EATING SELF EFFICACY AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to identify the levels of Eating Self-Efficacy among the adolescent girls at different developmental stages, such as pre-teens, early adolescents and late adolescents. A sample of 120 adolescent girls belonging to the three adolescent stages was selected from different schools and colleges in Tirupati. Eating self efficacy (1986) scale developed by Glynn, S.M and Ruderman, A.J was used to assess their levels of eating self efficacy. The data was subjected to statistical analysis such as Mean, S.D and ANOVA. The results revealed that there is significant difference between the three age groups of adolescent girls – pre-teens, early adolescents and late adolescents with regard to their eating self efficacy. Pre-teens and late adolescent girls have a higher eating self efficacy than the early adolescent girls.

INTRODUCTION

Nutritional needs during adolescence are increased by the increased growth rate and changes in body composition associated with puberty. The dramatic increase in energy and nutrient requirements coincide with other factors that may affect adolescents’ food choices and nutrient intake, and thus nutritional status. These factors, including the quest for independence and acceptance by peers, increased mobility, and greater time spent at school and/or work activities, and preoccupation with self image, contribute to the erratic and unhealthy eating behaviors that are common during adolescence.

It is common for adolescents to be unhappy with and self-conscious about their changing bodies. Thus, eating self efficacy plays an important role in deciding their eating habits, dietary intake and corresponding growth and development. Self –efficacy (Bandura, 1977) conceptualizes a person’s perceived ability to perform on task as a mediator of performance on future tasks. A change in the level of self efficacy can predict a lasting change in behavior if there are adequate incentives and skills. The adolescents, especially girls, become more conscious of their looks, as a result to avoid becoming overweight and to fit in, many adolescents attempt to lose weight by regulating their food intake.
The growth and reduction of Self-Efficacy is influenced over time by social comparison with peer and is therefore more pronounced as one grows older. Knowledge about self efficacy can be applied in important ways to enhance healthy eating habits. Self efficacy is definitely not an unchangeable characteristic; rather, it can be significantly raised even by short term interventions. Self efficacy factors are significantly associated with reported diet and exercise behavior (James et.al., 1988).

Researchers investigated correlates of self-efficacy have consistently found a relationship with several variables. A positive association has been found between self-efficacy and self-esteem (Bacchini & Magliulo, 2003), internal locus of control (Leganger et al., 2000) and adoption of healthy behaviors (Leganger et al., 2000). Self-efficacy is a key factor and acts as mediator between environmental social factors (family and friend support) and eating behavior. Barbara et.al., (1990) proposed that the environmental factors could directly influence eating behavior or indirectly influence it through self-efficacy which could, in turn, directly influence eating behavior or indirectly influence it through outcome expectancy. Self efficacy contributed significantly to explanation of eating behavior prior to course and to eating behavior change two months later. Family and friend support influenced eating behavior both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy.

Shaelyn and Lawrence (2009) used Identity and self-efficacy theories to examine the relationship between healthy-eater identity, self-efficacy for healthy eating and healthy eating. Measures of healthy-eater identity, perception of healthy eating, nutrition knowledge, self efficacy for both intake of fruits and vegetables and foods of low nutritional value were completed by 101 university students and staff. For both eating outcomes, healthy-eater identity was a significant predictor after controlling for nutritional knowledge. The addition of self-efficacy improved prediction in the case of both eating outcomes. Richman et.al., (2001) assessed the effect of a three month behavior modification weight management program on self efficacy and anthropometric variables among obese women seeking treatment at an obesity management clinic and to compare self-efficacy among these obese women to non-obese women. Self-efficacy among obese women was of sufficient magnitude to attain scores similar to women of a normal weight.

In the light of the above review, it is revealed that studies related to Eating Self-efficacy among adolescents are limited. Furthermore, there is a dearth of studies related to Eating Self-efficacy and healthy eating habits especially among adolescent girls. The present is aimed in the direction with the following objective,
1. To assess Eating self efficacy levels of the three adolescent age groups – pre-teens, early adolescents and late adolescent girls.

SAMPLE

The sample of the present study consists of 120 adolescent girls randomly selected from various schools and colleges in and around Tirupati Mandal of Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh State. The subjects belonged to three age groups - pre-teens (11-13 years), early adolescents (14-16 years) and late adolescents (17-19 years).

ASSESSMENT OF EATING SELF EFFICACY: The Eating Self-Efficacy of the adolescent girls was measured using the Eating Self-Efficacy Scale (1986) developed by Glynn, S.M and Ruderman, A.J. The Eating Self-Efficacy Scale (ESES) is a seven point 25-item self-report measure that assesses an individual’s confidence to abstain from overeating in a variety of situations. The ESES coefficient alphas were 0.92 for the whole scale. The test-retest reliability is 0.70. High scores on ESES indicate less eating self-efficacy.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Means, S.D and ‘F’ values of scores on Eating Self efficacy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADOLESCENT GIRLS</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEANS</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>‘F’ VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE-TEENS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARLY ADOLESCENTS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>3.73 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LATE ADOLESCENTS</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*-significant at 0.05 level

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and ‘F’ values of the three age groups with regard to their eating self efficacy. Higher the mean value, lower is the self efficacy. The early adolescent girls have obtained the highest mean value of 3.02, which indicates that they have low eating self efficacy than compared to the other two groups pre-teens and late adolescents. This indicates that the early adolescent girls have a lower confidence to abstain from overeating in a variety of situations. However, during late adolescent, the girls are more conscious about fitness and in order to avoid overweight tend to refrain from overeating, thus show a higher eating self efficacy.
The ‘F’ value of 3.73 is significant, indicating that there is significant difference between the three adolescent age groups in the study with regard to their eating self efficacy. The findings of the present study are in tune with early studies by James et.al. (1988) and Barbara et.al. (1990). Leganger et al., (2000) also proposed that self efficacy prominently affects the healthy eating and adoption of healthy eating behaviors.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. Pre-teens and late adolescent girls have a higher eating self efficacy than the early adolescent girls.
2. There is significant difference between the three age groups of adolescent girls – pre-teens, early adolescents and late adolescents with regard to their eating self efficacy.

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE EATING SELF EFFICACY AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS:

- Developing healthy eating habits
- Preference to regular family dinners
- Avoid eating when not hungry
- Check on skip-meals
- Avoiding snacking when with friends
- Exercises – as means of weight loss
- Role of mass media
- A well balanced diet
- Regular work schedules including proper provision for time for meals.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY:

It can be concluded that eating self efficacy changes, with the developmental changes in the adolescent girls. Developing a higher eating self efficacy can thus lead to healthy eating habits, reduces overeating problems, removing obesity phobias, selection of proper diet and thus enhancing their health and physical fitness.
Figure 1: Mean values of Eating Self-efficacy among the three Adolescent Age Groups:

![Bar Chart]

REFERENCES