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Prevalence of skipping breakfast, reasons for skipping breakfast and knowledge on healthy breakfast among advanced level students in Nallur Division

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Background and objective: Breakfast is often regarded as the most important meal of the day, playing a vital role in maintaining overall health, concentration, and academic performance. However, skipping breakfast is increasingly common among adolescents due to various lifestyle, social, and behavioural factors. This study aims to assess the prevalence of skipping breakfast, explore the reasons for skipping breakfast, and evaluate the level of knowledge on healthy breakfast habits among the 2025 batch Advanced Level students in the Nallur division.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 392 2025 Batch Advanced Level students from Nallur educational zone using proportionate stratified random sampling. Skipping breakfast was defined as not having breakfast on at least one day in a week. Data were collected via a self-administered questionnaire developed by the researchers and validated by the supervisors. Based on a scoring system developed by the researchers, knowledge level regarding healthy breakfast were categorized as very poor (0-3), poor (4-6), average (7-9), good (10-12) and excellent (13-15). Data analysis was performed with SPSS, and the chi-square test assessed associations between breakfast skipping and selected variables, with a significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Results: Among 389 participants, 62.2% skipped breakfast at least once per week, while 37.8% never skipped. Skipping was more common among tech, arts and commerce stream students. Reported reasons for skipping breakfast were: lack of appetite 39.3%, early extra classes 32.6%, over sleeping 22.1%, usual habit 20.1%, to avoid sleepiness during studying 15.7%, breakfast choices 15.1%, to reduce weight 10.2%, feeling discomfort 8.4%, economic crisis 7.1%, no one to prepare breakfast 6.1%, to reduce expenditure 5.9%, due to influence 3.3%. In the sample, 67.1% had good to excellent knowledge about healthy breakfast.

Conclusions: Although most students had adequate knowledge about the importance of breakfast, a majority still skipped it. Skipping was more frequent among certain academic and sociodemographic groups. Interventions promoting time management, family involvement and affordable breakfast options may help to improve regular breakfast consumption among students.

Keywords: skipping breakfast, associated factors, healthy breakfast, school students, dietary habits