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**BOOK OF EXTENDED
ABSTRACTS**



PREVALENCE OF SKIPPING BREAKFAST AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS WITH ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG STUDENTS OF THE FACULTY OF HEALTH CARE SCIENCES, EASTERN UNIVERSITY, SRI LANKA.

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Abstract:

Introduction: As a significant dietary source for energy, breakfast is considered an important meal of the day. Skipping breakfast may affect the mental and physical activity of people. Worldwide, undergraduate university students have the habit of skipping meals particularly breakfast. Since there was very little literature available on relations between skipping breakfast and academic performance, we endeavor to put forward a study to assess the prevalence of skipping breakfast and its association with academic performance among the FHCS students.

Methodology: A Cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted among all batches of nursing and medical students of the FHCS, Eastern University Sri Lanka (EUSL). Considering the total number (488) of students, the sample size was estimated as 250. A stratified simple random sampling method was used to select study participants. An online data collection was carried out using a pilot-tested and self-administered questionnaire.

Result: According to the finding of this study, the prevalence of skipping breakfast among the FHCS students was 36.4%. Significant differences were seen in various parameters like memory, concentration, grades obtained, and attendance between breakfast-skippers and non-skippers.

Conclusion: Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and is associated with a range of positive outcomes. The study indicated that skipping breakfast negatively affects the academic performance of university students.

Keywords: Food habits, Skipping breakfast, Academic performance

Introduction: The energy and nutrition requirement of the people is fulfilled by food intake. Breakfast is consumed as the first meal of the day. The incidences of skipping breakfast increase among younger adults than other categories of people. Skipping breakfast may affect the mental and physical activity of students. Regular skipping of breakfast is generally associated with a higher Body Mass Index (BMI), related to consuming an additional quantity of food during lunch.

According to the experience of the investigators, many undergraduate university students have the habit of skipping meals particularly breakfast. Skipping breakfast has become the norm in modern days because of changes in the family setup and lifestyle. Until today, very limited data is available on the relationship between skipping breakfast and academic performance among students of the Faculty of Health Care Sciences. Therefore, we endeavor to put forward a study to evaluate between skipping breakfast and academic performance, among students of the FHCS. The findings of the study may help to design interventions to support the notion of taking regular breakfast among university students.

General Objectives: To estimate the prevalence of students skipping their breakfast and its associations with academic performance among students of the Faculty of Health Care Sciences (FHCS)

Specific Objectives: To estimate the prevalence of students of FHCS skipping breakfast and to assess the food habit of students, the awareness of the students, the association between skipping breakfast and academic performance and the relationship between skipping breakfast and demographical variables.

Methodology: A Cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted using a stratified and simple random sampling method. Primarily population was stratified according to the course of the degree, academic year, and gender. Omission or lack of consumption of traditional meals between 06.00 am-09.00 am was considered as inclusion criteria. A pilot test and a self-administered online questionnaire were used to collect the data online. The study period was 10 months from December 2020 to September 2021. Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of Faculty of Health-care Sciences, Eastern University, Sri Lanka (ERC No: E/2021/10).

Results: We collected information from 250 students. According to the findings of the study, the prevalence of skipping breakfast among nursing and medical students in FHCS, EUSL was 36.4%. The usual food source of a majority of students was faculty/hostel canteen and self-cooking. Most of them skip their breakfast due to lack of time (68.1%). While analyzing the awareness of nursing/medical students on skipping breakfast, 96.4% of students considered breakfast as the most important meal of the day. Twenty percent of the students have experienced the positive effects of skipping breakfast: reduced discomfort and the feeling of nausea or vomiting while traveling (40.4 %). The majority of the students (87.6%) have experienced negative effects by skipping breakfast such as low energy level (74.2%). Considering the academic performance, we obtained students' experiences in various aspects of their academic performances. In addition to the students' experiences on their academic performances, we also obtained data from the faculty administration including the recent semester exam results and the attendance for academic activities. Inadequate academic performance was slightly higher among skippers but adequate academic performers were a bit higher among non-skippers. Those who skipped breakfast had an inadequate level of academic performance at a higher percentage. In comparisons between both groups, differences were noticed in parameters like memory, concentration, grades obtained, and attendance between breakfast-skippers and breakfast.

Discussion: According to the finding of the current study, the prevalence of skipping breakfast among students who study in FHCH, EUSL is 36.4%. Other studies have reported that 23.58% of school-going children were breakfast skippers (Vishnu sivapatham,2017). Murphy et al. (2007) reported that 31.5% of adolescents were breakfast skippers (Murphy,2007). Around 20-35% of university students skipped breakfast. According to our study result, most of the students have inadequate academic performance levels even they are breakfast skippers or non-skippers. The students of the FHCS had different food habits while their main food source was the faculty or hostel canteen. The majority of the students were skipping their breakfast due to a lack of time. Most of them felt dizziness, laziness, lack of energy, difficulties in attending morning lectures, clinical placement, and extracurricular activities after skipping their breakfast, which is the main and important meal of the day.

Conclusion Considering the overall result, the skippers were not only facing difficulties but also had an inadequate level of academic performance. Many non-skippers also had inadequate levels of academic performance.

Therefore, there can be other factors of which were not identified in this study that may influence academic activities among students in FHCS, EUSL, rather than skipping breakfast.

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