

## Health Education as a Means to Conscientize on Nutrition and Balanced Diet

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### Abstract

Physical and mental well-being along with social security contribute to the status of the health of a particular personal. Maintenance of a healthy mind and healthy body helps to be free from life-style diseases. Learning process itself is being interpreted as a behavioural change. A behavioural change positively contributing to the all-round development of mind and body is necessary in the present world of fast food culture and white collar jobs.

**Keywords:** Health Education, Conscientize, Nutrition, Balanced Diet, Malnutrition

### Introduction

According to Mahatma Gandhi education should enable for the all round drawing out of the best in an individual-body, mind and spirit. The traditional Indian educational system gave much significance to health education in the forms of various forms of martial arts and yoga system. The practice of Kalaris in Kerala can be considered as a typical example of the practice of traditional martial arts. The Ayurvedic system of medicine, evolved in India positively contributed to the development of general awareness on health. The traditional art forms also played a major role in physical and mental wellbeing.

The Colonial era witnessed famines in various parts of India. The nutritional problems naturally contributed to various wide spread diseases. The spread of modern education and natural rise in health literacy made the general public aware about health and nutrition.

Health literacy is the ability of individuals to access and utilise health information to make appropriate health decisions and maintain basic health. <sup>1</sup>The development of modern health care facilities along with the government initiatives to acquire self-sufficiency in food production helped to tackle the mal-nutrition and the other health problems to a great extent. But, even now, more than 100 crore people have food with insufficient nutrition in India.<sup>2</sup>

## Review of Literature

*Health Education: Theoretical Concepts, Effective Strategies and Core Competencies*, published by the WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo provides an insight to the health educators on various strategies of effective implementation of health education. *JME Reports* published by WHO, UNICEF & World Bank Group contains estimates of malnutrition and the strategies and plans to ensure nutritious food to the people through various organs.

Official Report of United Nations Inter-agency Group entitled *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality* evaluates various aspects leading to the recent trends in child mortality rate.

*Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030* published by the UNICEF provides a detailed account of the plan and strategies of UNICEF to overcome malnutrition in various parts of the globe within the period mentioned.

## Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the role of health education in Indian context.
- To examine the scope of health education to conscientize on health and nutrition.
- To assess the significance of a balanced diet in maintaining physical and mental wellness.
- To assess the effects of malnutrition.

## Methodology and Sources

The methodology adopted for the present study is historical and analytical. It adopts an interdisciplinary approach. Data collected from both primary and secondary sources are being evaluated. Primary sources include official reports, governmental records, newspaper reports, etc. Secondary sources including research papers relevant to the topic, available from various repositories are also evaluated.

## Health problems in India in General

### 1. Malnutrition

The nutritional problems in pregnant women affects the newborn child. The period of breast feeding for an infant is very important stage of the human development. Malnutrition is a serious problem that affects nearly eighty percentage of children under five years in the country. As per the JME 2023 Report of WHO, UNICEF & the World Bank Group, 18.7% of Indian children are affected by wasting.<sup>3</sup> Vitamin deficiency affects the children in between one to three years. The Government of India rejuvenated the Supplementary Nutrition Programme under Anganwadi Services and POSHAN Abhiyaan as Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 ( Mission Poshan 2.0).<sup>4</sup> The government initiatives to provide food to the students, through the educational institutions need to be managed effectively to make fruitful results. The Government of India give priority to the problems of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and the breast-feeding mothers.<sup>5</sup>

### 2. Pandemics

Cholera, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Filariasis, Leprosy, etc. affected the general health of the public from time to time which were ably managed by various health care

programmes and vaccinations under government initiatives. H1N1, Swine flu, Dengue fever, Leptospirosis, and at last the COVID 19 pandemic were effectively prevented under the collective efforts of various administrative bodies including the local administrative bodies by co-ordinating health and awareness programmes at various levels, including vaccinations. The world focus on sustainable development agenda recognise the right of every child to survive.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. Problems related with the Environmental Hygiene**

The scarcity of drinking water and unsanitary practices in dealing with water resources becomes a major cause for diseases especially in urban slums. The dry lands of the nation having scarcity of under water resource affects the living patterns of the local people of the area. Safe drinking water is essential to ensure healthy diet which also prevents diarrhoea, intestinal worm infections, etc.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Creating a Healthy Environment**

The educational institutions should ensure to maintain proper ventilation, availability of water, proper lighting, successful mid- day meal scheme, etc. within their premises. As per the nutrition strategy of UNICEF, food, health, water and sanitation, education and social protection are emphasised.<sup>8</sup>The local administrative bodies should take the responsibility to ensure such facilities in each home within its administrative limits. Adequate funding must be provided by the state as well as the central government in this regard. Engaging communities for collectively participating in the programmes to ensure nutrition of children, adolescents and women is essential.<sup>9</sup>There are various welfare measures initiated by the Government of India and the State governments in this regard, but more power need to be given to the local bodies. The educational institutions should give adequate time for the physical education of the students. The curriculum should enable for the all-round development of students

including physical education.<sup>10</sup> Health education should enable to develop physical, mental and social well-being of children.

