

Nutritional Awareness amongst the Adolescents and Their Parents in India

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Abstract

In today's world of hustle bustle, the life is quite occupied apart from just living it by good and healthy way, studying the awareness level in the society, especially in that segment of population where parents of the adolescents and the teenagers themselves, about the nutritional requirement by their body, to fulfill the demand to stay healthy, in terms of physical and psychological state in present and in future as well. Allowing the lifestyle in this regard, irrespective of other factors contributing towards life and giving preference to the healthy eating habits by including the nutritional foods in daily diets of the teenagers of our family and on the other hand teenagers also making it sure that they follow the guidelines about their nutritional requirements in the respective resources of information. This feedback from various targeted respondents was collected with the help of the survey questionnaire. It was circulated amongst mixed samples of students and parents from different places across the state of Maharashtra.

Keywords: Nutrition, Awareness, Adolescent, Malnutrition, Childhood, Adulthood

INTRODUCTION

India being the second largest country in population has the greatest/highest count for adolescents as well comprising about 20-21%. Almost every fifth person out of ten is an adolescent in India. In this article the thought has been given to overall population of Teenagers of the globe as an entire populace. Adolescence is a transition period between childhood and adulthood. It also has a consideration for the nutritional fulfillment against the body's requirement

as there are hormonal changes occurring simultaneously. The hormonal changes accounts for instability in both physical and psychological state of the teenagers. At this point of time an individual has maximum opportunities to understand the nutritional urge of the body and can acquire the knowledge pertaining to the food and other resources which could comply with the supply of nutritional elements. This will enable the adolescent to obtain an overall good health in the later part of his life as the negligence or ignorance or lack of knowledge would result in considerable health deterioration. The weakness and low attainment of physical strength might affect the psychical health as well, which at times becomes very difficult to overcome with.

A properly attended nutritional requirement in adolescence will give a healthy life to the coming generations which would be free from weaknesses and deficiencies unless it is neglected or ignored by any reasons. The state of lack of awareness about the nutritional requirements of adolescents in their concerns lot many elderly people or namely the parents might regret in later stage of their families. It is very unbearable to witness the younger generation struggling with their strengths to strive further in their lives.

As competent individuals of the global community at this present day who understands the severity of this upcoming looming crisis, it is expected from the elderly members who should at least initiate the endeavors to make people around us very much aware about the nutrition and malnutrition amongst the adolescents. Spreading the word about it will set the dice rolling not in a jiffy but in detail with slow and steady improvement to make notable impact on the coming generations of human beings in the future and the eco system in which they will live in.

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NEED OF THE STUDY

As the entire society have been fusilladed with fast food products and who have been inundated with the consumption of such kind of fast foods. The companies or organizations seeking the easier profit by luring the clientele with marketing and selling such product in our society are at large; we as a individual or even a small group of sensible people would not be able to do anything constructive as there are so many factors involved in the business of such kind of products. So to start a fire you need to ignite a spark at least, so as my efforts of writing this paper.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is been observed that even though having the proper education and knowledge, people tend to neglect or ignore the importance of nutritional food in their lives and most importantly the transforming phase of adolescent whether it is the teenager himself or may be the parents. It is my drop in the ocean of efforts in bringing in the focus of that population of society who in respect of the nutritional awareness can contribute by adopting the nutritional habits for themselves and adolescents in their family and the adolescents around as well who might not be that much aware about the nutritional requirement of a teenager or may not have the access for such information. It is an effort to push the targeted audience at least a step further.

DEFINITIONS

Adolescence: A stage in a human beings life when he is becoming a matured person in terms of physical and psychological basically it is a transition phase of physical and psychological changes and development of a human from his childhood to adulthood.

Nutrition: An element acquired from all kinds of food sources to nurture and nourish the living body.

