

The Interplay of Students' Lifestyle, Mental Health, and Academic Performance in a Public High School

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ABSTRACT

Within the Philippine educational setting, proper nutrition plays a vital role in supporting students' mental health and academic performance. However, breakfast skipping and unhealthy dietary patterns remain prevalent among adolescents. This study aimed to assess the correlation between breakfast skipping, daily dietary patterns, mental health, and academic performance among Grade 7 to 9 students of San Isidro National High School in Tagbilaran City, Bohol during the school year 2025–2026 as the basis for a proposed intervention program. A quantitative descriptive-correlational design was employed utilizing stratified random sampling with 151 respondents. Data were collected through a validated researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and Spearman rank correlation. The findings revealed that a significant number of students frequently skip breakfast and exhibit poor dietary patterns characterized by low consumption of nutrient-rich foods. In addition, students manifested moderate levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional concerns. Furthermore, results showed a significant correlation between breakfast habits and dietary patterns with mental health; however, no significant correlation was found between these variables and academic performance. The study concludes that nutritional habits influence students' mental well-being but not directly their academic performance. Therefore, the researcher highly recommends the implementation of an appropriate intervention program to improve students' nutritional practices and mental well-being.

Keywords—Vocational Education, Breakfast Skipping, Dietary Patterns, Mental Health Status, Academic Performance, Descriptive-Correlational Design, San Isidro National High School, Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical growth and marked emotional and cognitive changes that is a critical time in human development (Sawyer et al., 2012). During this period, proper nutrition is essential as it supports brain function, maintain emotional and psychological well-being, all of which are closely related to academic success and overall health. However, poor dietary behaviors formed during adolescence could have harmful impacts on physical and mental growth that can have long-term consequences (World Health Organization, 2021).

Among these behaviors, breakfast consumption is of special significance, as it restores energy after a night's fast and improves cognitive function, concentration, and emotional regulation. Conversely, breakfast skipping has been linked to fatigue, poor focus, irritability, and increased risks of anxiety and low self-esteem (Raña et al., 2025).

Globally, adolescents who skip breakfast are more likely to experience psychological distress, including symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as reduced school engagement and lower academic motivation. These issues are particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, where socio-economic inequalities limit access to nutritious food (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2020). In the

Philippines, similar patterns have emerged. Research indicates that approximately 37.1% of Filipino adolescents regularly skip breakfast, a behavior significantly associated with mental health problems and risky behaviors

(Pengpid et al., 2025). However, these national statistics often fail to reflect the specific conditions faced by students in rural and underserved communities.

San Isidro National High School presents a unique setting for this issue in the local context. Students face multiple challenges as a public secondary school operating in a double shift system, serving mainly low-income families, limited financial resources and lack of nutritional awareness. Many students attend classes early in the morning, including Technological and Livelihood Education (TLE) subjects that require focus, precision, and lower engagement, which can also affect safety during hands-on activities. These conditions can lead to heightened anxiety, lowered motivation and self-esteem which are important factors in mental health that can undermine academic functioning.

Furthermore, existing literature emphasizes that the issue is not limited to whether breakfast is consumed but also includes the nutritional quality of the meal. Adolescents from economically disadvantaged households are more likely to consume meals that lack essential nutrients due to food insecurity and limited access to healthy food options (Angeles-Agdeppa et al., 2022). Even when breakfast is consumed, it may not meet the recommended intake of key nutrients such as calcium, fiber, vitamin C, and potassium.

Poor dietary quality can contribute to cognitive fatigue, emotional instability, and reduced resilience, further affecting students' mental health. Supporting this, Fishmen et al. (2024) found that healthier breakfast habits are strongly associated with better mental health outcomes, reinforcing the importance of both frequency and quality of breakfast consumption.

Despite existing literature, there is a lack of research that focuses on localized context of schools and examine how breakfast habits influence mental health particularly anxiety, academic motivation, and self-esteem among Filipino adolescents in rural or semi-urban settings. This gap reduces the potential for targeted interventions that do not just meet students' nutritional needs, but also consider their psychological needs, particularly in situations where vocational learning and safety are important.

Considering these concerns, the study aims to better understand how breakfast consumption both in terms of frequency and nutritional quality affects the mental health and academic performance among students at San Isidro National High School.

The study also aims to find out how these factors contribute to students' physical readiness, focus, and safety in Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), thereby supporting their overall preparedness for active and skill-based learning. This problem serves as the basis for the study's objectives and guides the development of its conceptual framework and variables.

Theories and Legal Basis

To better understand how breakfast skipping and daily dietary patterns affect mental health and academic performance, this study adopts both global and national perspectives of breakfast skipping and daily dietary patterns as well as existing psychological and behavioral theories to further understand the correlation between variables.

It aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Good Health and Well-being, which advocates for ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all, especially the youth. Regular breakfast intake is associated with better concentration, emotional control and mental well-being, which is essential for the mental health and overall development of an adolescent.

Furthermore, this study is anchored in Ecological Systems Theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner (2000), which focuses on the impact of environmental systems on adolescent behavior, ranging from the family and school to peers and the broader socio-economic context. When it comes to breakfast, food availability at home school and in the community also influence students' eating habits. This theory helps explain that breakfast skipping is a multi-faceted phenomenon.

Moreover, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains that physiological needs, such as food and nutrition, are the fundamental requirements for human functioning. Without meeting these fundamental needs, higher-level needs such as academic achievement, self-esteem, and emotional stability cannot be fully attained. This underscores the importance of nutrition, especially breakfast in helping students achieve their optimal growth and development physically and mentally.

In addition, theoretical developments provide a better understanding of the psychological and behavioral processes involved in the relationship between nutrition and mental health. Health Belief Model (HBM) can clarify multicultural behaviors (Glanz et al., 1990). It highlights those students are more likely to adopt healthy eating habits if they feel at risk of health issues due to poor eating habits. In this context, if students are unaware of the mental and physical health effects of skipping breakfast, they are unlikely to change their habits. Schools can help by raising awareness and reducing barriers such as time constraints and limited access to nutritious food.

Expanding behavioral analysis, the Integrated Behavior Model (IBM) by Montaño and Kasprzyk (2020) identifies three key factors that influence behavior: intention, skills, and environmental constraints. Even if a student intends to eat breakfast, their behavior may not align due to real-life barriers such as lack of food, insufficient time, or unsupportive routines. This model is particularly relevant in explaining how socio-economic conditions influence dietary patterns.

Additionally, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping by Lazarus and Folkman (2021) explains how stress influences behavior. Students experiencing academic or emotional stress may neglect proper eating habits, including skipping breakfast. When breakfast skipping becomes a coping response to stress, it may lead to a cycle of poor nutrition and declining mental health.

In 2024, Marinković et al. introduced the correlation between psychological aspects and nutritional levels in adolescence, highlighting that adolescent with healthy eating habits tend to demonstrate better emotional regulation, resilience, and academic focus. Similarly, Melo et al. (2025) proposed the Digital Nutrition Awareness Theory, which explains how digital exposure can either promote or hinder healthy eating behaviors depending on the quality of information consumed.

