



A Study on Nutritional Messaging for Adolescents in Adilabad, Telangana, India

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INTRODUCTION

As of 2017, 14.5% of India's population is malnourished. Undernutrition is substantially higher in tribal areas, especially amongst children and adolescents. This project explores the linkage between the nutritional status of adolescents in the tribal villages and their knowledge and understanding of nutrition. This study is based on previous data provided by ICRISAT's Nutri-Food Basket baseline survey which revealed low dietary diversity scores, low hemoglobin levels and low BMI amongst adolescent girls in the villages of Utnoor Mandal in Adilabad District.

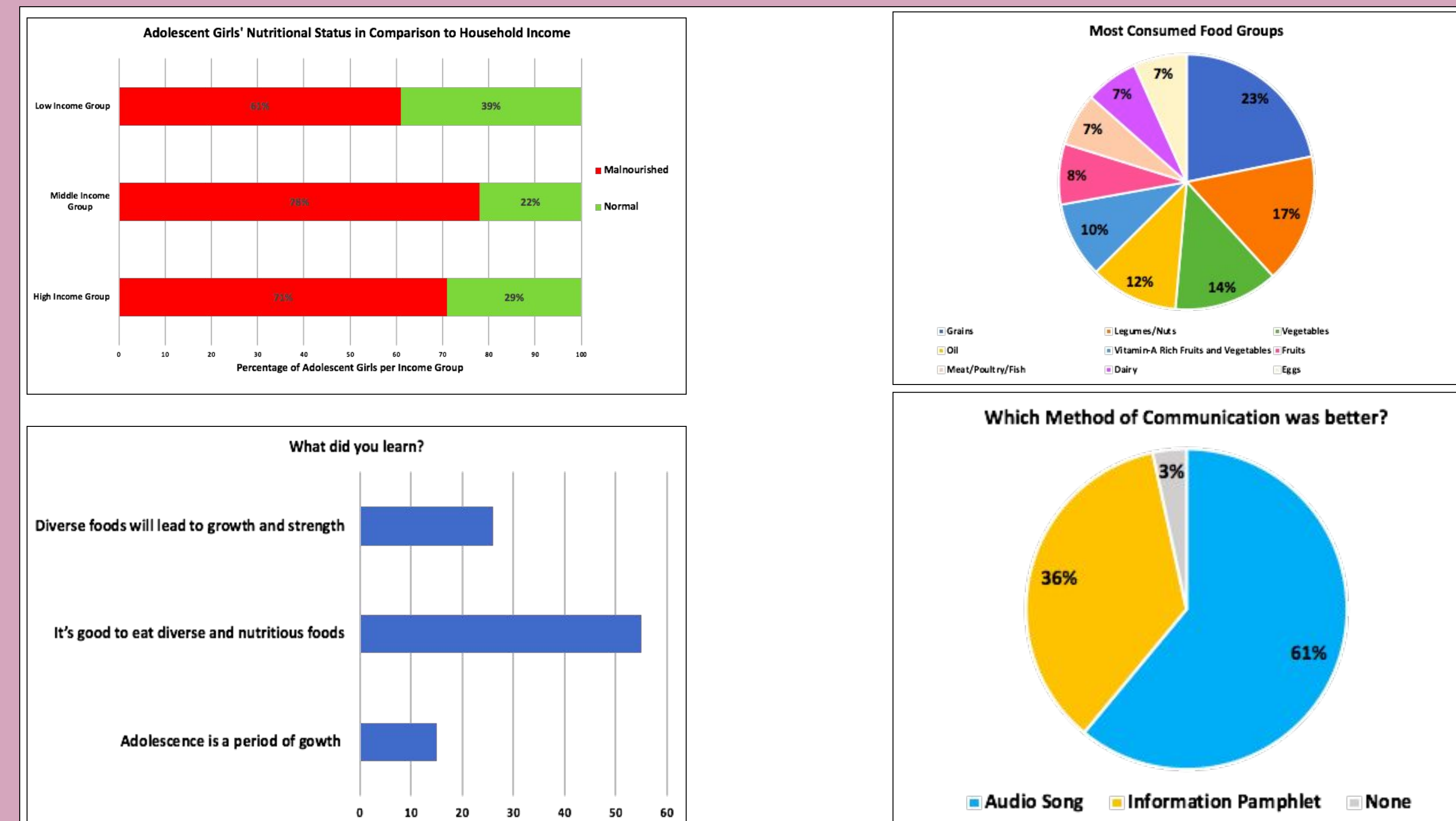
METHOD

The ongoing "Nutri-Food Basket" project baseline survey studied the food security, food consumption, nutrition and wellbeing of tribal villages of Utnoor mandal. This survey revealed through BMI, hemoglobin levels and dietary diversity scores that there was a prevalence of malnutrition amongst adolescent girls. However, food resources are readily available in this area, which indicates that there is a greater factor contributing to malnutrition. The data collected as a part of the "Nutri-Food Basket" project was analyzed and used as a basis for this project.

The first portion of this study aims to assess the knowledge of adolescent nutrition in the tribal villages. The second portion explores how nutritional messages can be conveyed to increase the understanding of nutrition especially amongst adolescents. Focus group discussions were conducted with the adolescents to collect qualitative and quantitative data that would assess the participants' current understanding of nutrition. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for these discussions. Along with the focus group discussions, a total of eight individual interviews were conducted with teachers and parents of adolescents in Lakkaram and Shyampur villages.

A nutritional message was given to a sample of sixty adolescents.. Purposive sampling was used to pick adolescents between the ages of 11-18. The topic of dietary diversity was chosen for the nutritional messages which was given in the format of an information pamphlet and a traditional folklore song. A feedback form was then given to the adolescents to assess their understanding of the message and their preferences for future messages.

GRAPHS



RESULTS