Malnutrition: deficiency or deterioration in the state of the living body due to insufficient supply of nutrients or a state of under/over nutrition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Relationship between Adolescents' nutrition Literacy and Food Habits, and Affecting Factors

While studying the nutritional awareness in adolescent and their parents in India it becomes much of importance to refer the status in other part of the globe as well. This research conducted by Bennur Koca and Gulcihan Arkan in the city of Izmir in Turkey. The authors have explained and arranged the topic in statistic way and with descriptive paragraphs, which has shown a greater relation between Adolescent Nutrition Literacy Scale (ANLS) and the Adolescent Food Habit Checklist (AFHC). The outcome observation which could be considered very apt one is that the 'Nutritional Literacy increases Food Habits improves positively to the satisfactory level'.

A Study of Nutritional Awareness and Attitude of Adolescent Girls towards Nutrition

Ananya G Roy and Pooja Gusain both in their study about nutritional awareness and attitude of adolescent girls towards nutrition states the importance of nutrition in the adolescence, as it is the second lap of the life cycle after childhood where one can improve or modify the food habits to gain or restore good health through supplying the better nutritious food compare to which was consumed in the physical state of childhood. The requirement of nutritious food from body increases to considerable level in adolescence in both girls and boys. The study was carried out in one of the districts of Uttarakhand – Almora, India. Since the authors specifically studying the subject pertaining to adolescent girls, they surveyed one hundred girls of 13 to 15 years of age. The feedback which they receive makes us think with greater concern as very less number of girls from the selected location was aware about their nutritional requirement in adolescence and so as their parents because they were very discriminative when it comes to provide the food which would nourish their daughters and not just their sons. Most of them had the perception that nutritional food means costly food which is not the truth, this shows that how poor is the level of nutritional awareness amongst the girls.

A Study of Awareness of Nutrition & Anaemia among College Going Students of Mahila College of Bhavnagar

Awareness of nutrition & anemia among college going students of Mahila college of Bhavnagar is an another study in concern with women's health in their adolescence carried out in Bhavnagar district of Gujarat a state in India. The usual limitation about education which can be observed in many parts of India accounts for the shortness of knowledge about the health concerns which can be dealt

with nutritious food. Providing simple good nutritious food is compromised just because inadequate knowledge and poor vision related with nutritional requirements of human body. According to the study conducted by Harshad Patel, Harsha Solanki, Vibha Gosalia, Falguni Vora, M. P. Singh the lack of awareness is the major cause of the under development of this segment of the society which is a big challenge of the present day India.

A Study of Nutritional Status and High Risk Behavior of Adolescents in Ahmedabad: A Cross Sectional Study

A study of nutritional status and high risk behavior of adolescents in Ahmedabad – A Cross Sectional Study by Mital Prajapati, D. V. Bala and Hemant Tiwari gives the insights about nutritional status and high risk behavior of adolescents in Ahmedabad. Their objective of the cross sectional study was both to understand and evaluate the nutritional status and the teenagers high risk behavior. While going through the data they found that the data available at national level is insufficient to conduct such kind of study and hence needs to be concentrated further for future research studies nationwide. After the possible swotting authors found that there are lot many issues present regarding the adolescents health in India, which needs to be solved as much as effectively as possible and would bridge the gap between the awareness and the implementation about the nutritional food.

Adolescent Nutrition: A Review of the Situation in Selected South-East Asian Countries

Dr. Rukhsana Haider assisted by Ms. Suman Bhatia drafted the review ‘Adolescent Nutrition: A review of the situation in selected countries of South East Asia’ for Regional Office WHO for South-East Asia, New Delhi. This review is a compilation of information regarding the malnutrition in the South East Asian countries especially of the girls. The SEA countries have almost 20% of their population as adolescents. Humans have three stages for growth and overall physical development which before birth in womb, during childhood and in the adolescent stage. But most of the adolescents from these countries suffer from malnutrition and anaemia which resentfully affects their physical health and growth. This is mainly observed in girls with increased impact of diseases and illness resulting in considerable death tolls. It doesn't end here the ill girls then gives the birth to the next generations

who already are suffering from malnutrition and anaemia, which contributes to the weaker future generations affecting the health of the nation.

