

THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS ON THE EATING HABITS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: *The article is focused on rarely mentioned psychological and social aspects, that along with physiological aspects influence children's and teenagers' eating habits. The article deals mainly with the influence of family and social environment on the feeding behavior and its evolution. Attention is also paid on the formation of preferences, attitudes, and aversions to food. The contribution introduces the issue of school meals and the impact of media and advertising on primary schoolchildren's attitudes to food and eating habits.*

Keywords: *feeding behavior; psychological aspects, social aspects, diet, eating habits, personality, society, environment, preferences, aversions, family, school canteen, food,*

1. Introduction

Food is an integral part of human life. Today's hectic lifestyle, however, reflects negatively on access to food and our eating habits. Time for family lunch or dinner is becoming shorter. It leads to the lack of opportunities when parents can influence their children's eating habits. Lack of educational influence on children's nutrition may lead to the formation of irregular eating habits and attitudes towards food.

Food and eating were considered only as a subject of exploring science until the middle of the last century. Professional community focused mainly on physiology of nutrition and diet as a source of energy for our body. This concept usually persists even today. Above all, a healthy diet is a hot topic for today's society that is obsessed by cult of attractive and desirable body.

Physiological aspects of food are closely linked to psychological and social aspects. Recently, psychological and social aspects of food are often ignored. Unlike the physiology of nutrition, this area is very little mapped out, although we could provide answers to many questions.

2. Feeding behavior and its evolution

The issue of eating behavior is of interest to both natural and social sciences. Knowledge of food behavior and mechanisms of control of food intake and utilization are very useful in further exploring of the human body and its interaction with environment. Especially for the understanding and explanation of some diseases, such as eating disorder, knowledge of food behavior plays a key role.

Fraňková and Dvořáková (2003) describe the feeding behavior as a complex of activities which serve to uncover food sources, to identify food and deciding whether the food will be accepted or rejected, then to get food and its preparation for consumption, and finally food consumption and metabolic conversion of nutrients.

Feeding behavior, as well as other types of human behavior is motivated, focused primarily on meeting the needs. If there is no disruption during the eating behavior, eating behavior goes regularly in certain cycles.

Every baby comes into the world equipped with mechanisms that enable it to obtain food. Any mammal, including a man, is born equipped with a set of reflexes - a move that will bring him the food.

Shortly after giving birth, newborn baby begins to carry out reflex movements of the head to the left and right and searches for mother's breast nipple. This form of behavior is innate and occurs only in first days of life. Then these instinctive movements are replaced by oriented head movements toward the breast.¹

Food intake in the newborn baby begins with sucking, based on the sucking reflex. There is evidence that such movements occur during intrauterine life. Fetus even suck its hands during the last weeks of pregnancy. It is a sort of training movements that help a child to survive in the new living conditions.

Breastfeeding is not only a physiological activity to feed a child. Breastfeeding is also accompanied with very strong feelings, that help a child to gain experience with the outside world and begins to communicate with others. Through the senses, baby gets a lot of information: perception of breast milk taste, hear mother's heart beat, take gentle touches. Visual stimuli are also very important. While breastfeeding, baby observes mother's movements very closely, instills her physical appearance, the smell of her body etc. All this creates a feeling of security. Pleasant feelings associated with nutrition are the source and basis of emotion.

It might seem that in the first weeks and months of life the child is just a passive recipient, but it is not the truth. Soon after the birth, a child communicates with its surroundings and is starting to show its individuality. There can be recorded just for feeding. Some children should be forced to drink, often ceases to suck and monitors around, another child obediently sucks or shouting demands for more frequent breastfeeding.

Breast milk gradually ceases to be enough for a child and it is necessary to start with additional baby food to meet child's need adequately. Child used to suck the sweet breast milk suddenly receives food that is salty, has a different color, different smells. Child's position during feeding changes too. Child is no longer held in mother's

¹ FRAŇKOVÁ, Slávka; DVOŘÁKOVÁ-JANŮ, Věra. Psychologie výživy a sociální aspekty jídla. 1.vyd. Praha: KAROLINUM, 2003. 255 s. ISBN 80-246-0548-1

arms, but gradually learn to sit and eat in an upright position. It has to learn to chew and swallow soft foods. Also child's digestive tract has to adapt to these changes. Addition of new kind of food into the infant diet is associated with the advent of many new initiatives that affect the child's senses. At the same time there is also a rapid development of a child's brain. It has to sort new sensations, process information and store them in memory in such a way that they can later be used at any time for comparison with recent experience.

