plate Checking Checklist, and 24-hour Dietary Recall method. The sample size for the final study was determined through power analysis and after adding 20% attrition, the final sample size was 120 school-going children.

Results: The mean dietary knowledge score increased from 15.7 ± 5.4 during pre-test to 24.3 ± 1.6 in post-test, with a statistically significant paired t-test value ($t=5.7$, $p=0.001^*$). The control group showed no meaningful improvement. Independent t-test analysis also demonstrated a highly significant difference between experimental and control groups in post-test knowledge scores ($t=-7.8$, $p=0.001^*$). Dietary practice scores also improved among children in the experimental group, where the mean score increased from 6.2 ± 1.09 to 7.3 ± 0.7 after administration of the NEP. The 24-hour dietary recall findings indicated improvement in calorie intake adequacy, as children consuming appropriate calorie intake increased from 22.2% during pre-test to 66.7% in post-test within the experimental group. Most demographic variables were not significantly associated with dietary knowledge and practices except selected factors such as diet pattern and duration of outdoor games.

Conclusion: The pilot study demonstrated that the NEP was feasible and effective in improving dietary knowledge and promoting healthier dietary practices among school-going children. Structured nutrition education conducted in school settings can contribute significantly toward prevention of malnutrition and development of healthy lifestyle behaviours among adolescents.

Keywords: Content validity, Dietary practices, Item content validity index, Scale content validity index.

PARTICULARS OF CONTRIBUTORS:

1. Student M.Sc. Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar College of Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala, Haryana, India.
2. Associate Professor, Maharishi Markandeshwar College of Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala, Haryana, India.
3. Associate Professor, Maharishi Markandeshwar College of Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala, Haryana, India.
4. Principal cum Professor, Maharishi Markandeshwar College of Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala, Haryana, India.

NAME, ADDRESS, E-MAIL ID OF THE CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Ms. Pooja Jaswal,

Associate Professor, Maharishi Markandeshwar College of Nursing, Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University), Mullana, Ambala-133207, Haryana, India.

Email: poojajaswalmmcn@mmummullana.org