An Investigation into School Children's Knowledge and Awareness of Food and Nutrition

To understand the awareness and the knowledge level of school going children's about Good Nutrition and Malnutrition as they would be requiring its awareness and implementation of the same in their adolescence. K. H. Hart, J. A. Bishop, H. Truby observed with sampling of 114 school going children's in UK by forming them in different groups the improvement in knowledge and awareness about the food and the related nutrition. It has been observed by the authors that there are differences in food choices due to socio economic status as well as the gender. There were constraints of children's psychological understanding and thought processes in concern with their traditional health food and its connection with nutrition. They were very affirmative about their food preferences and tastes, also they were found adoptive for food based dietary guidelines and constructive food groups.

Nutritional Awareness and Food Preferences of Young Consumers

Author Karen Brown, Heather McIlveen and Christopher Strugnell in their article “Nutritional awareness and food preferences of young consumers” emphasizes on the very necessity of educating the younger generation about their food habits and behavior towards the nutritional food. They are living in or with three environments namely home, school and social, the relationship between their interaction about their food preferences and nutritional awareness behavior needs to be focused. At this stage of adolescence the teenager's develop the feeling of “Independence” which makes them have an approach of self-decision making habits in their behavior. This is of a great concern as they decide about their food preferences and the perceived behavior towards it, which generally falls in the category of “Fast Food”, which might develop in consuming nutritionally poor food in greater volume. The fact which the author states that even though most of them are aware of the fact that they need to consume nutritious food and also has the knowledge about it but does not reflect in their behavior towards school and social environments.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the current status of awareness about nutritional requirement of adolescents in teenagers as well as the parents.
- To observe the knowledge of the concerned group of population about nutritional food.
- To have the information about the preferences of food by the adolescents as well as the parents in the society considering the nutritional requirement of adolescents.
- To find out the ways for improvement in the area of Nutritional Awareness amongst the Adolescents and their Parents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was the most essential segment of study out of few, in order to conduct this research and study the perceptions of the objectives. The effect of awareness about the nutritional requirements in adolescents for their growth and development which will avoid or eradicate malnutrition from later stage of their life were identified and floated in the form of a questionnaire. This feedback from various targeted respondents was collected with the help of the survey questionnaire. It was circulated amongst mixed samples of students and parents from different places across the state of Maharashtra. This survey was specifically carried out to evaluate and fulfill the set objectives for the study.

Type of Research

An explanatory form of research was used to study the various measures to be taken towards generating nutritional awareness amongst the adolescents and their parents with an initiative to trigger the movement not by all but at least few to whom it is possible to pass this initiative to one person from the society in such a way that he could follow it and guide others to do so as well. It also consists of the surveys and fact finding enquiries in different manner.

Methods of Data Collection

Primary Data - was collected from the mixed sample of various respondents from families at different locations

and students of AISSMS College of Hotel Management and Catering Technology. Primary data was collected through survey in the following ways:

- *Personal Interviews*: The answer was sought to a set of pre-conceived questions through personal interviews with parents and students the data was collected in a structured way.
- *Questionnaires*: Considering the reviews and the additional inputs, one questionnaire was prepared and distributed to various respondents.
- *Observation*: The data was collected by observing the non verbal behavior of adolescents and students experienced the adolescence to understand dynamic behavioral process.

Secondary Data – was collected from published / unpublished literature on nutritional awareness amongst adolescents and their parents in India and some other countries for the reference and also the latest references available from the journals, newspapers, research publications and magazines, past records and other relevant sources available online.

Questionnaire – Design and Implementation: The questionnaire design was done with the aid of fellow expert researchers and taking into account the depth needs & objectives of the study. The questionnaire was administered to the sample population and sample size.

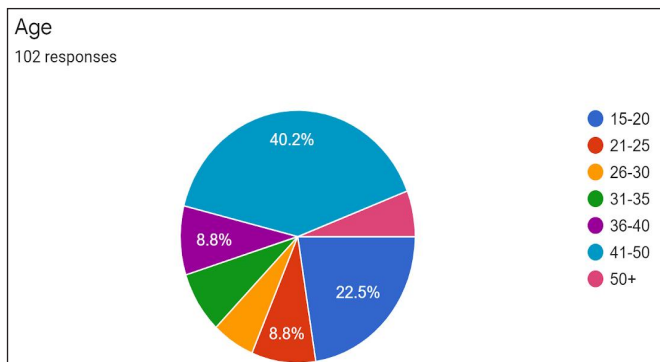
Sampling Techniques: To conduct this study different respondent was selected from various segments but majorly from families, friends, professionals and students of AISSMS College of Hotel Management and Catering Technology, Pune. To achieve the minimum sample requirement a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed and in return 102 were received.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected was analyzed using basic and advanced analytical tools. This also includes the detailed analysis of the data which was conducted with the purpose of attaining the set objectives of the research. Mentioned below is the analysis which is presented graphically and in tabulated form for better interpretation. The Interpretation of the collected data was done by drawing inferences from the collected facts after the analysis of the study.

