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## Dietary pattern of meals among college going girls in Assam

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### Abstract

In this era of transition, though change is constant and one must be flexible enough to adjust with changing time still some things are constant. Such of one thing is the meals of a day: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner. Skipping or ignoring any of the meals has adverse effects to the human body. This study was conducted by the researcher in order to study the dietary intake of the college girls and understand their perspective towards the most preferred meal of the day. The present study was conducted to learn about the socio economic information of the college going students, their dietary intake of meals and their favorite meal in a day. The study sample were 40 college going girls selected from a girls' college in Mirza, District Kamrup of state Assam. The study gave brief information on the importance of the three meals in a day and also attempted to draw a relation between the meals and the health of college going students. Results revealed that dinner is the favorite meal for the college going girls and is rarely skipped whereas lunch is the second most preferred meal for the college girls and is skipped by a sizeable amount of respondents.

**Keywords:** Dietary, meals, college, girls, Assam

### 1. Introduction

Food habits of people have changed drastically over the period of time. It has become a trend to adopt and experiment new dishes from different regions, states or countries. Be it Biryani- the most popular Muslim dish from South Asia, Sushi- from Japan, Butter Chicken- from India or Bibimbap- from Korea. People are indulging themselves in various types of food available in the market. Teenagers or college students are more prone to indulge themselves in this variety of food and also the most vulnerable group of people who are affected by serious illness like: Food disorder, Obesity, Anemia, Malnutrition, Lack of calcium and many other diseases. The girls especially are most affected as they suffer from PCOD, PCOS, Iron deficiency, thyroid and many disorders which is harmful for their physical as well as mental health. College is a time to experience new things, learn new concepts and develop new skills for the students. Yet with all the new things come new challenges, which are required to be taken care of very minutely. The college students often suffer from stress and anxiety due to classes, assignments, practical, examinations or other co circular activities. While juggling between all these, health is the sector that is often affected directly. Lack of sleep or lack of proper rest, stress to complete assignments, exam fright and several other problems surround the students. In this scenario, it is important to consume all the necessary nutrients and to have regular intake of the meals. It is necessary for the college going students to have proper breakfast, lunch and dinner in order to maintain a good health and sound mind. Meals in a day for human body are like the fuel for an engine of a car. The dietary intake or the pattern of food has evolved a lot but still Scientist, Nutritionists or Dieticians consider the three meals in a day as the most important meals for a person. Breakfast, the first meal of the day is considered as the most important meal of the day as it is found that intake of breakfast helps in weight control, reduces cardio-metabolic risk factors and also has other health benefits (Gibney *et al.* 2018) [4]. Lunch is the second meal of the day and is considered to important for development, growth and academic performance of the children (Rongen *et al.* 2019) [7] or people as a whole. In a study conducted in a school in Sweden, it was found that lunch have positive contribution to the diets of the children (Eustachio *et al.* 2020) [3].

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And finally the dinner, the third and last meal of the day, which is consumed around 6.00-7.00 pm in Western Countries and around 7.00-9.00 pm in India. Though there are people who consume dinner after 9.00 pm but scientifically it is not recommended. But due to evolution of the dietary intake pattern, it is common for people to dine after 9.00 pm or even as late as 11.00 pm or midnight.

**1.1 Objectives of the study**

1. To obtain general information on the personal and socio economic background of the college girls.
2. To find out the dietary intake of meals in a day.
3. To find out the favorite meal of the day for college girls.

**2. Methodology**

A cross-sectional study was carried out in Dakshin Kamrup Girls’ College in Mirza, Kamrup District, Assam. A quantitative method was used for the study. The study consists of 40 college girls from different departments of the college. A multistage simple random sampling was used to select the college and samples for the study. Permission was obtained from the Principal of the College for collection of data from the students. A structured closed ended questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The author administered the questionnaire and collected it after the respondents completed their responds. The data was coded by using SPSS for further analysis.

**3. Results and Discussions**

**1. Socio economic information of the respondents**

Analysis on the data of the age of respondents revealed that 25 per cent of the respondents were of 18 years of age followed by 65 per cent were of 19 years, 5 per cent were of age 20 years and another 5 per cent were of 21 years of age (Table 1). It can be concluded that the respondents belong to category of young adults, which ranges from 18-26 years of age group. This period is also known as the transitional period and is difficult to deal with if not physically as well as

mentally fit.

