ABSTRACT

TITLE OF THE THESIS: A STUDY ON EATING BEHAVIOURS AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS AMONG A GROUP OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

INTRODUCTION: The prevalence of both the disordered eating and eating disorders among adolescents has steadily increased during the past 50 years. Disordered eating behaviour is defined as a wide range of irregular eating habits, excessive dieting, fasting, and binging that may lead to a number of health problems.

OBJECTIVES: i) To find out the types of eating behaviours (disordered or not) among a group of urban adolescent girls and factors associated with it. ii) To assess the nutritional status of these girls. iii) To find out the relationship between eating behaviours and nutritional status among these girls.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: Sample comprised of 400 girls, [aged 14-21 years] inhabiting in the city of Howrah, West Bengal. Information on socio-demographic and factors related to eating behaviours were collected using pretested questionnaires. Two self reported questionnaires [Eating Attitude Test (EAT) - 26 and Eating Distress Syndrome (EDS)] were used to measure eating behaviours. Nutritional status was assessed through dietary pattern and anthropometric measurements.
RESULTS: A section of the participants revealed disordered eating behaviours which was significantly associated with several factors (p≤0.05). Participants mostly consumed cereals, bread, vegetables and fish with less intake of fruits, milk and green leafy vegetables every day. Snacking between meals and consumption of fast food (energy rich with low nutritive value) were also common. Daily calorie consumption was found to be less than recommended dietary allowances (RDA). Surprisingly, consumption of protein based foods and fast foods were higher among participants with disordered eating behaviours. Anthropometric profiles of the participants revealed that both under nutrition and over nutrition prevailed among them. Participants with disordered eating behaviours were significantly more obese than those with normal eating behaviours (p≤0.05). Multivariate analysis showed that eating behaviours and socio-demographic factors do have an important role to play in determining the nutritional status of the participants.

CONCLUSION: With globalization, a major socio-cultural change is noticed in the overall lifestyle of people with the changed socio-cultural milieu. This could be one of the reasons of development of disordered eating behaviours among present study participants. Moreover, this type of eating behaviour plays a significant role on their nutritional status.