Table 1: Frequency Analysis - Age of the Respondents

Frequency							Total
15 – 20	21 – 25	26 – 30	31 – 35	36 – 40	41 – 50	50+	
22.54%	8.82%	5.88%	7.84%	8.82%	40.20%	5.88%	100%

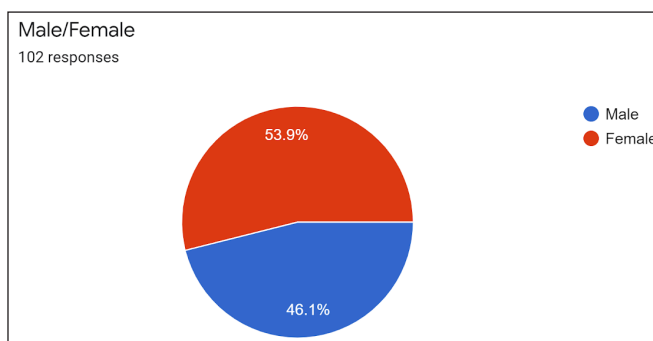


Observation: As the chart shows different age groups were selected for the study ranging from 15 years of age to 50 plus years of age. Most of the respondents i.e. 40.20% were from the group of 41-50 years of age followed by the group 15-20 years of age which counted for 22.54%.

Interpretation: The age group plays a vital role in this survey as the groups were formed right from age of 15 years till the age of 50 years and more. Both the groups represent the adults who are more concern about the nutritional awareness. Age group 15-20 who have just experienced the adolescence and age group 41-50 are the adults who are parents to the adolescence or has adolescents in their family or in the neighborhoods. These are the right samples as they have closer encounter with adolescence.

Table 2: Frequency Analysis - Gender of the Respondents

Frequency		Total
Male	Female	
46.1%	53.9%	100%

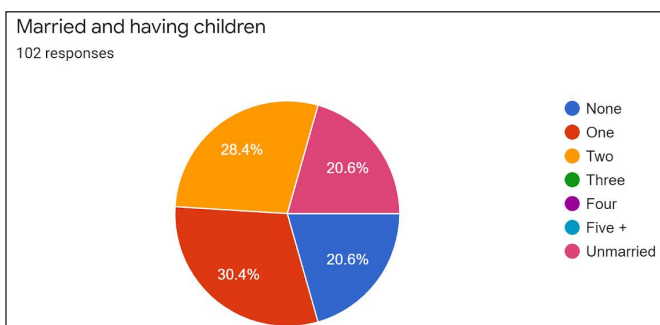


Observation: Most of the respondents out of 102 were females standing for 53.90% and males for 46.10%.

Interpretation: In present days scenario in India to understand the volume of awareness in the population it becomes necessary to know the percentage of male and female. Female members of the country have a greater contribution towards awareness of the nutrition and maintaining the same in better condition by implementing in the households to avoid the malnutrition.

Table 3: Frequency Analysis – Marital and Children Status if Applicable of the Respondents

Frequency							Total
None	One	Two	Three	Four	Five+	Unmarried	
20.58%	30.39%	28.43%	0%	0%	0%	20.58%	100%



Observation: As per the chart it can be stated that most of the married respondents have one child 30.39% and two children 28.43%. Rests of the respondents were either married or unmarried carrying same percentage i.e. 20.58%.