In summary, this study integrates ecological, motivational, behavioral, and legal frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how breakfast habits influence adolescents' mental health—particularly anxiety, academic motivation, and self-esteem. These theories collectively emphasize that proper nutrition is not only essential for physical growth but also a foundational factor in emotional stability, cognitive functioning, and overall student well-being

To establish a strong foundation for this study, it is crucial to anchor its relevance within existing legal and policy frameworks that promote health and wellbeing among Filipino learners. Various international and national laws highlight the state's commitment to ensuring proper nutrition as a fundamental right and developmental necessity. These legal provisions not only guide program implementation but also reinforce the urgency of addressing breakfast skipping and poor dietary patterns as factors that impact the mental and emotional health of students.

The Sustainable Development Goals, particularly **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being**, serves as a global benchmark for promoting physical and mental well-being across all age groups. This goal directly supports the research by emphasizing the importance of proper nutrition in achieving holistic health outcomes. Regular breakfast consumption contributes significantly to students' mental alertness, emotional regulation, and academic focus. When students start their day with a healthy meal, they are better equipped to manage stress, anxiety, and cognitive demands, aligning with the SDG's emphasis on comprehensive health development.

Moreover, this study is supported by Republic Act No. 11036, which emphasizes the promotion and protection of mental health among Filipinos, particularly in educational institutions. The law recognizes the importance of addressing factors that affect students' psychological well-being, including lifestyle and health behaviors such

as nutrition. This strengthens the study's relevance by linking dietary practices like breakfast consumption to national mental health priorities.

Republic Act No. 11037 institutionalizes a nationwide feeding program for undernourished children enrolled in public schools. This law directly supports the research by addressing food insecurity, which is one of the leading causes of breakfast skipping. By mandating regular, nutritious meals for learners, the law acknowledges that hunger and malnutrition affect not only physical health but also mental and emotional well-being.

It reinforces the idea that proper nutrition contributes to improved academic performance, behavior, and overall student development. Another significant legislative measure is Republic Act No. 11148, which ensures the delivery of integrated nutrition and health programs from pregnancy through early childhood. While primarily focused on early development, this law promotes a life-course approach to nutrition, emphasizing that proper dietary practices must be sustained across all developmental stages. This supports the study by highlighting that adolescents' mental and academic outcomes are influenced by continuous nutritional support.

In support of these mandates, DepEd Order No. 13 s. 2017 provides guidelines for implementing school-based feeding programs and integrating nutrition education into the curriculum. This policy promotes a supportive school environment that encourages healthy eating habits and informed food choices. It reinforces the role of schools as key institutions in addressing both nutritional deficiencies and related mental health concerns among students.

In summary, the study is firmly grounded in both international and national legal frameworks that underscore the fundamental right of every learner to proper nutrition and its direct influence on mental, emotional, and cognitive development. These policies collectively demonstrate that addressing breakfast skipping is not only a health concern but also a legal and educational priority.

By aligning with these frameworks, the study highlights the need for integrated, school-based interventions that support students' physical nourishment while also enhancing their mental health particularly in terms of anxiety, academic motivation, and self-esteem.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the relationship between breakfast habits, dietary patterns, mental health, and academic performance among adolescents, serving as a basis for developing appropriate school-based intervention programs. The beneficiaries of this study include policymakers and educational leaders, school administrators, teachers, parents or guardians, students, researchers, future researchers.

Objectives of the Study

This study examined the school administration practices that foster teacher well-being and prevent burnout among teachers in selected basic education schools in the Schools Division of Toledo City for the school year 2025–2026, as basis for proposing an evidence-based administrative action plan.

This study aimed to explore the patterns of breakfast skipping and overall dietary habits among morning shift students of San Isidro National High School in the Tagbilaran City Division during the school year 2025–2026 and determined how these behaviors were related to their mental health and academic performance. By identifying relevant patterns and associations, this research sought to propose a school-based nutrition and mental wellness intervention program.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

- 1.1 Age;

- 1.2 Gender;
- 1.3 Grade level;
- 1.4 Combined family monthly income; and
- 1.5 Living arrangement?
2. What is the level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of:
 - 2.1 Frequency of breakfast consumption;
 - 2.2 Reasons for skipping breakfast;
 - 2.3 Number of meals consumed per day;
3. What is the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of:
 - 3.1 Types of food commonly consumed; and
 - 3.2 Meal timing and regularity
4. What is the level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of:
 - 4.1 Stress levels;
 - 4.2 Emotional stability;
 - 4.3 Self-esteem; and
 - 4.4 Presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies?
5. What is the level of academic performance of the respondents?
6. Is there a significant correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and:
 - 6.1 their daily dietary patterns;
 - 6.2 their mental health status; and
 - 6.3 their academic performance?
7. Is there a significant correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and:
 - 7.1 their mental health status; and
 - 7.2 academic performance?
8. Is there a significant correlation between respondents' mental health status and their academic performance?
9. What intervention program or set of recommendations can be proposed based on the findings of the study to promote better dietary practices and mental health among students?

Research Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive approach was used to collect information on students' profiles, breakfast skipping habits, daily dietary patterns, mental health status, and

academic performance. The correlational aspect was intended to determine the significant correlation between students' dietary behaviors and their mental health, as well as the associations between their profiles and the identified study variables.

Research Design

A quantitative method was employed using a structured survey questionnaire to collect measurable data. This method was appropriate for analyzing the extent to which breakfast skipping and dietary behaviors were associated with indicators of mental health among high school students.

Environment

The study was conducted at San Isidro National High School (SINHS), located in San Isidro District, Tagbilaran City, Bohol. The school served both junior and senior high school students coming from various barangays, many of whom belonged to diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This diversity provided a meaningful context for examining variations in students' dietary habits and mental health conditions.

Notably, San Isidro National High School implemented a double class-shifting schedule, wherein some students attended morning classes while others attended in the afternoon. This arrangement is due to lack of classroom and increase in the student population. The shifting schedule played a significant role in shaping students' daily routines, particularly their eating patterns. Morning shift students, for instance, were more likely to skip breakfast due to time constraints, while afternoon shift students experienced irregular meal timing, which could also affect their nutritional intake.

Moreover, financial constraints and differing nutritional knowledge affected students' access to healthy and balanced meals. These circumstances potentially led to less-than-optimal eating habits, including breakfast skipping and reliance on low-nutrient food options. Such factors were important to consider, as they directly and indirectly affected students' physical health, emotional well-being, and academic performance.

The school environment, including its policies, available food options, and support systems, also served as a contributing factor in shaping students' eating behaviors. As a public secondary school, SINHS represented a typical educational setting where challenges related to nutrition and mental health were evident and relevant.

Therefore, San Isidro National High School was considered an appropriate and significant locale for the study, as it provided a realistic and context-rich environment for examining the correlation between breakfast skipping, dietary patterns, and students' mental health. The findings derived from this setting were expected to offer practical insights applicable to similar schools, particularly those operating under comparable socio-economic and structural conditions.