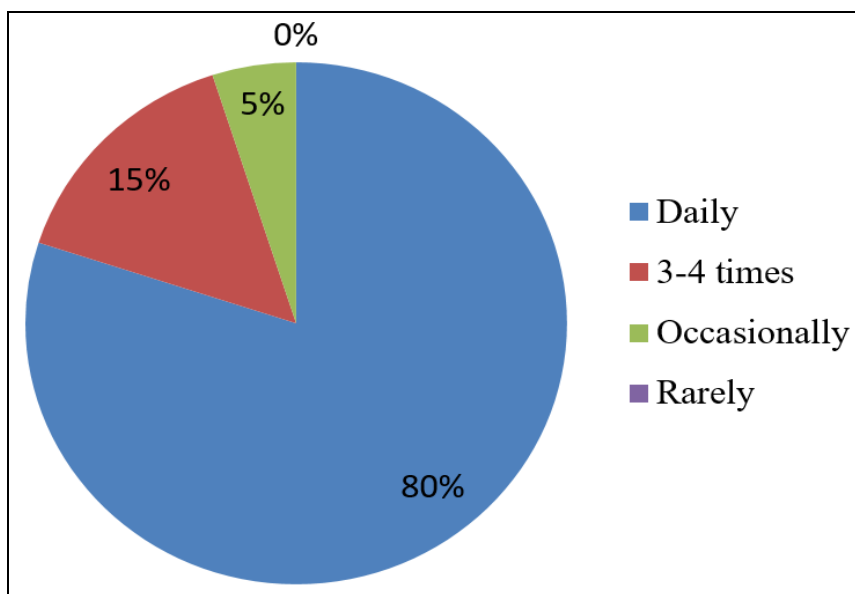
The study also revealed that 90 per cent of the respondents were found to be Assamese and 10 per cent of the respondents were Rabha. It can be concluded that a maximum of Assamese people can be found studying in Dakshin Kamrup Girls’ College, Mirza. From the selected samples, 55 per cent of the respondents were studying in 1<sup>st</sup> year of Bachelor’s Degree and the remaining 45 per cent were from 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Bachelor’s Degree.

**Table 1:** Socioeconomic information of the respondents

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Age		
	18 years	10	25.00
	19 years	26	65.00
	20 years	02	5.00
2.	Identity		
	Assamese	36	90.00
	Rabha	04	10.00
3.	Study Year		
	1 <sup>st</sup>	22	55.00
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	18	45.00

**2. Dietary intake of meals by the respondents**

The data revealed that majority (95%) of the respondents consume breakfast and only 5 per cent of the total respondents were found to be not consuming breakfast (Table 2). Though a very less percentage of respondents were found to be skipping breakfast still it is a matter of concern because breakfast is the most important meal in a day. A study revealed that skipping breakfast can have affects like irregular menstruation and poor Body Mass Index in females (Rani, *et al*, 2020) [6]. Further, from that 95 per cent of respondents who consume breakfast, it was found that 80 per cent of the respondents consume breakfast on a regular basis followed by 15 per cent, who consume breakfast 3 to 4 times a week and 2 per cent who consume breakfast occasionally (Fig 1).



**Fig 1:** Respondents consuming breakfast

90 per cent of the total respondents were found to be consuming lunch whereas 10 per cent of them were found to skip lunch (Table 2). It is important to note that skipping lunch can cause hunger pangs or low blood sugar, which can

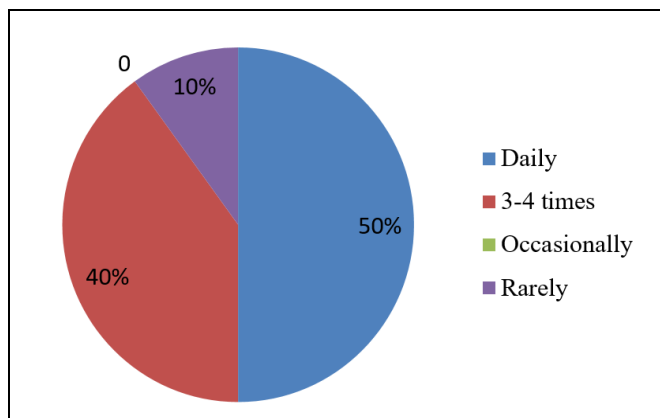
be quite harmful for the students. Also out of 90 per cent of the respondents who were found to consume lunch, only half (50%) of the respondents revealed to consume lunch on daily basis, which is quite alarming. If the students do not consume

their lunch daily during college hours then, ‘what do they eat?’ or ‘do they eat anything at all?’ the answer to these questions is really important in overall youth health of the country. It may be a warning for the people or the authority of the college to take notes regarding the food habits of their students because if there is health, there is wealth or everything that follows. Similar data was reported by other

