

INFLUENCE OF LIFESTYLE AND EATING HABITS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

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Abstract:

The research on lifestyle and eating habits and their effects on the mental health of school-going children is becoming increasingly important. By understanding the links between lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health outcomes, interventions can be developed to promote healthy lifestyles and eating habits that may reduce the risk of developing mental health disorders. **Objective:** The objective of this research was to explore the relationships between lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health outcomes in school-going children. **Methods:** The study analyzed the data of 200 students (100 boys and 100 girls) of The Somaiya school aged between 13 to 15 years who responded to the lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health questionnaire used for data collection. The statistical procedure adopted by the researcher for the analysis and interpretation of data is "majors of central tendency mean". Bar graphs and column graphs are used to show the data's graphical representation. **Results:** The study shows that both boys and girls of The Somaiya School have good eating habits with mean scores of 102.11 and 102.09 respectively. Therefore, boys have better eating habits than girls, with a mean difference of 0.02. The mean scores of lifestyle of boys and girls are 6.06 and 6.62 respectively. Therefore, analysis & interpretation of data displays that boys have better lifestyles compared to girls with a mean difference of 0.56 as the lower the mean score better the lifestyle. The mean score of mental health of boys and girls are 16.27 and 14.72 respectively. Therefore, boys have a better quality of mental health as compared to girls with a mean difference of 1.55. The result of the study shows that both good lifestyles and good eating habits contribute to improving the mental health of school-going boys and girls. **Conclusion:** Both lifestyle and eating habits have a significant and positive effect on the mental health of boys and girls of The Somaiya School.

Keywords

Lifestyle, Mental health, Eating habits, School children, Mean, Questionnaire.

Introduction

The lifestyle and eating habits have been found to significantly impact mental health. Research has shown that a healthy lifestyle, which includes regular physical activity, healthy dietary habits, and adequate sleep, can promote positive mental health outcomes. In contrast, poor lifestyle habits, such as sedentary behavior, unhealthy dietary habits, and inadequate sleep, have been associated with an increased risk of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.

Physical activity is an essential component of a healthy lifestyle and has been found to be a protective factor for mental health. Studies have shown that regular physical activity is associated with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improved mood, self-esteem, and cognitive function. On the other hand, a sedentary lifestyle has been linked to poor mental health outcomes, including an increased risk of anxiety and depression.

Dietary habits also play a crucial role in mental health outcomes. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources has been associated with better mental health outcomes, while a diet high in processed foods and added sugars has been linked to poorer mental health outcomes. Additionally, inadequate sleep has been associated with an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

Overall, lifestyle and eating habits have a significant impact on mental health.

1.1 Historical Background

Concept of Lifestyle:

The term lifestyle refers to the collection of interests, opinions, and behaviors that make up a person's personality. The first use of the word lifestyle can be attributed to German psychologist Georg Simmel, although Max Weber used the term first. In a book written in 1929, Adler describes a lifestyle as a "basic character" cultivated from early childhood. In 1961, Adler redefined lifestyle to mean "a way of life". This concept involves a combination of both tangible and intangible factors that relate to a person's personal values and outlooks.

The concept of lifestyle has several facets. Among them, the nature of the environment a person lives in affects one's lifestyle. Rural environments, for instance, have a different type of lifestyle than metropolitan areas. Even within a city, location plays a role in the quality of life. The type of neighborhood, and proximity to natural environments such as the sea, can all influence one's lifestyle. Another important aspect of lifestyle is one's views on politics, religion, health, and intimacy.

A person's lifestyle is a reflection of the values and attitudes of a person. A typical lifestyle is reflected in behaviors, attitudes, interests, and other factors. A healthy lifestyle includes wise choices, balance, and a sense of purpose. For example, a healthy diet is essential for a happy life. And, a balanced lifestyle allows a person to be healthy and happy.

A lifestyle reflects an individual's interests, opinions, and behavioral orientation. It is the result of a person's personal beliefs, preferences, and lifestyle. It can be influenced by their age, income, and social status. The concept of lifestyle has also influenced the way we live and think.

Concept of Eating Habits:

(encyclopedia.com, n.d.)