Respondents

The respondents of this study were selected from the Junior High School Department of San Isidro National High School, specifically from Grades 7, 8, and 9. Students from various sections within these grade levels were included, representing a diverse group in terms of age, academic standing, and daily routines. These students were chosen as respondents because they were in a critical developmental stage where nutritional habits and mental health concerns were highly relevant.

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure fair representation across all grade levels and sections. From the total population, the sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula with a margin of error of 5%.

Since the respondents were minors, appropriate ethical considerations were strictly observed. A parental consent form and assent from the students were secured prior to data collection to ensure voluntary participation and to protect their rights and welfare. Confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were also maintained throughout the study.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents

Grade Level	Section	Population	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Grade 7	Acceptance			
	Brilliance	84	52	34.57
	Confidence			
Grade 8	Diligence			
	Excellence	102	63	41.98
	Generosity			
Grade 9	Jovial			
	Kindness	57	36	23.46
	Total	243	151	100.00

Instrument

The primary research instrument for this study was a structured self-administered questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data on breakfast skipping, daily dietary patterns, and their implications for mental health among students at San Isidro National High School. The instrument was divided into four main parts.

Part I covered the demographic profile of the respondents, including age, gender, grade level, socioeconomic status, academic performance, and living arrangement. These variables were used to describe the respondents' background and facilitate comparative analysis among groups. Academic performance was assessed based on the students' 3rd quarter grades, which were obtained with permission from the students through the assistance of their class advisers and the school registrar.

Part II focused on breakfast consumption and eating habits, consisting of three subscales: frequency of breakfast consumption, reasons for skipping breakfast, and number of meals consumed per day. These subscales yielded Cronbach's alpha values of 0.777, 0.742, and 0.705, respectively, indicating acceptable internal consistency. The overall reliability for breakfast skipping habits was 0.765, suggesting that the items consistently measured the intended construct.

Part III examined daily dietary patterns, which included two subscales: types of food commonly consumed and meal timing and regularity. These subscales obtained Cronbach's alpha values of 0.806 and 0.763, respectively, while the overall reliability for this section was 0.825, indicating good internal consistency.

Part IV evaluated mental health indicators and consisted of four subscales: stress levels ($\alpha = 0.837$), emotional stability ($\alpha = 0.873$), self-esteem ($\alpha = 0.870$), and presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies ($\alpha = 0.883$). The overall mental health scale achieved an excellent Cronbach's alpha value of 0.916, reflecting very high reliability.

All items were rated on a Five-point Likert scale ranging from "Always" to "Never" to quantify the frequency of behaviors, experiences, and attitudes. The questionnaire was developed based on existing literature on nutrition and mental health to ensure content validity. A pilot test was conducted to assess reliability, and all sections demonstrated acceptable to excellent Cronbach's alpha values.

According to Taber, Keith S. (2018), a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable, indicating adequate internal consistency of the instrument. Based on this threshold, all subscales and overall measures in this study met or exceeded the acceptable standard.

For statistical analysis, a 0.05 level of significance was used as the basis for determining the significance of the findings.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure of the study followed three phases: Pre-Data Gathering Stage, Data Gathering Stage, and Post-Data Gathering Stage. In the pre-data gathering stage the study began with the formulation of research objectives, identification of key variables, and a comprehensive review of related literature to guide the development of the questionnaire.

The draft instrument was subjected to expert validation to ensure content accuracy, clarity, and relevance, followed by a pilot test to assess reliability using Cronbach's alpha. Based on expert feedback and pilot test results, necessary revisions were made, and the final version of the questionnaire was prepared. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration, and parental consent and student assent were secured prior to data collection, considering that the respondents were minors.

During the data gathering stage, the questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents during their free periods to avoid disruption of classes. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and were given clear instructions to answer the questionnaire honestly and accurately. The researcher provided guidance when needed, and completed questionnaires were collected immediately after completion to ensure a high retrieval rate.

In the post-data gathering stage, the gathered data were checked, coded, and organized systematically. The responses were then encoded and entered into statistical software for analysis. Appropriate statistical tools, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and reliability testing, were utilized to interpret the data and generate meaningful findings aligned with the objectives of the study.

Statistical Treatment

The data gathered from the respondents were organized, encoded, and analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized to interpret the data in accordance with the research questions.

Frequency count and percentage were used to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, grade level, combined family monthly income, and living arrangement. These tools provided a clear distribution and proportion of respondents across different categories.

To determine the level of breakfast skipping habits, daily dietary patterns, and mental health status, weighted mean and standard deviation were employed. The weighted mean was used to measure the average responses of the respondents for each indicator, such as frequency of breakfast consumption, reasons for skipping breakfast, number of meals consumed per day, types of food commonly consumed, meal timing and regularity, stress levels, emotional stability, self-esteem, and presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies.

Meanwhile, the standard deviation was used to determine the variability or consistency of the respondents' answers, indicating how closely the responses were clustered around the mean.

The level of academic performance of the respondents was described using mean and standard deviation, based on their recorded 3rd quarter grades. To determine the significant correlations between variables, **Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient** was utilized.

This statistical tool was used to examine the correlations between: (1) breakfast skipping habits and daily dietary patterns, mental health status, and academic performance; (2) daily dietary patterns and mental health status and

academic performance; (3) mental health status and academic performance. In addition, Spearman's rho measured the strength and direction of the correlations among variables, indicating whether they were positively or negatively correlated. A 0.05 level of significance was adopted as the basis for determining whether the correlations between variables were statistically significant.

Results

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in this study on breakfast skipping habits, daily dietary patterns, mental health status, and academic performance among students of San Isidro National High School. The data were systematically organized and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Spearman's rho.

The presentation of results follows the sequence of the research questions, beginning with the profile of the respondents, followed by the levels of breakfast skipping habits, dietary patterns, mental health status, and academic performance, and finally, the significant correlations among the variables. Each table is accompanied by a discussion, interpretation, supporting literature, and implications to provide a comprehensive understanding of the findings.

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This portion presents the respondent's profile in terms of age, gender, grade level, monthly income, and living arrangement.

Age

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents in terms of age. The data shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Age of the respondents

Age (in years)	f	%
15-17	24	15.89
12-14	127	84.11
Total	151	100.00

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents were aged 12–14 years, comprising 127 students or 84.11% of the total sample. In contrast, only 24 respondents or 15.89% belonged to the 15–17 years age group. This indicates that most of the participants were in the early adolescent stage.

The findings suggest that the study predominantly involved early adolescents, who are in a crucial developmental period characterized by rapid physical growth and behavioral formation. From an analytical standpoint, this suggests that the study primarily captures the behaviors, habits, and experiences of students within a relatively homogeneous developmental stage, where physical, cognitive, and emotional changes are actively occurring.

This concentration within a particular age group is important, as it reflects a period where individuals begin to develop independence in their lifestyle choices, including eating habits and daily routines.

