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**BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NECESSITY FOR JOINT STUDENT-PARENT NUTRITIONAL LITERACY PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS & INSTITUTIONAL SETTING**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Traditional School Nutrition programs fail because they educate students in isolation from their home environment. Since parents are the primary gatekeepers of food access, a “knowledge-action gap” occurs where students cannot apply what they learn. This Research addresses the need for joint parent-student sessions to align school teaching with home habits, ensuring nutritional education leads to actual behavioral change and social wellness this also studies the initiatives taken by the major schemes in India that promotes the Nutritional Literacy Program and Awareness campaigns regarding specifically in schools and institutional settings, this research also showcases the role of parents in terms of dietary preferences and nutritional literacy.*

**Keywords:** Food, Nutritional Literacy, Education, Schools.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The research paper talks about the importance of holding joint sessions between parents and students to improve their understanding of nutrition. These sessions aim to meet the students' dietary needs, encourage healthy living, and help develop lasting, healthy eating habits. The research also aims to show Indian parents a different way of thinking about food items, so they can learn what foods are healthy and rich in nutrients.

The research paper is a qualitative study that examines the reviewed research papers written by Wincie Wilmah A and Jaishree Karthiga RK. A study that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, conducted by Branum C., looks into how Indian teachers and parents see and deal with food and nutrition education in primary schools. The study examines how people view and feel about teaching and learning about food and nutrition in elementary school. Promoting nutrition knowledge among kids: a case study showing how a university and an elementary school worked together with Moitra, P., and Kothavale, P. M. (2025). Creating a program to help parents of children between 3 and 10 years old learn about healthy eating habits, especially for families that are facing financial difficulties. Indian Journal of Preventive & Social Medicine, volume 56, issue 2, pages 222 to 232. The Papers mentioned above discussed about integration and strengthening of Nutritional Literacy as a subject of awareness among children from an early age and in their parents, educating them about the making of Healthy Meals, Balanced Nutrition etc. The research resulted in Positive way ensuring successful Education of Parents and Students in terms of Nutrition.

The Research paper seeks to enhance the effects of the Nutritional Literacy program by inculcating the Joint Parent-Student Session based on the findings of the reviewed literature.

**INTRODUCTION****Food**

Any substance that a person eats to get nutrition, stay healthy, join in a social activity, or feel good and happy can be called a food item. But this definition is a bit unclear because people eat different types of food, and it can also be grouped based on its uses, characteristics, and nutritional value.

Barton, A., Toyoshima, F., & Dooley, D. (2024, July). What is food? An investigation into food realizations. In Proceedings of the Joint Ontology Workshops (JOWO)-Episode X: The Tukker Zomer of Ontology, and satellite events co-located with the 14th International Conference on Formal Ontology in Information Systems (FOIS 2024).

**Nutritional Literacy**

Nutritional Literacy means a person's understanding of what is in food, how it affects the body, and the knowledge and ability to make good choices about what to eat.

**Taylor MK, et al. (2019).** Nutrition literacy & diet adherence in chronic conditions. *Public Health Nutr.* doi: 10.1017/S1368980019001289.

**School**

The School is a formal education setting where the minds of students are moulded into future leaders and responsible citizens it plays the role of organizer as it organizes different learning experiences for students, enhancing their Learning processes.

Górka-Strzałkowska, Anna. (2017). School as an institution, organization, social system. *International Journal of Pedagogy, Innovation and New Technologies*. 4. 58-66. 10.5604/01.3001.0011.5892.

**Education**

Education involves a diverse variety of experiences that support learning and foster a person's mental, social, and physical growth. Essentially, it is the act of passing down information, ethics, and practical abilities to the next generation, which maintains the stability of society and drives human progress.

**Doharey, Prof & Verma, Aman & Verma, Kapil & Yadav, Vishal. (2023). Education : Meaning, definition & Types.**

**Need for Nutritional Literacy Programmes**

The most recent survey from 2019 to 2021, known as the National Family Health Survey, found that the rate of obesity in children under the age of 5 has gone up from 2.1% to 3.4% compared to the previous survey done in 2015 to 2016.

By looking at these findings we can assume that Childhood obesity has become a major issue in India as the increase in percentage might seem small but considering the population of India Small Increase in the percentage can be considered as huge amount of obese children in numbers. It is because of the Nutritional illiteracy or Issues in accepting the Healthy Nutritional Practices.

