

TEEN CULTURE AND ITS REFLECTION ON HEALTH



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Abstract:-The progress of any country rests on the health of its population, the population of India consists teenagers as a major part of it. The future progress reflects on adolescent population. In this new era of modernization and Globalization teenagers lifestyle is changing at every level and it is influenced by their family structure, peer-pressure, media and socio-economic background. New teen-culture in Indian Society has certain mode of living, lifestyle, habits, fashion, attitudes, values and practices. Today due to the new trends in the 'teen-culture' negative effects have been observed on the health of teenage group. According to the National Centre for Health statistics it has been indicated that the physical and mental health is mediated by social and cultural aspects. This article is mainly focused on the health aspects of adolescent generation of our society especially of the teenage female population in urban setup. The effects of new emerging cultural traits and technology on the health of teenagers have been analyzed in this article.

Keywords:teen-culture, dieting, obesity, health, technology.

INTRODUCTION

As we all know culture is a unique possession of man and is one of the distinguishing features of our society. Each society has its own culture which is common to all its members. But in a single society we come across different groups, each such group has its own culture, which is known as 'sub-culture'. One among them is 'teen-Culture'.

The term 'teenager' is used to describe an age group between childhood and adulthood. Generally the accepted ages of terms 'teen' or 'teenager' are 13 to 19 years of age. The teen years are a time of transition from becoming child to a young adult who is capable of taking care of them. During transition stage of physical and mental development, teens tend to seek independence and experiment with youth risk behaviours. They have their own modes of behavior, philosophies, ethics, morals, manners, food habits, dressing styles etc. All these are the main aspects of teen-culture. Teenage group is considered as an important in any culture. Society looks at youngsters, teenagers as the future of society. India is called 'Young India' as it contains more number of young people in its population. As per the Census of 2011 – Total population of India is 1,210,193,422.

Table –I
Age structure of Indian population (As per 2011 census)

Age groups	Population on %	Males	Females
0-14	29.7%	1,87,450,635	1,65,415,758
15-64	64.9%	3,98,757,331	3,72,719,379
65 +	5.5%	30,831,190	33,998,613

India has the largest population of adolescents in the world. (i.e. 243 million people of India belong to the age group of 10-19 years), it is 20% of the world's 1.2 billion adolescents. These youngsters have developed their own culture. Some of the habits, practices developed by these teenagers have become dangerous for their health. Like due to wrong food-habits they are suffering from the problem of obesity. On the other hand due to the craze of becoming fit and slim, young girls are doing dieting and suffering from the problems like Bulimia, Anorexia Nervosa etc. As they are spending more time in front of T.V. and computers they are getting other health related problems which have been analyzed further.

OBESITY

Obesity is the most present nutritional disorder among children and teenagers. The high prevalence of obesity during adolescence is a serious public health concern. According to WHO definition, overweight or obesity is the condition, where abnormal / excessive fat accumulation takes place within the body. Obesity is thus the result of an imbalance between food intake and energy expenditure which ultimately leads to excessive accumulation of fat in adipose tissue, liver, muscle and other organs involved in metabolism.

A number of tools are available to measure obesity. Most are based on height and weight ratios, body size and shape, body mass index etc. Obesity is when a person's BMI is 30 or more. BMI or Body Mass Index is a statistical measurement to understand whether the body weight is within a healthy range or not. It can be calculated as

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Person's weight (Kgs)}}{\text{Height (in meters)}^2}$$

The problem of obesity has become a global problem. And emerging as an epidemic, day by day there is an increase in the number of obese people which can be followed through the table given below by Nutritional Diabetes. Obesity and cholesterol foundation (N-DOC) and Centre for Nutrition and Metabolic Research (C-NET)

Table – II
Childhood overweight / obesity

Country/City	Year	Prevalence
Global	2004	10
USA/UK	2000	20
Australia	1995	20
India/Chennai	2002	22
India/Delhi	2004	16
India/Delhi	2006	29

(Source – Misra et.al. 2006)

CAUSES OF OBESITY:

There are several causes of obesity but environmental factors strongly influence obesity. This includes lifestyle behaviors such as what you eat and your level of physical activity. Poor food choices are often to blame for obesity. Today we see that teenagers are more found of fast-food. Due to the liking of teenagers numbers of fast food restaurants are increasing day by day in all the cities near to school and colleges. Quick - grab snacks among teenagers includes pizza, chips, Burgers, Cookies, Soda, Candy, Ice – cream French fries etc.

Table – III
Consumption of lifestyle foods among children and teenagers

Item	Young children	Older children
	>2-3 times a week	
Chips/Pringles	67.5	66.3
Corn puffs etc.	58.6	52.4
Popcorns	32.8	28.2
Soft drinks	30.0	41.0
Ice-creams	43.7	57.9
Cakes/muffins	34.7	31.7
Chocolates	71.3	74.7
Fried food	39.7	56.7
Fast food (Pizza/burger)	22.0	30.93

(Source-Misra et. el. unpublished data-2011)

Fast food generally has a higher fat content than home – cooked food. The high fat content makes this food more tasty, but it's also much more fattening. Fast food tends to have a higher proportion of saturated fats. Saturated fats serve as an energy reserve in the body for the time of hunger and security of food, but if those times never come the reserve of saturated fats grows, causing obesity. Stress is another cause responsible for obesity. Teenagers are under tremendous peer pressure at School College and their every day lives. There may be stressful events in the teenagers life such as exam pressure, parents expectations etc. Many teen-angers react to stress by overeating. On top of that, it may also result in not only other peoples putting them down, but also his / her own self – esteem taking hit. It has been found that a large percentage of overweight teenagers are thought to be clinically depressed. While depression can often cause overeating usually, being lead to low self – esteem and if the problem left untreated, it can lead to teenager suicide, so from this we can understand the seriousness of this problem.