The term eating habits (or food habits) refers to why and how people eat, which foods they eat, and with whom they eat, as well as the ways people obtain, store, use, and discard food. Individual, social, cultural, religious, economic, environmental, and political factors all influence people's eating habits.

All humans eat to survive. They also eat to express appreciation, for a sense of belonging, as part of family customs, and for self-realization. For example, someone who is not hungry may eat a piece of cake that has been baked in his or her honour.

People eat according to learned behaviours regarding etiquette, meal and snack patterns, acceptable foods, food combinations, and portion sizes. Etiquette refers to acceptable behaviours. For example, for some groups, it is acceptable to lick one's fingers while eating, while for other groups this is rude behaviour. Etiquette and eating rituals also vary depending on whether the meal is formal, informal, or special (such as a meal on a birthday or religious holiday).

Concept of Mental Health:

The concept of mental health is difficult to express in simple terms. When it comes to coining a singular definition of mental wellness, psychologists disagree. Good mental health is defined as the ability to face obstacles bravely without showing signs of stress, tension, or conflict while maintaining a positive attitude. As a result, mental health is defined as the ability to achieve a perfect equilibrium in one's thinking, feeling, and acting.

When we talk about health, we don't only mean bodily well-being; we also mean mental well-being. The ability to control emotions while maintaining a healthy mind is the epitome of good health. Human beings can also be deduced to be psychosomatic units having a well-balanced physical and mental essence. An individual's overall behaviour is influenced by both physical and mental health. An individual's personality is a result of both physical and mental health.

Mental health also refers to an individual's ability to cope with his or her surroundings, as well as his or her care for the needs and desires of others. It also denotes a friendly relationship between an individual and the rest of society. Thus, mental health refers to

an individual's ability to carry out any task with accurate and correct decisions, as well as to assume personal and social duties, and to live life with a pleasant and positive mental attitude.

(Centers for disease Control and Prevention, 2023)

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

Mental health has been defined in numerous ways by various intellectuals, psychologists, and philosophers. Some of them are listed below.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)- "Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."

The WHO states that mental health is "more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities." Peak mental health is not only about managing active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness.

"Mental health is the ability to cope with one's environment and gain some degree of happiness from working and living, coupled with the promise of hope for the future," according to the Oxford Dictionary.

"Mental health is a condition of total physical, mental, and social wellbeing, not only the absence of disease or infirmity," according to the World Health Organization.

"Mental health may be defined as the adjustment of individuals to themselves and the world at large with a maximum of effectiveness, satisfaction, cheerfulness, and socially considerate behaviour, as well as the ability to face and accept the realities of life," according to the White House Conference Preliminary Report (1930).

"Mental health is the adjustment of human beings to the world and to each other, with the greatest possible effectiveness and satisfaction," Meninger says. A mentally healthy person can build a balanced personality in which he can regulate his own emotions such as anger, jealousy, stress, and fear, and live a totally harmonious existence filled with happiness, contentment, and success, while also adjusting readily to his or her personal and social life.

Mental Health Components / Factors

A number of elements have an impact on mental health. Different people exhibit a wide range of mental health due to a variety of variables. Some people are normal, whereas others are aggressive, afraid, and so forth. To investigate a person's good mental health, we must look into some of the most essential aspects that influence mental health. The following are some of them:

Hereditary Elements: The foundation stones for personality development are hereditary factors. Hereditary features, such as intelligence, attractiveness, growth, and some physical and mental ailments, are extremely evident in each individual, and mental strength or illnesses can be traced back to hereditary roots. Though the environment has an important influence in an individual's development and shaping, heredity has a significant impact.

1.2 Significance of the Study:

The research can help establish a connection between lifestyle eating habits and mental health problems in children. It can help identify whether a healthy or unhealthy diet is linked to various mental health conditions. Understanding the impact of lifestyle eating habits on mental health can help prevent mental health problems in children. By promoting healthy eating habits in children, parents and caregivers can reduce the risk of developing mental health conditions. The research can also help in the treatment of mental health conditions in children. By identifying the role of diet in mental health, doctors and mental health professionals can incorporate dietary changes into the treatment plan. The research can inform public health policies that promote healthy eating habits in children. Schools, community centers, and other institutions can implement policies that encourage healthy eating habits among children to improve their mental health. The research can increase parental awareness about the impact of lifestyle eating habits on their children's mental health. Parents can be more mindful of what they feed their children and the long-term implications of their choices.