The relatively narrow age distribution of respondents also implies that variations in the results may be less influenced by age differences and more by other factors such as lifestyle, environment, and personal behaviors.

This strengthens the internal consistency of the study but may limit the generalizability of the findings to other age groups, particularly younger children or older adolescents who may exhibit different behavioral patterns.

This observation is supported by research indicating that adolescence is a critical period for the development of dietary habits and mental health. Sawyer et al. (2012) emphasized that adolescents undergo significant biological and social changes that influence their health behaviors, while the World Health Organization highlights their vulnerability to unhealthy eating patterns and mental health challenges during this stage.

According to Jean Piaget, individuals aged 12–15 are in the formal operational stage, characterized by developing decision-making and self-regulation skills. Studies further show that early adolescence is a formative period for establishing eating habits and lifestyle behaviors that can affect long-term health outcomes. Additionally, younger adolescents are more susceptible to external influences such as family routines and school schedules, which may shape their dietary patterns and psychological well-being (Sawyer et al., 2012).

The dominance of respondents aged 12–14 suggests that interventions derived from this study should be tailored toward early adolescents, focusing on establishing healthy breakfast habits and promoting mental well-being at an early stage. Schools and parents may need to provide stronger guidance and structured routines, as students in this age group are still developing independence in their eating behaviors. Moreover, early intervention can help prevent the development of unhealthy dietary patterns and mental health issues as students' progress into later adolescence.

Gender

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents in terms of gender. The data shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Gender of the respondents

Gender	f	%
Female	71	47.02
Male	80	52.98
Total	151	100.00

Table 3 presents the gender distribution of the respondents. The data showed that 80 respondents or 52.98% were male, while 71 respondents or 47.02% were female. This indicates a relatively balanced distribution of respondents in terms of gender, with a slightly higher number of male participants. The results suggest that both male and female students were adequately represented in the study, allowing for a more balanced perspective in examining breakfast habits, dietary patterns, and mental health.

The slight predominance of male respondents indicates that the findings may marginally reflect male experiences; however, the difference is minimal and does not significantly affect the overall representation.

From an analytical perspective, gender differences can significantly shape how adolescents experience and manage both their dietary habits and mental health. It can be observed that males and females may respond differently to stress, social expectations, and lifestyle choices, which in turn influence their eating behaviors and emotional well-being. For instance, females may be more conscious of body image and social standards, potentially leading to restrictive eating patterns or heightened emotional sensitivity.

On the other hand, males may be less expressive about emotional concerns and may cope through behavioral or external actions, which can also affect their overall health practices. These differences suggest that gender is not merely a demographic variable but a meaningful factor that influences how students develop habits and respond to daily challenges.

Additionally, the nearly equal representation of male and female respondents strengthens the reliability of the study, as it allows for a balanced understanding of both groups. However, despite this balance, it is important to recognize that exposure does not necessarily mean experience, as each gender may interpret and respond to similar situations differently.

This implies that school-based programs should not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, interventions should be designed to be gender-sensitive, acknowledging differences in emotional processing, coping strategies, and behavioral tendencies to ensure more effective outcomes in promoting healthy eating and mental well-being.

This observation is supported by the World Health Organization (2020), which emphasizes that gender plays a significant role in shaping dietary behaviors and mental health outcomes among adolescents. Nolen-Hoeksema (2001) found that females are more likely to experience higher levels of stress and anxiety due to a tendency toward rumination. In terms of body image, Cash and Smolak (2011) reported that adolescent females exhibit greater body dissatisfaction compared to males, largely influenced by sociocultural expectations and media exposure.

Furthermore, Susman (2006) noted that males and females differ in coping mechanisms, with males tending to externalize stress while females are more likely to internalize emotional distress, further influencing their dietary habits and overall well-being.

Grade Level

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents in terms of grade level. The data shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Grade level of the respondents

Grade Level	f	%
Grade 9	36	23.84
Grade 8	63	41.72
Grade 7	52	34.44
Total	151	100.00

Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents according to grade level. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents were from Grade 8, with 63 students or 41.72%. This was followed by Grade 7, comprising 52 respondents or 34.44%, while Grade 9 had the smallest proportion with 36 respondents or 23.84%.

The findings indicate that most of the respondents were in the middle level of junior high school, particularly in Grade 8. From an analytical perspective, this suggests that the study largely reflects the experiences of students who are in a critical midpoint of adolescent development, where they have already begun adjusting to the academic and social demands of high school but are still in the process of forming stable habits and coping mechanisms.

At this stage, students are likely gaining more independence in managing their daily routines, including their eating behaviors, which may directly influence both their nutritional practices and mental health status.

Furthermore, the distribution across grade levels implies that the study captures perspectives from early to middle adolescence, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how dietary habits and mental health may evolve during these years. Students in Grade 8, in particular, may experience a balance of increasing academic responsibilities and social pressures, which can affect their lifestyle choices.

This stage may also represent a period where behaviors become more consistent, making it an important point for observation and intervention. The prominence of this group in the study highlights their relevance in understanding patterns related to breakfast skipping, dietary practices, and psychological well-being.

According to the Department of Education (DepEd), junior high school students, particularly those in Grades 7 to 9, undergo significant academic and social transitions that can influence both their eating behaviors and mental health. Studies further indicate that as students' progress through grade levels, they develop greater autonomy in their daily routines, including meal patterns, which can impact their nutritional intake and psychological well-being. These findings support the idea that middle adolescence is a formative stage where both positive and negative habits may become established.

The predominance of Grade 8 respondents suggests that interventions and programs developed from this study should particularly address students in the middle stage of junior high school. This implies that schools should not only focus on early prevention in lower grade levels but also reinforce healthy behaviors during this transitional midpoint, where students are more capable of making independent choices yet still require guidance.

Strengthening nutrition education and mental health support across all grade levels while tailoring strategies to students' developmental needs can help promote consistent healthy dietary habits and improve overall well-being and academic performance.

Monthly Income

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents in terms of monthly income. The data shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Combined Family Income

Monthly Income (in pesos)	f	%
140,845 and above	5	3.31
82,807-140,844	5	3.31
47,687-82,806	8	5.30
23,844-47,686	10	6.62
13,874-23,843	43	28.48
Below 13,873	80	52.98
Total	151	100.00

Table 5 presents the distribution of respondents according to their combined family monthly income. The data showed that the majority of the respondents, 80 or 52.98%, belonged to households earning below ₱13,873. This was followed by 43 respondents or 28.48% within the ₱13,874–₱23,843 income bracket. A smaller proportion of respondents fell within the middle-income categories: ₱23,844– ₱47,686 (10 or 6.62%) and ₱47,687–₱82,806 (8 or 5.30%). Meanwhile, only 5 respondents (3.31%) each belonged to the higher income brackets of ₱82,807– ₱140,844 and ₱140,845 and above.