Problem of Weight loss and Crash dieting

Being overweight is not the only way eating can harm our health. 'An eating disorder is an intense

form of dieting or other unhealthy method of weight control driven by the desire to be very thin.'

Research shows that most college-age girls believe that 1) "Guys like thin girls" 2) being thin is critical to physical attractiveness, and 3) They are not as thin as men would like. In fact most college going girls want to be even thinner than most college men say women/girls should be.

This fad of thinness among teen-age girls is popularized by television and Movies. Traditionally, Fijian culture emphasizes good nutrition and looking strong and healthy. The idea of dieting was almost unknown to Fiji women. A research was conducted by Anne Becker in 1995 on gender and eating disorder according to this research just 3% of teenage girls reported ever vomiting to control their weight. By 1998, however, a striking change was evident in that 15% of teenage girls reported this practice. more over Becker found that 62% of girls claimed they has dieted during the previous month, and 74% reported feeling 'too big' or 'fat'.

Models Film – actresses are the ideals for teenagers (girls). They always wants to look like them so they imitate actresses and Models some of the film actresses like Kareena Kapoor and Shilpa Shetty who have popularized the concept of Zero Size Teenage girls also wants to make their body size zero and for this they are ready to do anything. The number of health centers are growing in every city as the fad of thinness is growing among youngsters. Among the member of health centre maximum members are teenagers. Now a days there is a dietician in the health centers. Who recommends diet plan to members but to become thin as early as possible these girls eat less food than the recommendation of the dietician.

Another consequence of this cultural obsession with weight and thinness is the high rate of Anorexia nervosa, Bulimia etc. Women's concern with weight and body image can affect self – esteem and academic performance. Researches finds that the less attractive a woman perceives herself to be and the more weight she wants to lose, the greater is her sense of academic social and psychological impairment. Eating disorders although contributing to poor academic performance and lowered self – esteem, are most common among women and girls who value physical appearance.

Young college going girls wants to become thin as early as possible. So they prefer crash dieting as a solution to this problem. But dieting can cause following health problems among girls.

First of all it is not a permanent solution to the long – term problem of losing weight.

Once they stop the diet, they gain the weight back.

Crash dieting cause to the deficiency of proteins, vitamins, and nutrients.

As soon as dieting is stopped, the weight creeps back on them and this continues and finally causes depression.

Losing weight quickly by dieting is not a good idea. Most of the teenage girls end up losing too much weight in a short period of time. When they do eat regular again, some of what them have consumed turns in to fat, Their storage of fat is depleted when they were dieting and their body will start now working to create additional storage. They also mess up their metabolism this way.

EXCESS USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ITS EFFECT ON HEALTH

Communication technology has brought a revolution in society. It has enhanced our lifestyle but its adverse effects can also be observed on health. Fast anytime, anywhere connectivity and loaded with a host of fancy features the mobile phone is today much more popular among youngsters. Mobile phone has become a fashion statement for teenagers. They spend maximum time on cell phones. But widespread use of cell phones has led to increased concerns about possible health hazards, particularly concerns about brain cancer. Researchers have shown that the younger the child the more radiation is absorbed by the brain. It also causes irritation, mood swings, sleeplessness, low sperm count and cancer. A study in to men with fertility problems showed that those who used the mobile phone for more than four hours a day had a lower sperm count.

A preliminary study conducted by Indian council of Medical Research (ICMR) has confirmed that cell phones can pose a serious threat to male reproductive health due to Radiofrequency Radiation emitted from cell phones.

Recent studies confirm that cell and cordless phone can -

Damage nerves in the scalp.

Cause blood cells to leak hemoglobin.

Cause memory loss and mental confusion.

Cause headache and induce extreme fatigue.

Create burning sensation and rash on the skin.

Cause eye cancer.
 Reduces the no efficiency of white blood cells.
 Causes digestive problem.

So we can imagine to what extent our teen-agers are going face problem due to the excess use of cell phones. It is not only cell phones but our youngsters also spend several hours in front of computer. Playing computers games, chatting with friends and staring at computer screen for as 20 minutes causes the visual system to become locked in to focus to refocus at the screen's distance when an Individual tries to refocus in the distance it is blurry. Blinking is also reducing when an individual stares at a computer screen while using it normally blinking occurs 15 times per minute is a natural way lubricating our eyes. Reduced blinking causes many problems.

Even due to the excess use of computers causes problem like neck and back pain among youngsters due to awkward postures. The teenagers who regularly goes to internet cafe are also habituated to fast food and cold drinks while using computers and this causes obesity which further adds to the problem like high sugar level i.e. diabetes, heart problems and many more.

CONCLUSION

The problems which have mentioned above are needed to be tackled carefully. As we know most of the teenagers are obese, so parents are needed to develop good eating habits among them. They must make their children to eat home – made food than fast – food, children must be encouraged to develop regular exercise during early childhood they have a much better chance of taking it with them in to adulthood. They must be involved in activities like gardening, cleaning house and encouraged to take part in outdoor game like swimming, Badminton, Tennis, football etc.

The teen age girls who are over conscious about weight management must be made aware of risk factors involved in dieting. There is also need of creating awareness among teenagers regarding excess use of technology and its side effects on health. It is important to remember to support in proper manner. Support of parents, family members, friends etc. is needed to tackle these problems with consistent love and support. We must reinforce the need for a healthy lifestyle among youngster. There is a need for the inculcation of good ideas, values, practices which gives our teenagers a chance to lead healthy life.

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