Another task of this period of child development is to manage the timing of food intake. Feeding frequency was gradually reduced to just a few doses. Portion size and meal times when food is served is dependent on the family traditions and cultural background in which children grow up.

It is very important when we start with expanding the child's diet inclusion of meals, that are not appropriate for a given age, as well as delay to the introduction of new foods into the child's diet may adversely affect the development of eating behavior and child's attitudes to food.²

3. Psychological aspects of food

„Psychological motives include feelings and emotions, which force us to eat and drink. They also include those that result from the very food and drink. The most important variations of feelings are natural hunger and thirst, taste and depth, the delight and disgust or loathing and disgust. The ability to experience and feel is unique and common only for human species. The content of the association associated with certain food or a situation that is reflected, however, is the result of individual experience. Individual experience is incommunicable.“³

PERSONALITY AND FOOD

Psychologists, psychiatrists and other professionals have been trying to define personality for more than hundred years. Drapela argues that all theories of personality could be deployed on one axis, which connects the opposite views. On one side stood the axis of the theorists of „I“ who consider personality as something that actually exists and has a real effect on the surrounding world. On the other hand, there are behaviorists who define personality as *„merely a derivative of conduct, which is itself only directly observable and measurable phenomenon.“*⁴ Drapela defines personality as *„a dynamic source of behavior, identity and uniqueness of each person“.*⁵ He defines the concept of behavioral processes including thinking, emotion, decision making, physical activity, social interaction, etc.

We could say that every man is a typical figure whose formation is caused by heredity and environment influences. Each personality has its own characteristics, which is given by the combination of certain features. According to these features it is possible to divide the different types of personalities.

2 FRAŇKOVÁ, Slávka; ODEHNAL, Jiří; PAŘÍZKOVÁ, Jana. *Výživa a vývoj osobnosti dítěte*. Praha: HZ Editio, 2000. 198 s. ISBN 80-86009-32-7

3 DVOŘÁKOVÁ – JANUŠ, Věra. *Lidé a jídlo*. 1. vyd. Praha: ISV nakladatelství, 1999. s. 1

4 DRAPELA, Viktor. *Přehled teorií osobnosti*. 3. vyd. Praha: Portál, 2001. s.14

5 DRAPELA, Viktor. *Přehled teorií osobnosti*. 3. vyd. Praha: Portál, 2001. s.14

Hippocratic theory is one of the oldest and still used typology of personality. This theory divides people into four basic types of temperaments (sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic, melancholic), according to body fluids, which prompt it. Some authors dealing with nutrition add a distinctive approach to food⁶ and eating to these types of classical temperaments.

ATTITUDES TO FOOD. RITUALS.

Attitudes to food are shaped from an early age and are strongly influenced by environmental pressures. Family plays the main role, as well as the child's individuality, which is given by temperament, conscious qualities, emotion and experience of the child with food.⁷

The place of the food in our value rankings is given primarily due to cultural and economic levels of society in which we live. We can learn about the relation of a particular culture to food and eating by studying of menus, method of eating and preparing food technological processes.

Attitude towards food is important for some religions and philosophical systems. For example, for the Taoists the food is part of spiritual practice. We have to take a balanced diet and follow the correct procedure for the preparation of meals in order to achieve understanding and harmony of body and spirit. According to Buddhists, it is necessary to prepare the food carefully and thoroughly as food borne power of Buddha.

In our predominantly Christian society we rarely meet with respect for certain old habits referring to the sacred nature of food. For example during fasting before Easter or Christmas etc.

Throughout our life we get a series of rituals associated with preparing and eating meals. Rituals become a nominal part of our personalities and traditions are passed down from generation to generation. For example, the ritual of tea drinking, use of bread and salt to welcome guest, or prayer before meals.

Rituals are an essential part of holidays and important events of the year.