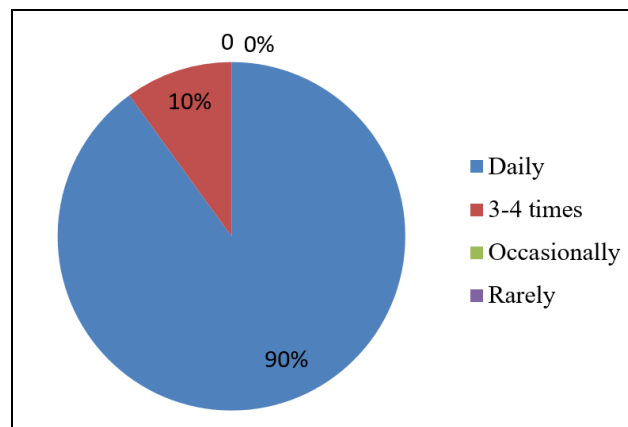
researchers, where it was reported that lunch skipping is common in female college going students (Colić et. al 2003; Neslişah & Emine, 2011)<sup>[2, 5]</sup>. 40 per cent of the respondents were found to consume lunch only 3-4 times in a week and 10 per cent of the respondents were found to consume lunch only occasionally (Fig 2).

**Table 2:** Dietary intake of meals by the respondents in a day

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age			
1.	18 years	10	25.00
	19 years	26	65.00
	20 years	02	5.00
	21 years	02	5.00
Identity			
2.	Assamese	36	90.00
	Rabha	04	10.00
Study Year			
3.	1 <sup>st</sup>	22	55.00
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	18	45.00
Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Breakfast			
1.	Yes	38	95.00
	No	02	5.00
Lunch			
2.	Yes	36	90.00
	No	04	10.00
Dinner			
3.	Yes	40	100.00
	No	00	00



**Fig 2:** Respondents consuming lunch

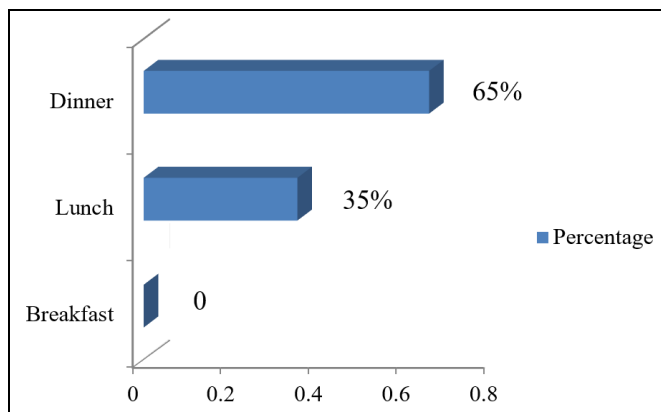


**Fig 3:** Respondents consuming dinner

The study also revealed that 100 per cent of the respondents were found to consume dinner, which is quite great to find (Table 2). The findings are in contrast to a research study, where it was reported that female students were more likely to skip dinner (Chung et. al 2003)<sup>[1]</sup>. Though out of 100 per cent of the respondents, 90 per cent per cent were found to consume dinner daily and 10 per cent were found to consume dinner 3-4 times a week (Fig 3).

**3. Favorite meal of the day for college girls**

The study revealed dinner to be the favorite meal of the day for majority (65%) of the respondents followed by 35 per cent of the respondents, who likes to have lunch. In a similar study with 1912 respondents belonging to college going students, it was reported that 5 per cent of the total respondents of the study skipped dinner (Ya-Li et. al 1994)<sup>[8]</sup>. It is quite interesting to note that not a single respondent considers breakfast to be their favorite meal of the day (Fig 4).



**Fig 4:** Favorite meal of the respondents

#### 4. Conclusions

The findings of the present study reveal that there are still countable sizes of college girls who avoid consuming breakfast daily, which may give rise to various health conditions among them in near future. There is a need to educate the college girls or maybe college students as a whole about the importance of breakfast, importance of all the meals in a day or other nutrition related topics. Also it was found only half of the respondents consume lunch in a daily basis, which is quite alarming because it is not recommended to stay hungry for the whole day while in college. If not now then in future, this may cause severe attention problems among the students. Also, respondents were found to prefer dinner over the two other meals, though it is a good thing to know that majority of the respondents consume dinner daily still it is quite interesting to note that none of the respondents accepted breakfast to be their favorite meal, considering the fact that breakfast is the most important meal of the day.

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