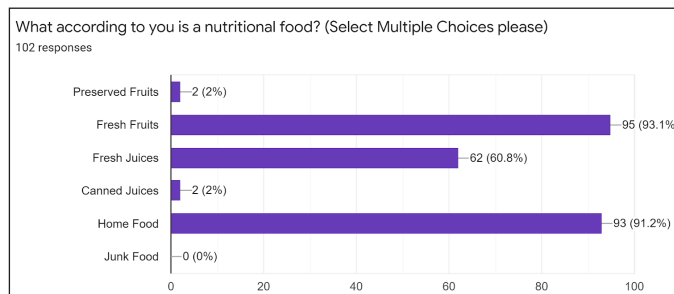
Interpretation: This question was asked to understand how many people the respondents can communicate the message to spread the awareness. As the combine percentage for both the parents having either one or two

children is 58.82%. They can administer the awareness in their families as well as they can percolate this sensitive

topic amongst the peers, the socio economic groups and or the society in general.

Table 4: Frequency Analysis - Understanding about Nutritional Foods

Frequency					
Fresh Fruits	Fresh Juices	Home Food	Preserved Fruits	Canned Juices	JunkFood
93.13%	60.78%	91.17%	1.96%	1.96%	0%



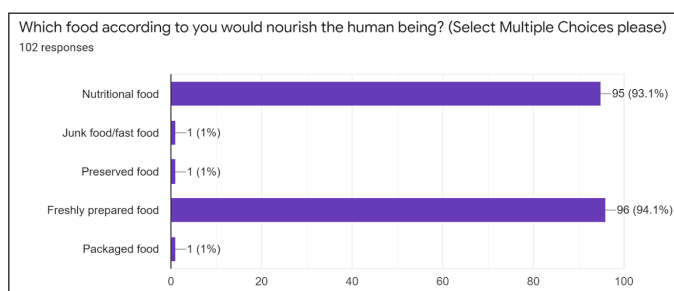
them have selected multiple answers which has been counted separately for every nutritional and unhealthy food as well. As expected the responses were as follows – Fresh Fruits 93.13%, Home Food 91.17% and Fresh Juices 60.78%.

Observation: The survey revealed that the understanding about what exactly is a nutritional food is better with the respondents, as this was a multi select question most of

Interpretation: The respondent’s awareness about nutritional food was calculated with this section of the questionnaire. The information was tabulated to know how many people do really understand the healthy food compare to health deteriorating food was the concern behind this question.

Table 5: Frequency Analysis – Knowledge about Foods that Nourishes the Body

Frequency				
Nutritional food	Junk food/fast food	Preserved food	Freshly prepared food	Packaged food
93.13%	1%	1%	94.11%	1%



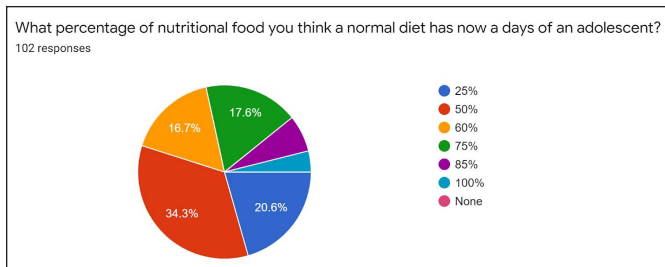
Observation: The responses which are seen in the chart about the nourishing food, which was a multi select question and answers were expected with more than

one choice. The responses were counted individually as per the answers which are as stated – Nutritional Food 93.13%, Freshly Prepared Food 94.11%.

Interpretation: To attain and maintain the good health by practicing the nutritious diet will definitely nourish the human body. More and more people are getting knowledgeable about the nutritional food and ignoring or avoiding junk food, packaged food and preserved foods but some of them which are very few do prefer these foods as well. It might be because of lack of knowledge or having no choice due to their busy lifestyle.