PREFERENCES AND AVERSIONS

According to Fraňková et al., preferences and aversions are the basis of attitudes to food. These two mechanisms help all living creatures to eat, to survive, but also to avoid harmful substances that may harm or even kill. Part of these characteristics are innate, part of them are created by individuals during their lives. The mechanism of nutrient preference are described in Fraňková's and al. book.⁸

6 Eg. Faltus defines sanguine as a good host, having the enjoyment of gourmet food, complying with his enthusiastic gourmand appetites. Choleric is steady fast in its activities and impulsive. He reflects passion and fanaticism. In relation to eating often demonstrate their displeasure. Phlegmatic is very quiet, little excitable. In relation to food, he usually does not matter the quality of food. If he could choose, he prefers traditional kitchen and eat with pleasure. He spoils the taste considerations about food quality and its impact on the physical line. Melancholy in his meditation often does not realize the feeling of hunger. If he decides to eat food, he not perceive because he is too preoccupied with his worries and problems.

7 FRAŇKOVÁ, Slávka; DVORÁKOVÁ-JANŮ, Věra. Psychologie výživy a sociální aspekty jídla. 1.vyd. Praha: KAROLINUM, 2003. 256 s. ISBN 80-246-0548-1

8 Fraňková and team (2003) describe the formation mechanism of nutritional preferences as follows:

Exposure to food. Repeated administration of a meal is possible for a child to grow its popularity. But this does not happen always. Too frequent use of certain foods, can achieve the opposite effect. Preference will be reduced or even disappear.

It was found that the man has high preference for sweet taste from his birth. Most agree that the sweet taste preference is innate in mammals. Apparently it has something to do with the fact that the sweet taste is typical of breast milk, but also for a range of energy sources that are found for example in the roots of certain plants or fruit. The preference for sweet compel the animal to seek sweet eatables.

Similarly, even aversion should protect individuals from ingesting substances that could endanger him. Some aversions are innate too. These include a natural aversion to bitter taste.

Most aversion rise on the basis of unpleasant experiences associated with food. Child could acquire resistance to meal, from which it vomited, or was forced to eat during its attendance in kindergarten. This aversion can endure until adulthood. Strong aversion to food can lead to serious eating disorders.

EMOTIONS AND FOOD

Emotions are psychological phenomenons. When talking about emotions, we think of anger, joy, regret or sympathy. Despite the fact that we all understand content of emotions, there is no uniform definition. In its broadest concept, as understood by M. Nakonečný, emotions can be defined as „*a complex phenomenon, which has its experiential, physiological and behavioral side. Close connection of emotion and physiology of the organism, in particular with visceral changes and moves, expresses their original biological effectiveness: emotions are experiences that meaningfully organize our behavior (eg. fear - flight), so it is possible to assign every emotion to a particular purpose, such as to avoid danger; you feel fear; or in other words, fear and danger signals are simultaneously accompanied by physiological changes that enable escape movements.*”⁹

According to this definition it is clear that emotions are also linked to our digestion. Nutrition education, attitudes towards food, cooking and rating, these are all inextricably linked with emotions. Food calms us. We rejoice a baby with food when it fell and scraped its knee. Food could be a reward or a gift.

Most social events in our life are associated with food. In these situations, the food is usually associated with positive emotions. It is quite normal that events such as infant baptism, wedding or birthday celebration are associated with good meals and drinks. But food also belongs to the less pleasant events in human life, e.g. a treat mourners after the funeral etc.

One turns to eat when he is happy to celebrate. When experiencing grief, search for food, that helps forget negative emotions. Food keeps our digestive system working and it does not allow us to think about what bothers us. Overeating is not the only way to solve our problems. Some people are trying to solve their problems by refusing food and denying hunger. In both cases there is a risk of severe psychosomatic problems.

Conscious control of food intake or, on the contrary, excessive consumption of

Pavlovov's conditioning. This type of conditioning is based on the concentration of food certain other stimuli. Mainly stimuli acting on our senses, such as food color, aroma, general appearance of the plates of food.

Social factors. Social factors are a powerful factor influencing the formation of preferences. Children are very perceptive and pay attention to how and what family members eat. They prefer such foods that know from the family or peer group.

9 NAKONEČNÝ, Milan. *Základy psychologie*. Praha: ACADEMIA, 1998. s. 415

food may indicate an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. In this case, it is necessary to seek psychological and social causes. Treatment of such psychosomatic illness is lengthy and in some cases almost impossible.