### **Programmes to be initiated for the All-round Development of Children**

- Providing Necessary Vaccinations Initiated by the Government
- Physical Education and Exercise under Trained Personnel
- Availability of First Aid and Emergency Medical Facilities
- Periodical Medical Check-Ups
- Providing Career Guidance and Counselling<sup>11</sup>
- Practicing Yoga and Meditation– Yoga was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2016<sup>12</sup>

### **BALANCED DIET**

#### **VITAMINS**

Our diet must include adequate supply of vitamins and minerals. They help to regulate metabolism and develop immunity. The Vitamin A, D, and K are fat soluble vitamins.

#### **VITAMIN A**

Food items including milk, butter, ghee, egg, fish, and liver are rich sources of vitamin A. Green leafy vegetables including cabbage and the orange-yellow fruits including papaya and mango are also good sources of Vitamin A

- Vitamin A helps to maintain normal eye vision. It also plays a major role in the development of skeleton and soft tissues. The UNICEF recommends the use of Vitamin supplement tablets in necessary situations.<sup>13</sup>

## VITAMIN D

Exposure to sunlight is a major source of Vitamin D. Milk, egg, fish, butter and fish liver oil are other sources.

- Vitamin D makes bones strong and healthy.

## VITAMIN E

Vitamin E contained in almost all food stuffs including vegetable oils like groundnut, sunflower, soya, cottonseed. Milk, banana, butter, apple, egg, leafy vegetables, etc. are also rich with Vitamin E.

## VITAMIN K

Vegetable oils, meat, leafy vegetables, soya-beans, tomato. Liver, cabbage, etc are sources of Vitamin K.

- Vitamin K plays a major role in clotting of blood.

## WATER-SOLUBLE VITAMINS

**VITAMIN C and Vitamins of B- Complex** are known as water-soluble Vitamins.

Vitamin B contains in tomato, potato, sweet corn, peanut, mutton, leafy vegetables, yeast, etc.

Vitamin B1 contained in beans, potato, soya-beans, sweet corn, liver, milk, etc

Vitamin B2 contained in egg, meat, milk, cheese, tomato, soya-beans, liver, vegetables, chicken, etc.

Vitamin B6 contained in dry fruits and nuts, sweet corn, fish, pulses, beans, mutton, liver, milk, etc.

Vitamin B 12 contained in egg, cheese, mutton, milk, liver, etc. It is necessary for the proper functioning of digestive system, nervous system, etc.

Vitamin C contained in cabbage, cucumber, leafy vegetables, grapes, guava, tomato, amla, lemon, orange, etc. It has role in the healing of wounds, helps to absorb iron, etc.

## CONCLUSION: NEED FOR A BALANCED DIET

The health education has much significance in making the students as well as the general public aware and conscious on a balanced diet and physical well-being. The community should get the benefits of health awareness programmes by conscientization through various organs initiated by the administrative bodies at various levels. The diet for an individual should be in accordance with the age of that person. The present status of his health condition also need to be taken into consideration. Food shortages, heavy rains and related diseases affect the nutrition status all over the world.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes and References

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<sup>1</sup>*Health Education: Theoretical Concepts, Effective Strategies and Core Competencies*, WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, 2012,p.62

<sup>2</sup>*India Today Report* , New Delhi, July 17, 2023

<sup>3</sup>WHO, UNICEF & World Bank Group *Joint Child Malnutrition Estimate Report*, New York,2023, pp.1-29

<sup>4</sup> Government of India Ministry of Women and Child Development *Press Release (Press Information Bureau) 15 March 2023*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Levels and Trends in Child Mortality Official Report of United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation, 2022*, New York. p.33

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF *Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030*, New York, December 2020 pp. 64,65

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*,pp.58,59

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p.82

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p.67

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<sup>11</sup> Health Education: Theoretical Concepts, Effective Strategies and Core Competencies, WHO Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean, Cairo, 2012,p.75

<sup>12</sup>Nomination File No.01163 Submitted by the State Party: India to UNESCO entitled: *For Inscription of Yoga in2016 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* pp.1-20.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020-2030, New York, December 2020, p.91

<sup>14</sup>WHO, UNICEF & World Bank Group Joint Child Malnutrition Estimate Report, New York,2023, p.27