- The "Nutri-Food Basket" survey in Utnoor Mandal revealed that around 70% of the surveyed adolescent girls were underweight and around 33% were mildly anaemic. Additionally, the survey showed that the majority of adolescent girls had medium dietary diversity scores and very few adolescent girls had high dietary diversity scores.
- An analysis of the socioeconomic statuses of households in Utnoor showed that malnutrition is prevalent even amongst those who are financially stable enough to make nutrition a priority, further emphasizing the need for nutritional messaging.
- The focus group discussions and interviews revealed that there was a lack of nutrition awareness amongst adolescents, parents and anganwadi teachers, but school teachers displayed greater understanding of nutrition.
- The three basic ideas conveyed in the nutritional messages was the significance of adolescence, the value of nutritious foods and the benefits of eating diverse foods. When asked to state what they learned, 92% of participants mentioned value of nutritious foods, 43% mentioned the significance of adolescence and 25% stated that diverse foods would lead to growth and strength.
- Additionally, 75% of the participants thought the nutritional messages were useful and 61% preferred the audio message over the pamphlet.

CONCLUSIONS

- The teachers' greater understanding of nutrition reveals that there is a divide in the education system as their level of education is not reflected in the students' awareness of nutrition.
- The results from the feedback forms showed that the adolescents were able to understand the nutritional message after reading the pamphlet for only five minutes and listening to the song twice. This indicates that given a greater amount of time and a more complete message, a larger number of the adolescents would comprehend all aspects of the message.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS...

- In this study, 61% of messaging participants preferred the audio message over the pamphlet. Furthermore, posters, charts and visuals were the most commonly recommended forms of messaging for the future.
- These preferences and suggestions should be taken into consideration when preparing future nutritional messages so that adolescents have a greater understanding of nutrition and especially why their period of life is so unique.
- Nutrition should also be taught as a mandatory class in schools and should be discussed at the anganwadi centers, which calls for the proper training of school teachers and anganwadi workers.



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