In conclusion, the research on the study of lifestyle eating habits and their effect on the mental health of school-going children is significant as it can help establish a connection, prevent, and treat mental health conditions, inform public health policies, and increase parental awareness. This research will help in promoting new innovative ideas to the community. Maybe a new theory can even be predicted through this research in the future. Ever new ideas with a concrete plane structure are worth investing time, energy, and cost. All the points are included in the research.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

a) Educate students about things that can affect their health andknowing about it can be important in providing them with the best medical care.

- b) Educate students to identify eating patterns, and health benefit scores and to provide a guide to start the conversation of eating healthy to prevent chronic diseases.
- c) Educate students about the state of mental health and mental health components/factors.
- d) Create awareness about healthy lifestyles and eating habits among school students.

1.4 Statement of Problem:

The purpose of the study is to find out the influence of lifestyle and eating on the mental health of school children.

1.5 Hypothesis:

- a) There will not be a significant difference between the mean scores of eating habits of school boys and girls.
- b) There will not be a significant difference between the mean scores of the lifestyle of school boys and girls.
- c) There will not be the effect of lifestyle and eating habits on mental health

1.6 Operational Terms:

A. Mental Health

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)-

"Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community."

The WHO states that mental health is "more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities." Peak mental health is not only about managing active conditions but also looking after ongoing wellness and happiness

B. Eating habits

The term eating habits (or food habits) refers to why and how people eat, which foods they eat, and with whom they eat, as well as the ways people obtain, store, use, and discard food. Individual, social, cultural, religious, economic, environmental, and political factors all influence people's eating habits

(your dictionary.com, n.d.)

A habit involving the regular consumption of certain types of food; the consistent choices one makes regarding eating, such as food choices, amount of food consumed, frequency of eating, etc.

C. Lifestyle

A lifestyle can be defined as a set of beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are fundamental to a person's character. A person's lifestyle is a reflection of the values and attitudes of a person. A lifestyle is an individual's preference for a certain style of living. These choices are influenced by a range of factors, such as a person's interests, beliefs, and behavior. The term lifestyle is also used to describe the way a person views themselves. For example, one person's lifestyle may be very different from another person's.

Critical Evaluation of the Literature:

After studying, analyzing, and evaluating the related literature, the researcher came to the conclusion that there are negligible studies conducted on the relationship between lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health. No research or study so far has been conducted on the "Influence of lifestyle and eating habits on the mental health of school children". However, the research scholar has cited various studies conducted by different researchers with reference to lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health. Hence, the researcher thought it appropriate to undertake the research study on the topic "Influence of lifestyle and eating habits on the mental health of school children".

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

3.1 Design of the study:

This study, therefore, used the survey method since it places emphasis on drawing meaningful research conclusions from data collected and conducting more rigorous and detailed quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study used questionnaires on eating habits, lifestyle, and mental health to collect data from the target audience, interpret data and draw meaningful and resourceful research conclusions.

3.2 Selection of sample:

The study used a purposive sampling method as it focuses in depth on relatively small samples and places emphasis on a particular subset of the population that shares certain characteristics.

The research is done on school children 100 boys and 100 girls of 13 to 15 years of age at The Somaiya School.

3.3 Selection of Variables:

According to Cicciarella (1997), a variable is "anything that is free to vary among subjects or classes in a study..." To put it in simple words, a variable is a dimension along which individual attributes (e.g., of people, events, or objects) can differ. Variables are the characteristics of the subject of a study.

The study focuses on three important characteristics of school students. The variable used in the study is a lifestyle, eating habits, and mental health which differ among different individuals and can be measured.

3.3.1 Table of Variables:

Variable	Tool	Author
Lifestyle	Appendix Y- Healthy Lifestyle Questionnaire	New Mexico Human Services Department
Eatinghabits	Healthy Eating Assessment	Paxton, Et al. American Journal of Preventive Medicine
MentalHealth	Mental Health Quality of Life Questionnaire (MHQoL)	Institute for Medical Technology Assessment

3.4 Procedure of the study:

The main purpose of the study is to draw the effects of lifestyle and eating habits on the mental health of school boys and girls by studying the mean score of the respective variables to trace if there's any significant change or difference.