4. Social aspects of food

There is little doubt that food occupies a solid and important point in mankind history. A table is a kind of mirror of period in which we live, it is a scale of civilizational maturity.

Food and eating are usually mentioned only in connection with the satisfaction of physiological needs. In addition to the maintenance function, food performs an important social, cultural and communicative function.¹⁰

We forget that man is primarily a social creature, and therefore all its activities, including food intake are influenced by human societies.

Effects of social environment on the feeding behavior, nutritional habits and customs of individuals can be classified into three categories:

1. influences of family,
2. social influences outside the family,
3. effects of the media and cultural environment.¹¹

FAMILY INFLUENCES

The family is regarded as a distinct social group whose main task is to ensure the healthy development of the child's personality. Family as a social group is characterized by intense emotional relationships among its members. In relation to its members, family shall perform the function of reproduction, socialization, educational and economic.

For a child, the family is the first social group, whose member it becomes. A child gains its position in this group from birth automatically. The family represents first model of social coexistence. Child's personality is gradually shaped by living in family and its attitudes to the outside world are formed.

The formation of the child's personality and its growth in the society is a part of the process of socialization. During this lifelong process, the child learns a specific form of human behavior, perception, thinking and acceptance of social norms applicable to the society. This also includes habits and attitudes relating to food and eating. All adult family members are involved into the process of educating and upbringing.

Education of parents, parenting style, family financial situation, and also the place where the family lives have significant impact on family lifestyle and nutritional education of children.

Relationship between family members play a key role in the issue of relations between family life and nutrition. It regards relations between adult members of families

¹⁰ Communicative function of food is often mentioned mainly in connection with eating disorders. Refusing food or, conversely, increased consumption, could be the way how individual suffering from an eating disorder communicates to those around, expresses something that can not or does not want to say in words.

¹¹ FRANKOVÁ, Slávka; DVOŘÁKOVÁ-JANŮ, Věra. Psychologie výživy a sociální aspekty jídla. 1.vyd. Praha: KAROLINUM, 2003. 256 s. ISBN 80-246-0548-1

involved in child rearing and relationships between parents and children and ultimately, relationships between siblings.

Common dining with parents is an effective way how to reinforce children's good attitudes to food. Even for older children it is important to eat with their parents as frequently as possible. Common dinners at least on weekends should be obvious. Parents should instill that eating several times a day is perfectly normal, and that overeating and possession and special diets are inappropriate.

Wrong and unhealthy eating habits, like overeating or irregular meals or eating alone, which many children do, can be very dangerous. This kind of habits can lead to eating disorders. If parents have not overview of when, where and what their children eat during the day, these disorders can be identified very late.¹²

SOCIAL INFLUENCES OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

Child's world is in first few years its reduced to a social environment that includes the closest family and relatives. With increasing age, however, the child becomes independent and it gets into the broader social environment outside the family. This environment has an effect on children and participate in shaping their attitudes.

Transition from home to kindergarten or to elementary school is an important moment in the life of each child. There are also big changes in a field of eating habits. Child has to submit a new dining system, get used to the new diet, learn how to eat and dine in the dining room with other children. For the child who is used to eating at home only in the presence of the mother or siblings could be difficult to use to the noise in the dining room, the clink of cutlery and other children shouting. This unpleasant experience may affect the development of eating behavior.

Visiting a restaurant or an invitation for lunch or dinner with friends is usually a nice change in the run-in dining family stereotype. This new social situation has a great importance for the development of the child's personality and its relation to food and restaurants

EFFECTS OF THE MEDIA AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Educational influence of parents on the dietary habits of their children is unfortunately weakened by the strong effect of the cultural environment in which children grow up. It is not possible to raise the child and protect him from the influence of the press, television or the Internet.

The negative effect of television on the youngest members of our society is a subject of many discussions today.

Younger and younger children spend most of their free time in front of the television screen or computer monitor. These two media play a major role in shaping the ideas of standards, ways of behavior, expression, clothing and meals that are accepted or even required in our society. Advertisements and advertising is very effective mean how to influence attitudes to food.