It can be tackled through proper intake of Balanced Meals, Including Carbohydrates, Proteins, Fats, Fruits & Vegetables, in order to prevent both undernutrition and overnutrition.

**Dr. Arjan de Wagt**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-62307784>

A study by Eloranta et al.

(2011) concluded that sugary beverages and processed food snacks accounted for as much as 42% of the calorie consumption of pre-adolescents in Finland. Similarly, Chhatwal, Verma, and Riar (2004), in a study conducted among pre-pre-adolescent and pre-adolescent children in India, found the overall level of obesity to be 11.1%, with a significantly higher prevalence of obesity among children of higher socio-economic status. A more recent study by Ranjani et al. (2016) concluded that childhood obesity in India had increased to 19.3% in the twenty-first century's second decade. Mahabir (2013) has demonstrated that both excessive calorie consumption, as in the case of obesity, and excessive calorie restriction, like hunger and malnutrition, can act as risk factors for developing pre-cancerous lesions later in life A study by Eloranta et al.

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A primary cause of childhood obesity has been the excess consumption of 'energy-dense' foods, or fast foods, usually rich in sugar, trans-fatty acids, and carbohydrates, while poor in other macronutrients such as proteins and most micronutrients

**(Cowburn, et al., 2007)**

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**Eloranta et al. (2011)**

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**Chhatwal, Verma, and Riar (2004)**

A more recent study concluded that childhood obesity in India had increased to 19.3% in the twenty-first century's second decade.

**Ranjani et al. (2016)**

Iyer, Kavitha & Siddhartha, Anupam. (2024). Perceived obstacles to implementing healthy eating habits amongst pre-adolescent Indian children – a parental perspective. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*. 29. 10.1080/02673843.2024.2398037.

**Joint Nutritional Literacy Programs****Misconceptions Regarding Nutritional Practices: -**

A study conducted by Sneha Nimmagadda highlighted the misconceptions that Parents (Especially Mothers) perceive Regarding the Quality of Foods, a test was conducted in which mothers were asked to rank different food items and less than 50% Mothers ranked non-dairy Protein rich foods (like eggs, chicken breast, Fish, nuts and Legumes) higher than staple foods (like Rice millets, banana). The study results concluded that most of the parents had traditional beliefs that Carb-based food products were considered more healthy than the Protein-rich food products thereby underestimating the Macronutrient Protein in their daily diet as a result of which their children were getting incomplete Nutrition in their daily diet.

**Sneha Nimmagadda****Parental Misperceptions on Child Nutrition in India****Common Problems in Maintaining Balanced Nutrition: -**

1. Financial Conditions of Family.
2. Unwilling behavior.
3. Rejection of New Methods.
4. Traditional Beliefs.
5. Time Management.
6. Easy Access to Junk Food.
7. Less Exposure / illiteracy towards the concept.
8. Consistency Issues.
9. Lack of Cooking Skills.
10. Misperception on Nutrition.
11. Advertisement / Social Influence on Choices of Parents and children affected by the MNC's

**Government Schemes and Initiatives promoting Nutritional Literacy : -****PM POSHAN SCHEME:-**

This scheme has various school health programs from making students cook healthy meals and growing fresh vegetables (School Gardens), it mainly helps in fighting against the malnutrition and specifically anaemia (deficiencies) it also promotes healthy food by providing Healthy Mid-day meals in Schools for students of Grade I – VIII. The Scheme emphasizes on Pragmatic Learning as it educates the students on Nutritional Literacy through various activities and specifically designed real-time experiences.

Although the scheme emphasizes on the Experiential Learning it has its limitations for the implementation of healthy eating habits in home environment as the the scheme focuses on educating the students on Nutrition, Healthy Eating habits etc, in Isolation without involving the parents which becomes a obstacle for students to implement what they've learnt in the school programmes in their home environment as the parents are the mediators and moderators who monitors and controls the eating habits of the students.

**FSSAI's EAT RIGHT SCHOOL INITIATIVE: -**

FSSAI has started several efforts to improve food safety and nutrition in India, making sure that people have access to safe food and healthy eating habits. The Eat Right School program helps teach kids about how to stay safe with food, eat healthy, and keep themselves clean. It also helps share this knowledge with the bigger community through the children. Children are powerful change agents. Messages sent to children or passed through them can lead to changes in behavior and help create a culture that promotes safe and healthy food choices. Because people form their eating habits early on, it's important for schools to include enough information about food and nutrition in both their lessons and activities outside the classroom.