The target population used by the researcher to collect data in this study are school students 100 boys and 100 girls of The Somaiya School. The research methodology applied by the researchers for the study is a survey method using a questionnaire as a testing tool.

The sampling frame used in the study is the admission register maintained in the school providing much more authentic and accurate details leaving little chance for sampling frame error. The researcher got a permission letter signed by the school principal to conduct a data collection drive in the school. The researcher briefed students about the study and questionnaire and urged them to fill out the questionnaires related to three different variables in the given time period. The researchers also educated the students the on importance of healthy lifestyle practices and eating habits and their effects on their mental health.

3.5 Statistical Procedure used:

The statistical procedure adopted by the researchers for the analysis and interpretation of data is the "Measures of Central Tendency Mean."

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The analysis and interpretation of data chapter displays an analysis of data, collection of data, findings, and discussion of findings. The survey method considered two groups viz. Boys and Girls School Students wherein the researcher studied the effect of lifestyle and eating habits and their effect on mental health. The analysis and interpretation of data are done through Statistical Analysis using Mean Scores.

The researcher presented the data analysis collected from Boys and Girls from The Somaiya School in this chapter. The researcher used the Healthy Lifestyle Questionnaire, Mental Health Quality of Life Questionnaire, and Healthy Eating Assessment Questionnaire for data collection. The survey method provided the quantitative data to perform statistical analysis using the majors of central tendency mean. Bar graphs and column graphs are used to show the data's graphical representation.

4.1 Comparison of mean scores of eating habits of boys and girls of The Somaiya School.

Mean scores	Boys	Girls
Eating habits	102.11	102.09

Table 4.1 Comparison of mean scores of eating habits of boys and girls.

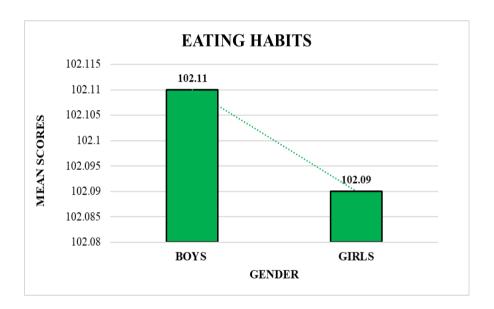


Figure 4.1 Graphical Representation of mean scores of eating habits of boys and girls.

From Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1, it can be seen that both boys and girls of The Somaiya School have good eating habits with mean scores of 102.11 and 102.09 respectively. the analysis & interpretation of the data shows that boys have better eating habits compared to girls with a mean difference of 0.02.

4.2 Comparison of mean scores of Lifestyle of boys and girls of The Somaiya School.

Mean scores	Boys	Girls
Lifestyle	6.06	6.62

Table 4.2 Comparison of mean scores of lifestyle of boys and girls.

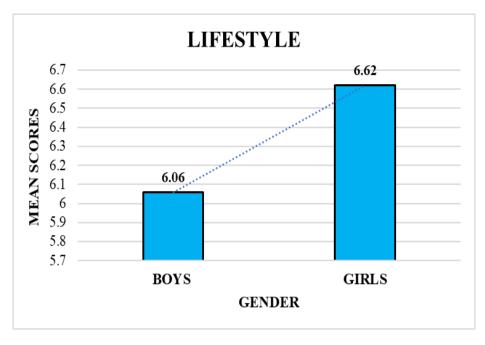


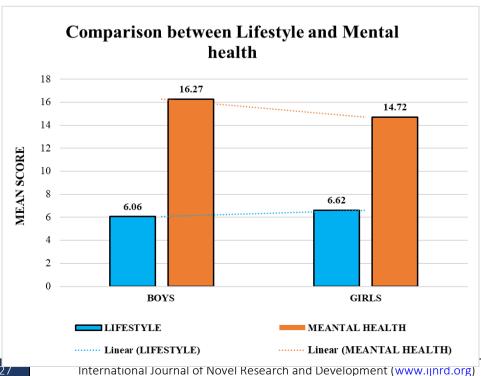
Figure 4.2 Graphical representation of mean scores of lifestyle of boys and girls

From Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2, it is seen that the mean scores of lifestyles of boys and girls are at 6.06 and 6.62 respectively. Analysis & interpretation of data also displays that boys have better lifestyles compared to girls with a mean difference of 0.56 as the lower the mean score better the lifestyle.