Advertisements for food are based on knowledge of psychology. Creators of ad-

12 OBČANSKÉ SDRUŽENÍ ANABELL. *Kouzlo stolování* [on-line]. Citováno dne 9.4.2008a. Dostupný z [www: <http://www.anabell.cz/index.php/clanky-a-vase-pribehy/vyziva/19-stravovaci-navyky/256-kouzlo-stolovani>](http://www.anabell.cz/index.php/clanky-a-vase-pribehy/vyziva/19-stravovaci-navyky/256-kouzlo-stolovani)

vertising campaigns use a number of effects on the psyche and human behavior. Billboards, leaflets and short films that promote food effect on human senses, especially thanks to their colors and sizes. There are many tricks how to draw the attention and attract emotional passion for food that is offered. This job employs whole teams of psychologists. Our rational side is influenced by emphasizing the health aspects, economical, and quick and easy preparation of offered goods. Last but not least, the advertisers try to focus on our emotions. Offered products are presented as those that meet our needs, bringing joy to our children, ensure a pleasant holiday days.¹³

This kind of advertising is very refined and could have strong effects mainly on small children, who accept it uncritically, and forcing parents to buy these products. For example, younger children do not distinguish between commercial adds and normal program. Children believe them like they believe to fairy tales. Older children are already able to distinguish advertising from the story and take a critical opinion.

Most of the advertising spots¹⁴ promotes too fatty, salty or sweet food. This food is not health for developing children's healthy organism, but if it is presented by peers, popular film heroes or characters from children's animated series, it is hard to resist.

In recent years, we can more often meet a new phenomenon in eating habits. It is about watching TV while eating. It is usual that in restaurants or in the so-called „Fast Food“ there is large plasma TV on the wall, which displays continuously animated movies, sporting events or music programs. In these places we are forced to watch TV involuntarily while we are eating.

Going a few years back, we can find that the previous generation eating was accompanied by radio. It was not the same in all restaurants and families, as well as television does not play in all households today.

General knowledge of psychology is widely used in the supermarket business. Chain stores usually employ large teams of experts. Those create strategies on basis of detailed analysis of shopper behavior and force the buyer to buy specific products.

The best-known strategies are eg. an arrangement of goods on shelves, arranging conspicuously expensive things next to things at an average price or the promulgation of time-limited actions on the less valuable foods or foods for which the warranty expires. Especially tricks with candy and chewing gum at the checkout work good, they usually cannot escape the attention of impatient children waiting with their parents in a row.

5. School lunches

Accrding to MD. Tláškal, President of the Society for Nutrition, school lunches are „*an important tool for nutrition and food policy of the state.*”¹⁵

The first mention of an organized school meals comes from the period after World War II. There was no use lunch as we know it today, but for some snacks that

13 FRANKOVÁ, Slávka; DVOŘÁKOVÁ-JANŮ, Věra. Psychologie výživy a sociální aspekty jídla. 1.vyd. Praha: KAROLINUM, 2003. 256 s. ISBN 80-246-0548-1

14 Some countries, like Great Britain or Scandinavia, have decided to fight with statistics showing an increase of child obesity and adopt a ban on ads promoting this so-called „junk food“. Despite the negative impact of such advertising on children's eating habits is evident ,this topic is not yet perceived as a problem in our country and therefore no legislative action are being prepared.

15 TLÁSKAL, P. *Školní stravování. Výživa a potraviný*, 2008, roč. 63, č.5, s.66-67 ISSN 1211-846X

were served to children in all schools. These snacks were collected from stock UNNRA. With the increasing employment of women in the 50th years the need to provide meals for their children also increased. First school canteens were opened. Schools were the first initiators.

In 1953 the Ministry of Education issued first decree, which was devoted to the issue of school meals. This decree established the authorities that were responsible for establishing and operating the school canteen, the financial standards for the purchase of food and catering charges.

This decree was replaced by the new one in 1963. This new decree set out precisely rations by age groups of children. First County inspectors of school meals were appointed, regional and district education center for school meals was also established. Their main task was to oversee the implementation of the tasks of school canteens, foster the development of school meals and increase the skills of canteens staff.

Charges for lunches served only to purchase food and their amount was determined by the social situation of the family. Other expenses for the operation of the dining room was funded from the state and municipal budgets.