This is a great initiative by FSSAI because it focuses on children in grades one through ten. The way nutrition is taught to student's works well for their age. They learn about ideas like calories, energy balance, macronutrients, and micronutrients in a fun and engaging way through games and activities. This program helps people learn about nutrition in a scientific way and also promotes good eating habits. It also asks parents to help a little by having them keep track of their child's eating habits at home using the yellow books given to them. However, this method has some limits because sometimes parents may not always give accurate information about how much or what their child actually eats. Neither students nor parents are monitored, which can lead to less accurate information being shared.

**SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAMME UNDER AYUSHMAN BHARAT: -**

This program focuses on teaching students about nutrition. Its main goal is to 1) give kids in schools information about health and nutrition that is suitable for their age, and 2) support research on the health, well-being, and nutrition of children. The program also does a health check to find out any missing nutrients or illnesses in children at schools.

This program is focused towards Education of Child but left parents in Isolation there is not much involvement of Parents towards Nutritional Literacy or Awareness regarding it, which makes it not possible for students to implement healthy eating habits after evaluation of their deficiencies and Nutritional Intake, as the Parents play role of Moderator and Mediator towards child's Eating Habits from the birth itself and the Home environment is what influences the Child's Daily Diet, Thus it Limits the awareness of the program to children and mostly lacks in the implementation of dietary changes that are required.

Iyer, Kavitha & Siddhartha, Anupam. (2024). Perceived obstacles to implementing healthy eating habits amongst pre-adolescent Indian children – a parental perspective. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*. 29. 10.1080/02673843.2024.2398037.

**Suggestions for Joint Parent-Student Nutrition Literacy Program: -**

The major Schemes like Ayushman Bharat, FSSAI's Eat Right School, PM Poshan Scheme, etc. in India are Initiatives in Schools and Institutional settings that Promotes Nutritional Literacy amongst the children of schools by various activities and awareness seminars, but it aware students in isolation away from their home environment as the involvement of parents is minimal. As the parents are the mediators and moderators of the students in terms of monitoring student's eating habits and nutrition, thus parents should be the one who should be educated first alongside the students as they are the one who develops their child's habits. Cooking healthy nutrition dense food specified by FSSAI's EAT RIGHT SCHOOL program by the Parents and students together; Performing Health Screening on a monthly basis of students can keep parents and students in loop so that parents can monitor and give the adequate nutrition to their child according to his needs; Evaluation of Parent and Students through Perception test with Food Picture Cards, testing their perception & adoption of the Eating Habits;

**BENEFITS:-**

1. Developing Consistency
2. Will Drop Obesity levels among children's(Relatively higher) and adults(Relatively Lower)
3. Increase Nutritonal Awareness.
4. Improved Health & Wellness of Students.

5. Will Improve Immunity of Students as well as parents etc.
6. Physical Enhancement
7. Mental Improvements
8. Positive Behavioral Changes.
9. Prevention of Lifestyle and Health Diseases.etc.

### **CONCLUSION**

Thus this study concludes that most of the major schemes in Indian Nutritional Literacy Programs and Schemes are more focused towards the awareness of the students in Schools neglecting the role of Parents as the governors of the student's Eating Habits and Nutritional Intake, as a result of which the students are getting aware about the right habits but are failing to implement the habits in their home environment due to isolated awareness programs towards students, or the dietary patterns may not have required positive change as the parents are aware about their child's nutrition in isolation which doesn't aware the students and keeps him uninformed about the Nutritional Value of food products and their effect on human body which makes him take decisions to have Junk foods/ Calorie Dense food/ food lacking Adequate amount of Nutrients for the student.

Also educating both parent and student simultaneously might also cause miscommunication, conflicting decisions about intake of food among students and parents, thus educating both(Joint Parent – Student Nutritional Literacy Program) in a single setting could prove more beneficial for both(Parent & Student).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper could be recommended for;

1. Academicians
2. Education Policy Developers
3. Indian Parents.
4. Students from Primary & Secondary Schools, Junior Colleges, etc.
5. Physical Education Professionals.
6. Sports Coaches.
7. Sports Players.
8. Sports Institutions/Academies.
9. Awareness Campaign Organizers.
10. Non-Governmental Organizations.
11. FSSAI Programs.

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