Table 6: Frequency Analysis – Realization of Nutritional Food Percentage in an Adolescents Daily Diet

Frequency							Total
25%	50%	60%	75%	85%	100%	None	
20.58%	34.31%	16.67%	17.65%	6.86%	3.92%	0	100%



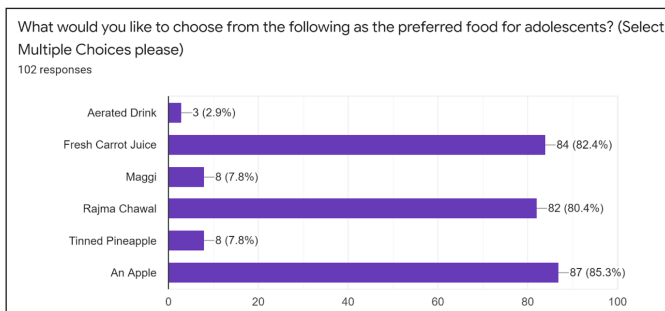
Observation: The above chart explains the understanding and awareness about an adolescent’s diet 34.31% respondents said it should be 50%, whereas 17.75% people opted for 75%, 16.67% selected 60% surprisingly there were respondents who choose the higher percentages

like 85% and 100% but they are less. One more category of 25% had 20.58% people agreeing to it.

Interpretation: The present day adolescents diet would be and should be a focal point while considering their overall growth whether physical or psychological. Looking at the responses it is essential to make sure the people in the society should understand the nutritional awareness in actual. One should act upon and let others who are related to this to follow and guide about the structure of an adolescents daily diet within the family and the society in general. The awareness drive should convert the percentage into 100% for maximum numbers of the society population.

Table 7: Frequency Analysis – Preferred Nutritional Food for Adolescents

Frequency					
Aerated Drink	Fresh Carrot Juice	Maggi	Rajma Chawal	Tinned Pineapple	An Apple
2.9%	82.4%	7.8%	80.4%	7.8%	85.3%



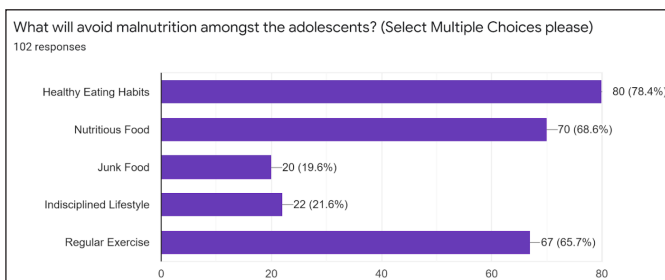
respectively. Since it was a multi select questions the percentage have been considered on individual basis.

Interpretation: Individuals who have just gone through the adolescence phase and also the parents or relatives or friends of adolescents who were part of this survey and who has the knowledge about food preferences were asked to choose the options. The responses were very satisfying with most of the respondents choosing the nutritious options like Fresh Carrot Juice, Rajma Chawal and An Apple and few of the respondents choosing the unhealthy choices such as Aerated Drink, Maggi and Tinned Pineapple.

Observation: The above chart states that given a choice of foods what present day population would choose. Respondents opted for Fresh Carrot Juice, Rajma Chawal and An Apple with a count of 82.4%, 80.4% and 85.3%

Table 8: Frequency Analysis – Efforts to Avoid Malnutrition

Frequency				
Healthy Eating Habits	Nutritious Food	Junk Food	Indiscipline Lifestyle	Regular Exercise
78.4%	68.6%	19.6%	21.6%	65.7%



Observation: As per above chart respondents who agrees to the options which can help in avoiding the malnutrition amongst the adolescents were in good numbers, such as for Healthy Eating Habits 78.4%, For Nutritional Food 68.6% and for Regular Exercise 65.7%. Abruptly few respondents with considerable percentages selected the options of Junk Food 19.6% and Undisciplined Lifestyle 21.6%.

Interpretation: With the knowledge about the impact of both nutrition and malnutrition on adolescent's growth and health status, people are expected to put in some considerable efforts to avoid and eradicate malnutrition completely from our society. As significant responses received for negative options, which state the requirement of definite efforts to spread a neat and in depth awareness of nutrition and malnutrition.