The findings indicate that many of the respondents came from low-income households, with a significant portion living below or near the poverty threshold. This suggests that financial constraints may play a major role in shaping students' dietary habits, including the likelihood of skipping breakfast and consuming nutritionally

inadequate meals. Limited financial resources may restrict access to healthy food options, thereby influencing both physical health and mental well-being.

According to Philippine Statistics Authority (2021), household income is a key determinant of food security and nutritional status among Filipino families. Studies have shown that children from low-income households are more likely to experience food insecurity, irregular meal consumption, and poor dietary quality (Gundersen and Ziliak, 2015). Similarly, Desbouys et al. (2020) emphasized that socio-economic disparities significantly affect adolescents' eating behaviors, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds more prone to skipping meals and consuming less nutritious food.

In addition, McEwen (2012) highlighted that financial stress associated with low socio-economic status can activate chronic stress responses, which are linked to increased anxiety levels, reduced academic performance, and overall lower psychological well-being among adolescents.

The predominance of respondents from low-income families highlights the need for school-based nutrition interventions, such as feeding programs and affordable healthy food options. Schools and policymakers should prioritize support for economically disadvantaged students to ensure access to proper nutrition, particularly breakfast. Addressing financial barriers may help improve students' dietary habits, which in turn can enhance their mental health, academic engagement, and overall well-being.

Living Arrangement

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents in terms of living arrangement. The data shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Respondents' living arrangement

Living Arrangement	f	%
With both parents	110	72.85
With one parent	17	11.26
With grandparents	12	7.95
With guardian	12	7.95
Total	151	100.00

Table 6 presents the distribution of respondents according to their living arrangement. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents, 110 or 72.85%, were living with both parents. This was followed by 17 respondents or 11.26% who were living with one parent. Meanwhile, 12 respondents or 7.95% each were living with grandparents and with guardians.

The findings indicate that most respondents were raised in a two-parent household, which may provide a more stable environment in terms of supervision, emotional support, and daily routines, including meal preparation. However, a notable proportion of students lived in alternative arrangements, such as with a single parent, grandparents, or guardians, which may influence their dietary habits and emotional well-being due to differences in caregiving practices and available resources.

According to UNICEF, family structure plays a significant role in shaping children's health behaviors, including nutrition and mental health. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994), found that adolescents living in two-parent households are more likely to benefit from structured routines and consistent parental monitoring compared to those in single-parent or alternative family arrangements. Similarly, adolescents in intact families tend to have more regular meal consumption patterns due to increased supervision and household stability (Stewart et al., 2009).

In contrast, Musick and Meier (2010), emphasized that adolescents in non-traditional family structures may experience reduced parental support and inconsistent routines, which can contribute to irregular eating habits and emotional vulnerability.

The predominance of respondents living with both parents suggests that family support systems are generally present; however, interventions should still consider students in non-traditional living arrangements, as they may be more vulnerable to irregular eating habits and mental health challenges. Schools may need to strengthen guidance programs, provide nutrition education, and offer additional support to students who lack consistent home-based support to ensure their overall well-being.

LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS' BREAKFAST SKIPPING HABITS

This portion presents the respondent's level of breakfast skipping in terms of frequency of breakfast consumption, reasons for skipping breakfast, and number of meals consumed per day.

Frequency of Breakfast Consumption

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' level of breakfast skipping in terms of frequency of breakfast consumption. The data shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of frequency of breakfast consumption

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I eat breakfast every school day.	3.77	1.32	Often
2	I eat breakfast on weekends	4.12	1.17	Often
3	I rarely eat breakfast before going to school.	2.87	1.46	Sometimes
4	I eat breakfast at the same time each morning before going to school.	3.44	1.41	Often
5	I eat breakfast even when I wake up late.	3.18	1.59	Sometimes
6	I eat breakfast more than four times a week.	3.11	1.40	Sometimes
7	I only eat breakfast when I feel hungry.	3.11	1.45	Sometimes
8	I eat breakfast when someone prepares it for me.	2.74	1.50	Sometimes
9	I make it a habit to eat breakfast every day.	3.58	1.44	Often
10	I skip breakfast more than three times a week.	2.28	1.38	Rarely
Aggregate Mean		3.22		
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.41	Sometimes

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Always; 3.41-4.20- Often; 2.61-3.40-Sometimes; 1.81-2.60-Rarely; 1.00-1.80- Never

Table 7 presents the level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of frequency of breakfast consumption. The overall results showed an aggregate mean of 3.22, verbally interpreted as "Sometimes," with a standard deviation of 1.41, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in “I eat breakfast on weekends” with a mean of 4.12 (Often), followed by “I eat breakfast every school day” with a mean of 3.77 (Often), and “I make it a habit to eat breakfast every day” with a mean of 3.58 (Often). On the other hand, lower mean scores were noted in “I skip breakfast more than three times a week” with a mean of 2.28 (Rarely) and “I eat breakfast when someone prepares it for me” with a mean of 2.74 (Sometimes).

The findings indicate that the respondents sometimes practiced regular breakfast consumption, suggesting that breakfast eating was not consistently maintained among students. While many respondents reported eating breakfast frequently especially on weekends there were still inconsistencies during school days.

This pattern implies that factors such as time constraints, daily routines, and personal habits may influence students’ breakfast consumption. The relatively low score for frequent skipping suggests that although breakfast is not always consistent, habitual skipping is not highly prevalent.

From a broader perspective, this inconsistency highlights how adolescent eating behaviors are often situational rather than stable habits. Students may recognize the importance of breakfast but still fail to consistently practice it when faced with competing morning demands such as rushing to school or prioritizing extra sleep.

This suggests that the issue is less about awareness and more about behavioral structure and environmental support systems that enable or hinder routine meal consumption.

This interpretation is supported by evidence indicating that regular breakfast intake contributes significantly to adolescents’ cognitive functioning, attention span, and emotional stability throughout the school day. The World Health Organization emphasizes that consistent breakfast consumption is linked to improved cognitive performance and better emotional regulation among adolescents.

Similarly, empirical studies show that breakfast skipping is more common on school days due to time constraints, lack of appetite in the morning, and lifestyle-related factors, whereas more flexible schedules during weekends allow for more regular meal consumption (Timlin & Pereira, 2007; Affenito, 2005). These findings reinforce the present study’s implication that breakfast patterns are highly sensitive to daily routines and external time structures.

Overall, the results suggest that interventions should go beyond awareness campaigns and focus on creating enabling environments for consistent breakfast consumption. Schools may consider adjusting schedules where possible or integrating short nutrition breaks and education programs that reinforce the importance of morning meals.

Likewise, parents and guardians play a crucial role in establishing morning routines and ensuring accessible, quick, and nutritious breakfast options. Strengthening both school-based and home-based support systems may help transform irregular breakfast consumption into a more consistent and sustainable habit among students.