4.3 Comparison of mean scores between lifestyleand mental health of boys and girls of The Somaiya School

Mean score	Boys	Girls
Lifestyle	6.06	6.62
Mental health	16.27	14.72

Table 4.3 Comparison of mean scores between lifestyle and mentalhealth of boys & girls.



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Figure 4.3 Graphical representation of a comparison of mean scores between lifestyle and mental health of boys & girls.

From Table 4.3 and Figure 4.3, it can be seen that the mean scores of boys of lifestyle and mental health are at 6.06 and 16.27 respectively. The mean scores of lifestyle and mental health of girls are 6.62 and 14.72 respectively. It can also be seen that boys have a better quality of mental health and lifestyle compared to girls with a mean difference of 1.55 and 0.56 respectively.

The study displays that the lower the mean score of lifestyle better the lifestyle and the higher the mean score of mental health better the mental health. The analysis & interpretation of data shows that as the lifestyle mean score decreases the mean score of mental health increases. This clearly means that a better lifestyle leads to better mental health quality of life. Therefore, it can be said that a good lifestyle contributes to improving the mental health of school-going boys and girls.

4.4 Comparison of mean scores between eating habits and mental health of boys and girls of The Somaiya school.

Mean score	Boys	Girls
Eating habits	102.11	102.09
Mental health	16.27	14.72

Table 4.4 Comparison of mean scores between eating habits and mentalhealth of boys and girls.

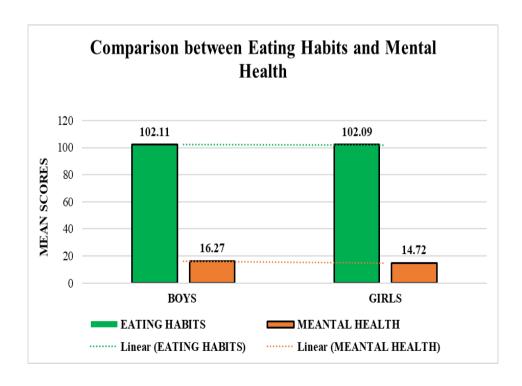


Figure 4.4 Graphical representation of a comparison of mean scores between

eating habitsand mental health of boys and girls.

From Table 4.4 and Figure 4.4, it can be seen that the mean scores of boys for eating habits and mental health are at 102.11 and 16.27 respectively. The mean scores of eating habits and mental health of girls are 102.09 and 14.72 respectively. It can also be seen that boys have a better quality of mental health and eating habits compared to girls with a mean difference of 1.55 and 0.02 respectively.

The study displays that the higher the mean score of eating habits better the eating habits and the higher the mean score of mental health better mental health. The analysis & interpretation of data shows that as the eating habits mean score increases the mean score of the mental health increases as well. This clearly means that better eating habits lead to better mental health quality of life. Therefore, it can be said that making healthy eating choices contributes to improving the mental health of school-going boys and girls.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary:

The study was taken under the following objectives:

- To study the relationship between the eating habits of boys and girls.
- To study the relationship between the lifestyle of boys and girls.
- To study the relationship between of mental health of boys and girls.
- To study the relationship between lifestyle and mental health of boys and girls.
- To study the relationship between eating habits and the mental health of boys and girls.

On the basis of the above-stated objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H01: There will not be a significant difference between the mean scores of eating habits of school boys and girls.

H02: There will not be a significant difference between the mean scores of the lifestyle of school boys and girls.

H03: There will not be an effect of lifestyle and eating habits on mental health.

This study used a survey method under the head of Descriptive Research. The study selected a purposive sampling method it focuses in depth on the relatively small samples and places emphasis on a particular subset of the population that shares certain characteristics. The researcher collected data from 100 boys and 100 girls at The Somaiya School. The researcher went to The Somaiya School and collect data on Lifestyle, Eating Habits, and Mental Health using the help of a questionnaire as a testing tool. The data of all the variables were primarily processed for descriptive statistics. Further, by using spreadsheets and majors of Central Tendency Mean the data were analyzed by employing statistical Analysis.