In the 60. and 70. a large increase in natality was seen. In this period there were built new housing estates with schools and school canteens. Gradually 10 000 school canteens were built, where 100% of nursery school children, more than 90% of elementary school pupils and 65% of secondary school students came for a lunch. Initially, school meals faced the problem within adequate facilities and the lack of finances to ensure adequate supplies of high quality and diverse raw materials. The increase in charges for meals would be pretty difficult for parents, could help to improve conditions of school meals, but was not support by the ruling party in this time.

After the year 2003 districts came to end and also their Centres for school boarding. Ministry of Education gradually restricts its activities in the school boarding. Dining room becomes part of schools. We managed to adjust the charges for meals so that it is possible to apply the recommended dietary allowance.

In the nineties, the nutritional standards, that should be an indicator of the quality of prepared meals, were announced. Later the market basket was build up for easier orientation of school canteen staff. Market basket is a continuously updated set of nutrition standards that must be followed when creating menus. The average food consumption per boarder per month is fixed.

Currently school meals has a long tradition. Methodical assistance for canteens is today provided exclusively by Society for Nutrition. Many school canteen go through extensive construction and modernization in recent years. They have to meet strict hygiene and technology rules set by European Union.¹⁶

Also interiors of school canteens have undergone vast changes through the recent years. Today's school canteen is rather reminiscent of a cozy restaurant, than the canteen, which we were accustomed to before 1989. When furnishing dining rooms, the emphasis is not just for functionality but also the convenience of diners.

Replacing the traditional square dining tables with round tables could be considered as a quite revolutionary change in the arrangement of school canteens. This idea

16 ŠULCOVÁ, E.; STROSSEROVÁ, A. *Školní stravování (historie a aktuálně)*. Výživa a potraviny, 2008, roč. 63, č.5, s.68-71 ISSN 1211-846X

came from one Moravian company that specializes in the production of school furniture. This idea is based on the roundtable theory. Round table has no corners, no edges, so that all the persons who sit at the table have the same status. At the round table, there is no privileged place. In the cafeteria, which is quite noisy place, round tables could help to calm the students and improve the general atmosphere in canteen.

In Czech Republic there is currently 9028 school canteens, which regularly prepare meals for 1.61 million consumers, more than 10% of the population of our country. According to figures of the Society for Nutrition, school canteens are used by 100% of nursery schools, 78% of elementary schools and 58% of secondary school students.¹⁷

LUNCH AS A NECESSARY PART OF A HEALTHY DIET OF THE CHILD

According to the Information Consultancy Centre for Nutrition, lunch should cover approximately 30-35% of daily energy intake. Unfortunately, the truth is that most children completely skip lunch or buy food at inappropriate restaurants, fast food type. School lunch seems to be the best option.¹⁸

Children who are not enrolled in school canteens, often claim that their school food does not taste good and that they do not like it. The problem is not in variety of food offered in school canteens, but in families. Children refuse to eat some meals only because they do not know them from their homes. The family diet is either generally unhealthy or on the contrary, parents trying to eat a healthy diet according to the rules, but they let their children eat only those foods that they like. These children are often allowed to eat sweets, chips and other fatty foods, inappropriate for their organism. It is clear that these children do not like dishes from school canteen.

Parents should realize that if they want to lead their child to a healthy diet, they must themselves set an example and follow certain principles of healthy eating.

School canteens, cafeterias and vending machines are kind of alternative to school canteens. In contrast, however, canteens do not offer fully valued meals.

First cafeterias and canteens in schools occurred soon after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. These „shops“ were operated mostly by school janitors. The main purpose of these cafeterias is not to ensure that children get valuable, energy and healthy food, but mainly to make money.¹⁹

Offer of these buffets are therefore driven by demand. Commercial interests are stronger than efforts to lead children to healthy eating habits.

Canteens, cafeterias and vending machines in schools should be just some kind of supplement meals for children during their school day. Unfortunately, increasingly we can see that food from machines substitute a fully valued lunch (offered by the school cafeteria), and are often the only meal that child eats per day.