Reasons for Skipping Breakfast

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents’ level of breakfast skipping in terms of reasons for skipping breakfast. The data shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Level of the respondents’ breakfast skipping habits in terms of reasons for skipping breakfast

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I skip breakfast because I don’t feel hungry in the morning.	2.74	1.31	Sometimes
2	I skip breakfast when I wake up late or run out of time.	2.95	1.39	Sometimes

3	I skip breakfast because food is not available.	2.15	1.28	Rarely
4	I skip breakfast to control my weight.	2.15	1.31	Rarely
5	I skip breakfast because it is not a priority for me.	1.70	1.05	Never
6	I skip breakfast because I don't like the food available.	1.85	1.15	Rarely
7	I skip breakfast because I feel too tired or sleepy.	2.17	1.19	Rarely
8	I skip breakfast due to stress or emotional problems.	2.05	1.19	Rarely
9	I skip breakfast because no one prepares food at home.	1.64	1.05	Never
10	I skip breakfast because I prefer to eat later in the day.	2.56	1.38	Rarely
Aggregate Mean		2.20		Rarely
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.23	

Table 8 presents the level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of their reasons for skipping breakfast. The results showed an aggregate mean of 2.20, verbally interpreted as "Rarely," with a standard deviation of 1.23, indicating relatively consistent responses among participants.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I skip breakfast when I wake up late or run out of time" with a mean of 2.95 (Sometimes), followed by "I skip breakfast because I don't feel hungry in the morning" with a mean of 2.74 (Sometimes).

Meanwhile, most of the remaining indicators were rated Rarely, including reasons such as lack of food availability (2.15), controlling weight (2.15), feeling too tired (2.17), and stress or emotional problems (2.05). Notably, the lowest mean scores were found in "I skip breakfast because no one prepares food at home" (1.64, Never) and "I skip breakfast because it is not a priority for me" (1.70, Never).

The findings indicate that the respondents rarely skipped breakfast due to specific reasons, suggesting that breakfast skipping was not strongly influenced by major barriers such as food unavailability, lack of support, or intentional behavior. Instead, the most common reasons identified were time constraints and lack of appetite, which are situational rather than habitual factors. This implies that breakfast skipping among the respondents may occur occasionally due to daily routines rather than consistent personal or environmental limitations.

The findings suggest that breakfast skipping among adolescents is less likely driven by extreme structural barriers such as food insecurity, and more influenced by everyday practical constraints within their routines. This implies that many students are not necessarily unable to access food, but rather are constrained by morning conditions that make breakfast less of a priority or difficult to integrate into their schedule.

In particular, early school start times, commuting demands, and competing morning activities appear to shape whether breakfast is consumed or skipped. This points to breakfast consumption as a behavior that is highly sensitive to time pressure and daily routine organization rather than purely economic or access-related factors.

Building on this, the pattern observed in the study highlights how adolescent eating behaviors are often shaped by convenience and perceived feasibility rather than nutritional awareness alone. Even when students understand the importance of breakfast, the decision to skip it may still occur if morning routines are rushed or if appetite is low upon waking.

This suggests that interventions must move beyond information dissemination and instead focus on modifying the conditions under which breakfast decisions are made, making the behavior easier and more automatic within students' daily schedules.

This interpretation aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of time constraints and environmental structure in adolescent breakfast consumption. The World Health Organization notes that breakfast skipping among adolescents is commonly associated with practical barriers such as limited time in the morning and reduced appetite rather than structural issues like food insecurity.

Similarly, Timlin and Pereira (2007) found that early school schedules and rushed morning routines significantly contribute to breakfast omission. Hoyland et al. (2009) further confirmed that breakfast consumption is consistently lower on school days compared to weekends, underscoring the influence of academic schedules on eating patterns. In addition, Affenito (2007) emphasized that both school demands and household routines significantly shape adolescents' breakfast behaviors, reinforcing the idea that context plays a central role in dietary consistency.

Taken together, these findings suggest that effective interventions should prioritize practical, routine-based solutions. Schools may consider promoting quick, accessible breakfast options or incorporating brief morning eating opportunities for students with limited time.

Parents can also support consistency by preparing simple, ready-to-eat meals that reduce morning preparation time. In addition, awareness campaigns may be strengthened by emphasizing that breakfast does not need to be elaborate to be beneficial, helping students understand that even simple meals can support cognitive and emotional functioning.

By addressing these practical barriers directly, it becomes more feasible to improve the regularity of breakfast consumption and, in turn, support students' academic performance and mental well-being.

Number of Meals Consumed Per Day

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' level of breakfast skipping in terms of number of meals consumed per day. The data shown in Table 9.

Table 9 Level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of number of meals consumed per day

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I eat three full meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) in a day.	3.97	1.19	Often
2	I eat in the middle of the day.	3.41	1.31	Often
3	I eat thrice in the morning.	2.43	1.45	Rarely
4	I eat midnight snacks.	2.75	1.35	Sometimes
5	I eat snacks after eating my meal.	2.81	1.27	Sometimes
6	I eat meal once every afternoon.	3.23	1.38	Sometimes
7	I eat meal twice every evening.	2.42	1.24	Rarely
8	I skip at least one meal in a typical day.	2.79	1.27	Sometimes
9	I go a whole day without eating at least once a week.	1.72	1.25	Never
10	I follow a consistent daily eating schedule (same meal times).	3.03	1.37	Sometimes

Aggregate Mean

2.86

Sometimes

Aggregate Standard Deviation

1.31

Table 9 presents the level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits in terms of the number of meals consumed per day. The results revealed an aggregate mean of 2.86, verbally interpreted as "Sometimes," with a standard deviation of 1.31, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I eat three full meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) in a day" with a mean of 3.97 (Often), followed by "I eat in the middle of the day" with a mean of 3.41 (Often).

On the other hand, lower mean scores were noted in "I go a whole day without eating at least once a week" with a mean of 1.72 (Never), "I eat thrice in the morning" with a mean of 2.43 (Rarely), and "I eat meal twice every evening" with a mean of 2.42 (Rarely). Several indicators such as "I skip at least one meal in a typical day" (2.79) and "I follow a consistent daily eating schedule" (3.03) were interpreted as Sometimes, reflecting some irregularities in eating patterns.

The findings suggest that respondents demonstrate only moderate consistency in maintaining regular meal consumption, indicating that while eating three meals a day is generally practiced, it is not yet a fully stable or structured habit among students.

This pattern implies that students are able to meet basic nutritional frequency most of the time, but their eating behaviors are still vulnerable to disruption from daily demands and shifting schedules.

The presence of occasional meal skipping and irregular eating times suggests that meal consumption is influenced more by situational factors such as school workload, time pressure, or personal routines rather than a firmly established daily structure.

Although the very low incidence of going an entire day without eating indicates that severe food deprivation is not a concern, the inconsistency in timing and completeness of meals may still have cumulative effects on energy regulation, concentration, and overall well-being.

From a behavioral standpoint, this suggests that students may have awareness of the importance of eating regularly but struggle with translating this awareness into consistent practice. Inconsistent meal timing can also reflect a lack of routine stability, where academic responsibilities and personal habits compete with structured eating schedules.

Over time, even occasional skipping may contribute to fluctuations in energy levels and cognitive performance during school activities, particularly if meals are not evenly distributed throughout the day.

