

ABSTRACT

As effects of development and globalisation grasps Sri Lanka, changes seen in terms of behaviour and attitudes among adolescents have become a major concern, especially in the food consumption pattern. Closeness of adolescence to adulthood may provide the final opportunity to implement activities to prevent adulthood health problems. So, empowering adolescents and their parents with knowledge and skills essential to make responsible nutrition during their adolescents is very important.

A cross sectional descriptive study was carried out to assess the association between television advertisements with the nutritional status and food consumption pattern in school children in Grade 6 in Ambalangoda Urban Council area. The study was conducted in three sections which included videotaping prime time hours of children in mostly visible four channels, Self administered questionnaire for children and self administered questionnaire for parents.

When describing the food advertisements which were videotaped during 40 hours and 15 minutes of prime time hours for children. It showed that 15.7% of the prime time was allocated for advertisements and from the total advertisements nearly 41.3 % allocated to show food advertisements. When consider the advertising time per hour nine minutes were allocated for advertisements during a hour.

Advertisements were further analyzed and found that processed food such as instant noodles, biscuits, cakes, flavoured milk, soft and carbonated drinks, milk and milk products were advertised mostly. Advertisements on natural foods like fruits and vegetables were not advertised at all.

Questionnaires were administered to 420 children of Grade 6 and their parents. Out of the total study sample 88.8% were having television at home while 52.6% of them watched the television as their daily routine. Out of the total study sample 82.1% watched only children's' programs. The children watched average of 18 hours of television per each week which means more than two hours per day.



Prevalence of obesity among study subjects was 4.8% and at risk for obesity was 10.2%. There was significant association between Televisions watching time of children and nutritional status which means a positive trend of obesity among the children with the increasing of hours of TV watching there was a significant association between who did not participated with physical activities with over weight.

When the level of basic knowledge on nutrition was assessed, only 19% of the children having good basic knowledge but when consider the factors associated with food preferences and food choices among the study subjects 52.3% used their knowledge when consuming food .Only 5.1% were influenced by TV advertisements.

Majority of the subjects in the study sample belong to families with a monthly income of over 10,000 rupees while 15% of the subjects belonged to families with less than 2500 rupees.

Majority of the parents (57.9%) disagree about the fact that advertising was good, but 64.5% said that they were encouraged to buy advertised food by their children. 85.2% of parents would purchased the advertised foods in the television when they were forced by the children. Food consumption pattern was assessed using 24 hour food frequency questionnaire High consumption of cereals, vegetables, fruits and foods of animal origin could be seen within the study population., but most of the children in the study population consumed readily available foods which were advertised on TV.

The study indicates the television advertisements influence the behaviour of children and it has adverse effects on nutritional status. It is recommended to raise awareness among parents, teachers and adolescents themselves on watching TV for long hours and adverse outcomes. The relevant authorities should consider advertising natural foods and good habits through the television to promote healthy diets and life styles.