OBSERVATIONS AND FINDINGS

It is observed that most of the respondents are aware of the importance of nutrition in the adolescent stage, the very crucial phase of one's life as the maximum growth and health gets constructed in this period which lasts for long. A good health in adolescence is a strong base for the future health which can be maintained or kept updated in later part of the life. Following are the observations and findings based on the questionnaire:

- It is observed that the age group which responded more is of age 15-20 years, which means respondents who have just experienced the adolescence. This questionnaire has them as the appropriate respondents.
- The respondents were more of female members, which make a strong statement that women's are getting more and more aware about the subject of nutrition.
- They also have knowledge about what kind of food needs to be consumed to attain the best nutritional level in a human's body.
- Observation says they are somewhat confident about the daily diet structure of an adolescent, how much nutritional food should be major part of their daily food intake.
- Also there is an understanding about what else is also required along with the nutritional food, a complete regime required and to be followed by the adolescence is known to most of the respondents.
- People who are aware about Nutrition and Malnutrition can keep a watch around them and can direct any malnutrition to the concerned government authorities or if possible for themselves then can attend such cases.
- Educational institutes, majorly schools and high schools to conduct additional classes on Nutritional Awareness in an attractive and fun loving atmosphere which will not make it feel as boredom and will not create any hesitation to attend the same.
- Posters, Billboards, Placards stating the importance and the ways or means of attaining good health in the period of adolescence in brief and effective words or animation which should carry an effective and interesting message.
- Television commercials to make mandatory inclusion of messages about nutrition and malnutrition.
- Foods which helps in maintaining the good health in adolescence to be allotted prime space in media in a time slots wherein all school and high school children's watches or uses the social media and television.
- While giving admissions to the schools parents to be interviewed on their knowledge and understanding of nutritional food, if they are not aware of the same then providing them with a counseling session or make them to attend the brief workshops related to the same.
- As in India, radio is the only media which has better and greater reach to the general public, so organizing some radio programs based on nutritional awareness in adolescents which can be interesting and attractive in nature. To be aired in prime time slot.
- Organizing rallies in the rural areas by the urban adolescents who has the knowledge about their nutritional requirements and knows how to obtain it, who can demonstrate and communicate the message effectively.

SUGGESTIONS

- The respondents can take responsibility to educate at least more than one individual regarding the Nutrition and Malnutrition.
- They need to monitor the adolescents in their families or in the neighborhood for adherence to the complete guidelines pertaining to nutritional awareness.

CONCLUSIONS

- People are more or less aware about the nutritional demands of the adolescence stage.
- It is satisfying information that more of female population is aware about the nutrition and malnutrition.

- They also have a realization that girl adolescents require more attention as they are the one who would be bearing the next generation.
- It's very important to understand that 'If a mother is healthy then the child would be healthy as well'.
- Overall health education along with the regular curriculum needs to be provided.
- Every one of us needs to put a foot forward in educating or guiding at least one individual who is not aware about the nutrition and malnutrition.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- This study was purely based on the information provided by the respondents i.e. Parents across the state of Maharashtra and Students of the AISSMS Hotel Management and Catering Technology.
- The study was conducted in the current scenario and the opinions, perception and expectations of the respondents may differ with time.
- The study does not differentiate respondents on basis of their demographic factors which may have an influence of their perception thereby identifying scope for further research.

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ANNEXURE – 1

Questionnaire

1. Name
2. Email Address
3. Age
 - 15-20
 - 21-25
 - 26-30
 - 31-35
 - 36-40
 - 41-50
 - 50+
4. Male / Female
5. Married and having children's
 - None
 - One
 - Two
 - Three
 - Four
 - Five +
 - Unmarried

6. What according to you is a nutritional food?
 - Preserved Fruits
 - Fresh Fruits
 - Fresh Juices
 - Canned Juices
 - Home Food
 - Junk Food
7. Which food according to you would nourish the human being?
 - Nutritional food
 - Junk food/fast food
 - Preserved food
 - Freshly prepared food
 - Packaged food
8. What percentage of nutritional food you think a normal diet has now a days of an adolescent?
 - 25%
 - 50%
 - 60%
9. What would you like to choose from the following as the preferred food for adolescents?
 - Aerated Drink
 - Fresh Carrot Juice
 - Maggi
 - Rajma Chawal
 - Tinned Pineapple
 - An Apple
10. What will avoid malnutrition amongst the adolescents?
 - Healthy Eating Habits
 - Nutritious Food
 - Junk Food
 - Indisciplined Lifestyle
 - Regular Exercise