Findings:

With the above analysis and interpretation of data, the following findings and discussion can be drawn-

- Boys and girls of The Somaiya School have good eating habits with mean scores of 102.11 and 102.09 respectively. The boys have better eating habits compared to girls with a mean difference of 0.02. This finding exhibit that boys make healthier eating choices than girls.
- The mean scores of lifestyles of boys and girls are at 6.06 and 6.62 respectively. The boys have a better lifestyle compared to the girls of The Somaiya School with a mean difference of 0.56. This finding displays that boys make better lifestyle practices than girls.
- The mean scores of boys in lifestyle and mental health are at 6.06 and 16.27 respectively. The boys have better mental health compared to girls of The Somaiya School with a mean difference of 1.55. This finding exhibit that boys live better mental health quality of life than girls.
- Mean scores of lifestyle are inversely proportional to mean score of mental health. This means that a decrease in the mean score of lifestyle which indicates a better lifestyle lead to an increase in the mean score of mental health indicating better mental health quality of life.
- Mean scores of eating habits are directly proportional to the mean scores of mental health. This means that an increase in the mean score of eating habits which indicates good eating habits lead to an increase in the mean score of mental health indicating better mental health quality of life.
- Both lifestyle and eating habits positively affect the mental health of boys and girls of The Somaiya School.

Conclusion:

This study, within limitations, helped to draw the following conclusions:

- 1. There is a marginal difference between the mean scores of eating habits of school boys and girls wherein boys have better eating habits with a mean difference of 0.02.
- 2. There is a marginal difference between the mean scores of lifestyle of school boys and girls wherein boys have a better lifestyle with a mean difference of 0.56.
- 3. There is a significant difference between mean scores of mental of school boys and girls wherein boys have better mental health quality of life with a mean difference of 1.55 because boys have better eating habits and lifestyle which contributes in improvement of mental health\
- 4. There is a significant effect of lifestyle and eating habits on mental health. The study shows that a decrease in the mean score of lifestyle indicating a better lifestyle lead to an increase in the mean score of mental health indicating better mental health quality of life. And an increase in the mean score of eating habits indicating better eating habits leads to an increase in the mean score of mental health indicating better mental health quality of life. Therefore, the study presents that both lifestyle and eating habits have positive effects on eating habits. Better lifestyle and eating habits contribute to better mental health quality of life.

Recommendations:

After considering all findings of the present study following recommendations and suggestions for further studies are made:

- 1. Encourage physical activity: Regular physical activity has numerous benefits for children, including improved cardiovascular health, better mood, and reduced stress. Encourage children to engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day.
- 2. Promote healthy eating habits: A balanced and nutritious diet is important for children's health and well-being. Encourage children to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Limit processed foods, sugary snacks, and sugary drinks.
- 3. Ensure adequate sleep: Adequate sleep is essential for children's physical and mental health. Encourage children to establish a consistent sleep routine and aim for 9-11 hours of sleep per night.
- 4. Limit screen time: Excessive screen time has been linked to a variety of health problems in children, including poor sleep and an increased risk of obesity. Encourage children to limit screen time to no more than 2 hours per day.
- 5. Provide opportunities for creative expression: Engaging in creative activities such as art, music, and dance can have numerous benefits for children's mental health and well-being.
- 6. Stay socially connected: Social connections are important for mental health and well-being. Make time for social activities with family and friends.
- 7. Maintain a healthy weight: Maintaining a healthy weight can reduce the risk of chronic diseases.
- 8. Teach coping skills: Teaching children healthy coping mechanisms, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, and positive self-talk, can help them manage stress and anxiety.
- 9. Teach emotion regulation: Teaching children how to identify and regulate their emotions can help them cope with stress and anxiety.
- 10. Create a positive home environment: A supportive and positive home environment can have a significant impact on a child's mental health. Encourage positive communication, set clear expectations, and praise children for their achievements.
- 11. Sample size can be increased to get more precise output.
- 12. The study findings may inspire education policymakers, curriculum designers, and education researchers for future studies.

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