17 VÝŽIVA DĚTÍ. [online]. *Má školní stravování budoucnost?*, poslední revize.2007 [cit.2008-10-22]. Dostupné z www: < http://www.vyzivadeti.cz/data/sharedfiles/tiskove_materialy/TZ_Skolni%20stravovani_fin.doc

18 VÝŽIVA DĚTÍ. [online]. *Školní oběd=součást zdravého jídelníčku dítěte*, poslední revize.2007 [cit.2008-10-22]. Dostupné z www: < http://www.vyzivadeti.cz/data/sharedfiles/tiskove_materialy/TM_Tomesova_fin.doc

19 RÁBOVÁ, Marcela. *Současné školní stravování se zaměřením na školní bufety a prodejní automaty* : diplomová práce. Masarykova univerzita, Fakulta pedagogická, 2008

6. Results of research in the influence of selected psychological and social aspects on eating habits of children in a primary school

During March 2009 I carried out an investigation which aim was to determine the potential effect of psychological and social aspects on eating habits among primary school pupils. Research has focused on the effects of close family and social environment outside the family. Part-task of this probe was also to investigate how much are children's dietary preferences affected by media and advertisements.

The research was conducted by questionnaire, which was filled in by 322 pupils aged 8-16 years. The investigation was carried out at three primary schools in Zlin region. The divergence of these schools were given by pupils place of residence. Most respondents were from primary school Bílovice, which is a village school in which children commute from a number of surrounding villages. Primary school Zlín is a housing estate school, which is mainly attended by children living in the city. This school has several classes with extended lessons of physical education. The third school was primary school Napajedla, a small town school, attended by children living in the city, but also by children from nearby villages.

SCHOOL MEALS - SNACKS, LUNCHESES

In almost every school we can find a school cafeteria, canteen or vending machines with sandwiches, baguettes, sweets and beverages. The suitability of these foods could be certainly discussed. Unfortunately, these substitute meals replace even a child's fully valued lunch very often. The results of the questionnaire probes that, for pupils aged 14 to 16 years, this way of providing snacks or lunch is probably more acceptable than to eat snack prepared at home or eat at school canteen. Teenagers are trying to manifest their independence and adulthood, and these include an effort to show that they are able to deal with money that they get from their parents. Whether they use this money for snacks and lunches, this could be a theme for discussion. It is evident that not all teenagers spend money for a nutritionally valuable foods.

On the contrary, younger schoolchildren aged 8-11 years preferred snacks prepared by their parents. In my opinion, these children are not yet well adapted to the school. They are still dependent on their parents. Preparing snacks could be a difficult task for many of them and if they get money for lunch, they would probably spend them on sweets, which would satisfy their cravings, but not feed them. Parents are aware of this fact. Brunch prepared by parents is more suitable for these children. For example, snack or brunch prepared by mummy can be for first graders a sort of link with home. Mother knows her child, knows what it tastes and what not.

It is certainly no surprise that girls often prepare their own snacks. It is possible to explain it, for example, that girls, unlike boys, are from a very early age led to housework, to independence in preparing simple meals and small works in the kitchen. If entrusted with tasks such as preparing a snack for themselves or for their siblings, they like accept it.

FAMILY INFLUENCE ON CHILD'S EATING HABITS

Family influence on children's eating habits is undoubted. In most families parents and children meet each other every day at least to dinner. It is mainly because parents are very busy. In today's hurried time, it is more difficult for some people to find the time for valuable lunch. They even have no time for regular family dinners at home. Children of these parents are usually used to the fact that everyone eats alone, takes „something“ from refrigerators. Lack of rules and regularities in the family eating may enable children to be more easily influenced by wrong nutrition examples. They are lost in the world of food, they are trying to find themselves.

The results confirmed, that children whose families meet regularly for joint lunches and dinners, are less sensitive to advertisements of food and snacks. Children from these families have a knowledge of wide range of traditional and less traditional dishes from their homes, and are often included in the preparation of meals. They are oriented in the world of food. Assume that this family has run a dietary rules are observed both adults and children. (eg. family meets for dinner daily at 18.00, the son sets the table, daughter prepares vegetables, cuts bread, etc.) Parents talk to their children more about food and have the opportunity to influence their dietary preferences. During a common dining, parents may influence the eating habits of their children mainly because they set an example.