This interpretation is consistent with global and empirical findings emphasizing the importance of regular meal patterns during adolescence. The World Health Organization stresses that adolescents should maintain consistent eating schedules, including three balanced meals per day, to support growth, cognitive development, and sustained energy levels.

However, research indicates that irregular eating patterns and occasional meal skipping are prevalent among adolescents, often driven by academic pressures, lifestyle behaviors, and limited time availability (Affenito, 2007). These findings support the idea that meal irregularity is not uncommon even in populations without severe food insecurity, reinforcing the situational nature of adolescent dietary habits.

Overall, the results highlight the need to strengthen not only meal frequency but also meal regularity and structure. Schools and families play a critical role in reinforcing predictable eating routines by encouraging students to allocate specific times for meals despite academic or personal demands.

Nutrition education programs may further emphasize that consistency in meal timing is as important as meal quantity, helping students understand its link to sustained energy and mental focus.

By reinforcing structured eating habits at both home and school levels, students may be better supported in achieving improved concentration, stable energy levels, and enhanced academic performance.

Summary on the Level of the Respondents' Breakfast Skipping Habits

This sub-section presents the summary of the survey results of the respondents' level of breakfast skipping in terms of frequency of breakfast consumption, reasons for skipping breakfast, and number of meals consumed per day. The data shown in Table 10.

Table 10 Summary on the level of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Frequency of breakfast consumption	3.22	1.41	Sometimes
Reasons for skipping breakfast	2.20	1.23	Rarely
Number of meals consumed per day	2.86	1.31	Sometimes
Grand Mean	2.76		Sometimes
Grand Standard Deviation		1.32	

Table 10 presents the summary of the respondents' breakfast skipping habits across three components. The results revealed a grand mean of 2.76, verbally interpreted as "Sometimes," with a grand standard deviation of 1.32, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Among the components, frequency of breakfast consumption obtained the highest mean of 3.22 (Sometimes), followed by number of meals consumed per day with a mean of 2.86 (Sometimes).

Meanwhile, reasons for skipping breakfast had the lowest mean of 2.20 (Rarely). These findings indicate that while students sometimes practiced regular breakfast consumption and meal intake, the reasons for skipping breakfast were not strongly evident among the respondents.

The findings suggest that the respondents occasionally exhibited breakfast skipping behaviors, reflecting moderate inconsistency in their eating habits.

Although students generally did not strongly identify with specific reasons for skipping breakfast, their actual behaviors indicated that breakfast consumption was not consistently practiced. This implies that breakfast skipping may occur due to situational or routine related factors rather than deliberate or strongly perceived reasons.

According to World Health Organization, adolescents often demonstrate irregular eating patterns, particularly breakfast consumption, due to lifestyle factors such as time constraints, changing routines, and personal habits.

Research also suggests that even when adolescents do not strongly perceive reasons for skipping meals, their behaviors may still reflect inconsistent eating patterns, which can affect both physical and mental health (Rampersaud et al., 2005; O'Sullivan et al., 2009).

The results highlight the need for consistent reinforcement of healthy breakfast habits among students. Since breakfast skipping occurs occasionally rather than frequently, interventions should focus on establishing regular routines and increasing awareness of the importance of daily breakfast consumption.

Schools and families may collaborate to promote structured meal schedules and provide accessible breakfast options. Strengthening these habits can contribute to improved nutritional intake, better mental health, and enhanced academic performance among students.

EXTENT OF THE RESPONDENTS' DAILY DIETARY PATTERNS

This portion presents the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of types of food commonly consumed and their meal timing and regularity.

Types of Food Commonly Consumed

This sub-section presents the survey results of the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of types of food commonly consumed. The data shown in Table 11.

Table 11 Extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of types of food commonly consumed

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I eat rice or other grains (e.g., bread, corn) with my meals.	4.19	1.09	Often
2	I consume fruits such as bananas, mangoes, apples, etc.	3.62	1.09	Often
3	I eat vegetables such as leafy greens, carrots, squash, etc.	3.46	1.18	Often
4	I drink milk or eat other dairy products like cheese or yogurt.	3.26	1.22	Sometimes
5	I eat meat, poultry, or fish.	3.91	1.03	Often
6	I consume processed or instant food (e.g., canned goods, noodles).	3.62	1.04	Often
7	I eat sweet snacks.	3.38	1.04	Sometimes
8	I drink sugar- sweetened beverages.	3.05	1.02	Sometimes
9	I eat fast food (e.g., burgers, fried chicken, pizza, etc.)	3.12	1.00	Sometimes
10	I consume chips or salty snacks (e.g., fries, crackers).	3.05	1.01	Sometimes
Aggregate Mean		3.47		
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.07	Often

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Always; 3.41-4.20- Often; 2.61-3.40-Sometimes; 1.81-2.60-Rarely; 1.00-1.80- Never

Table 11 presents the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of the types of food commonly consumed. The results revealed an aggregate mean of 3.47, verbally interpreted as "Often," with a standard deviation of 1.07, indicating relatively consistent responses among respondents.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was recorded in "I eat rice or other grains (e.g., bread, corn) with my meals" with a mean of 4.19 (Often), followed by "I eat meat, poultry, or fish" with a mean of 3.91 (Often). Other indicators that were interpreted as Often included fruit consumption (3.62), vegetable intake (3.46), and consumption of processed or instant foods (3.62).

On the other hand, several indicators were interpreted as Sometimes, such as "I drink milk or eat dairy products" (3.26), "I eat sweet snacks" (3.38), "I drink sugar-sweetened beverages" (3.05), "I eat fast food" (3.12), and "I consume chips or salty snacks" (3.05).

The findings indicate that the respondents often consumed a variety of food types, including staple foods, protein sources, and some fruits and vegetables, suggesting relatively acceptable dietary practices.

However, the presence of processed foods, sweet snacks, and sugar-sweetened beverages in their diet indicates that students also engaged in less healthy eating behaviors. The moderate consumption of dairy products suggests a possible gap in nutrient intake, particularly calcium-rich foods.

From a nutritional behavior perspective, this dual pattern may reflect the influence of convenience, food preferences, and environmental availability. While healthier food options may be present, processed and sugary foods are often more accessible, more affordable, or more appealing to adolescents, which can lead to frequent consumption despite awareness of healthier alternatives.

The moderate intake of dairy products also signals a potential nutritional gap, particularly in calcium and other micronutrients essential for adolescent growth and bone development. Over time, such imbalances may not be immediately visible but can contribute to long-term health implications if not addressed.

According to World Health Organization, a balanced diet for adolescents should include a variety of food groups such as grains, fruits, vegetables, protein sources, and dairy products.

However, studies have shown that adolescents frequently consume processed foods and sugary beverages due to accessibility, preference, and lifestyle factors (Story et al., 2002; Popkin, 2012). This combination of healthy and less healthy food choices is common among adolescents and may affect both physical and mental health outcomes.