PEER INFLUENCE

Family members are not the only ones who can influence children's eating habits. The majority of children spend most of the day at school or in after school center, where they meet their peers and friends. Mutually influence each other. I wonder how much influence have classmates on individuals when selecting meals. I started from my own experience. I believe that every child is trying to find and consolidate its position in the group of peers. It wants to engage. In an effort to gain favor with friends, children are often forced to adopt rules of the group, they are trying not to stand out, they do what others do. It could be similar in case of nutrition preferences. I can imagine a group of girls, friends who choose the same food for a lunch just because they are friends. They have the same idols, listen to the same music, wear the same hairstyles, eat the same food. My presumption was not proved. The questionnaire responses showed that the selection of pupils' meals governed primarily by what they like. They do not let their peers to influence them. Today's children are confident and not afraid to express their opinions. They are used to eat at restaurants, choose foods from the menu, at its discretion.

FASTFOODS AND SCHOOL CANTEENS

Growing popularity of quick-service restaurants, so called fast food restaurant, is relatively young phenomenon in Czech republic. Today's generation of school children are fed with meals from food chain restaurants like KFC and McDonald's. These eating establishments are designed to serve and feed as much as possible people in relatively short time. Noise, screams, and the constant movement of people is nothing unusual here. It is quite impossible to enjoy your meal in peace in place such as McDonald's.

Most of the adults prefer lunch or dinner in a quiet pleasant environment. They are not able to enjoy their food in the canteen or fast food restaurant. On the other hand, children, who are accustomed to eating in fast food from an early age, do not notice the noise and constant movement in the school canteen. They are not disturbed. The results obtained by questionnaire confirmed this fact. 75 % of all respondents replied that they do not mind noise, chatter and constant movement in the school canteen. Nearly 10 % of pupils answered that they like the bustle and noise in the dining room.

CHILDREN FROM THE CITY, CHILDREN FROM VILLAGES

Children from villages often commute to school outside their residence and they are likely to be eating in a bus or train or buy something to eat in fast food, cafeteria on the railway station, etc. Children who commute, often skip the lunch at school canteen just because they do not want to miss the bus to home. This research, however, demonstrated that the residence had no impact on whether children are more likely to eat in the cafeteria or outside. The number of urban children eating in the school canteen is not very different from the number of village children who eat at school.

Previously, maybe children from a village often had lunch at home. Mummy prepared lunch one day in advance, or there was grandmother to which children went every day for lunch. The situation is different today. Rural life is not very different from city life. Most parents of children from villages are just as busy as urban parents. Mothers do not have time for everyday cooking. Family relationships are also freed. Thus left no choice but to ensure the child with school lunches.

7. Conclusion

The research showed that pupils of primary schools eat most meals at home and at school. Most students who participated in the investigation, eat in the company of their parents during working days. This finding is very positive because common dining with parents is exceptional in these hurried times. Educational influence on shaping attitudes towards food is weakened. Survey among pupils of selected schools revealed, that regular eating families, where parents have the opportunity to influence children's attitudes to introduction of new food to family diet, has positive effects on reduction of influence of advertisements and media on pupils' eating habits. A surprising finding was the fact that today's children and young people are not influenced in their dietary preferences by their peers and that there are no differences between the eating habits of urban children and children from villages. Life in the village appears not to be so different from life in the city.

Food guides us through our lives and is an essential part of daily reality. Although food is one of the most important factors that keep our bodies healthy, it does not only fulfill the function of maintenance, but also an important social and communicative function. Due to the increasing number of psychosomatic disorders associated with food intake, physiological aspects of nutrition should not be overstated, but attention should be paid to the psychological and social aspects too.

VLIV PSYCHOLOGICKÝCH A SOCIÁLNÍCH ASPEKTŮ NA STRAVOVÁNÍ ŽÁKŮ ZŠ

Abstrakt: Příspěvek se snaží poukázat na často opomíjené psychologické a sociální aspekty, které spolu s aspekty fyziologickými ovlivňují vztah dětí a mládeže k jídlu a stravování. Zaměřuje se především na vlivy rodiny a sociálního prostředí na potravní chování a jeho vývoj. Pozornost je věnována také otázce utváření preferencí, averzí a postojů k jídlu. Příspěvek se věnuje také otázkám školního stravování a vlivu médií a reklamy na stravování žáků základních škol.

Klíčová slova: potravní chování, psychologické aspekty, sociální aspekty, stravování, stravovací návyky, jídlo, osobnost, společnost, prostředí, preference, averze, rodina, školní jídelna