The results suggest a need to strengthen nutrition education programs that promote balanced and healthy food choices among students. While the frequent consumption of staple foods and protein sources is positive, schools and families should encourage increased intake of nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, and dairy products while reducing the consumption of processed foods and sugary drinks.

Improving dietary quality can contribute to better physical health, enhanced cognitive function, and improved mental well-being among students.

Meal Timing and Regularity

This sub-section presents the survey results of the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of meal timing and regularity. The data shown in Table 12.

Table 12 Extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of meal timing and regularity

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I eat my meals at the same time every day.	3.31	1.19	Sometimes
2	I regularly eat breakfast before going to school.	3.68	1.30	Often
3	I follow a consistent meal schedule throughout the week.	3.07	1.41	Sometimes
4	I usually eat my meal at a regular time.	3.54	1.15	Often
5	I often delay eating meals due to school or personal activities.	3.22	1.23	Sometimes
6	I tend to skip meals when I'm busy or stressed.	2.58	1.37	Rarely

7	I have a regular eating routine on both weekdays and weekends.	3.25	1.24	Sometimes
8	I feel comfortable when I eat my meal.	4.05	1.13	Often
9	I plan my meals according to a daily schedule.	2.81	1.29	Sometimes
10	I tend to skip meals when I'm busy or stressed.	2.59	1.34	Rarely
Aggregate Mean		3.21		Sometimes
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.27	

Table 12 presents the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of meal timing and regularity. The results revealed an aggregate mean of 3.21, verbally interpreted as "Sometimes," with a standard deviation of 1.27, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I feel comfortable when I eat my meal" with a mean of 4.05 (Often), followed by "I regularly eat breakfast before going to school" (3.68, Often) and "I usually eat my meal at a regular time" (3.54, Often).

On the other hand, several indicators were interpreted as Sometimes, including "I eat my meals at the same time every day" (3.31), "I follow a consistent meal schedule throughout the week" (3.07), "I often delay eating meals due to school or personal activities" (3.22), "I have a regular eating routine on both weekdays and weekends" (3.25), and "I plan my meals according to a daily schedule" (2.81).

Meanwhile, the lowest mean scores were observed in "I tend to skip meals when I'm busy or stressed" with means of 2.58 and 2.59 (Rarely), indicating that skipping meals due to stress or busyness was not frequently practiced.

The findings indicate that the respondents sometimes practiced regular meal timing and consistency, suggesting moderate adherence to structured eating routines. While students often ate breakfast and maintained regular meal times, overall consistency across days and schedules was not strongly established. The results also suggest that although students occasionally delayed meals, skipping meals due to stress or busyness was not a common behavior.

According to World Health Organization, maintaining regular meal timing is essential for proper metabolism, energy balance, and cognitive performance among adolescents.

However, studies indicate that irregular schedules due to academic demands and daily activities often lead to inconsistent meal timing (Timlin & Pereira, 2007; Hoyland et al., 2009). This aligns with the findings that students sometimes follow structured eating routines but still experience occasional irregularities.

The results highlight the need to promote consistent meal scheduling and time management among students. Schools and families should encourage structured daily routines that support regular eating habits, even during busy schedules.

Nutrition education programs may emphasize the importance of meal timing in maintaining energy levels and mental well-being. Strengthening consistency in meal patterns can help improve students' overall health, concentration, and academic performance.

Summary on the Extent of the Respondents' Daily Dietary Patterns

This sub-section presents the summary of the survey results of the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns in terms of types of food commonly consumed and their meal timing and regularity. The data shown in Table 13.

Table 13 Summary on the extent of the respondents' daily dietary patterns

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Types of food commonly consumed	3.47	1.07	Often
Meal timing and regularity	3.21	1.27	Sometimes
Grand Mean	3.34		Sometimes
Grand Standard Deviation		1.17	

Table 13 presents the summary of the respondents' daily dietary patterns across two components. The results revealed a grand mean of 3.34, verbally interpreted as "Sometimes," with a grand standard deviation of 1.17, indicating moderate consistency in responses.

Among the components, types of food commonly consumed obtained a higher mean of 3.47 (Often), while meal timing and regularity had a lower mean of 3.21 (Sometimes). These findings suggest that while respondents frequently consumed various types of food, their consistency in meal timing and regular eating routines was less stable.

The findings indicate that the respondents sometimes demonstrated healthy dietary patterns overall, with better performance in food variety than in meal regularity. This implies that although students were able to consume different types of food, they were not consistently following structured meal schedules. The imbalance between food choice and eating routine suggests that dietary quality may be present, but consistency in eating behavior remains a concern.

RESPONDENT'S MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

This portion presents the respondents' mental health status in terms of stress levels, emotional stability, self-esteem, and presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies.

Stress Levels

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' mental health status in terms of stress levels. The data shown in Table 14.

Table 14 Level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of stress levels

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I feel overwhelmed by school responsibilities	3.34	0.99	Good
2	I experience headaches, stomachaches, or body pains when I'm in school/stress	3.31	1.07	Good
3	I have difficulty concentrating because of stress.	3.01	1.16	Good
4	I feel nervous or anxious when facing deadlines or exams.	3.56	1.14	Very Good
5	I feel emotionally exhausted after a long day at school.	3.54	1.20	Very Good
6	I lose sleep due to worrying about school or personal issues.	3.16	1.23	Good

7	I feel easily irritated or short-tempered when stressed	3.16	1.23	Good
8	I feel pressure to meet the expectations of others (e.g., teachers, family).	3.23	1.24	Good
9	I avoid tasks or responsibilities because they feel too overwhelming.	2.60	1.16	Fair
10	I feel like I have no control over things happening in my life.	2.84	1.25	Good
Aggregate Mean		3.18		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.17	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Outstanding; 3.41-4.20-Very Good; 2.61-3.40-Good; 1.81-2.60-Fair; 1.00-1.80- Poor

Table 14 presents the level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of stress levels. The results showed an aggregate mean of 3.18, which indicates that students sometimes experience the given stress-related indicators, verbally interpreted as "Good," with a standard deviation of 1.17, indicating moderate variability in responses. It is important to clarify that the verbal descriptions "Good" and "Very Good" in this context do not imply a positive mental health condition but rather represent the frequency or extent of experiencing stress symptoms, since the indicators are negatively worded. Thus, higher mean scores correspond to higher level of stress among the respondents.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I feel nervous or anxious when facing deadlines or exams" with a mean of 3.56 (Very Good), indicating that students often experience nervousness or anxiety when dealing with deadlines or examinations. This is followed closely by "I feel emotionally exhausted after a long day at school" with a mean of 3.54 (Very Good) suggesting also that students often experience emotional exhaustion after a full day of school activities.

Other indicators such as feeling overwhelmed by school responsibilities (3.34), experiencing physical symptoms of stress (3.31), and feeling pressure to meet expectations (3.23) were interpreted as Good and fall under the sometimes category, implying that these experiences occur at a moderate level among students.

Meanwhile, the lowest mean was recorded in "I avoid tasks or responsibilities because they feel too overwhelming" with a mean of 2.60 (Fair), followed by "I feel like I have no control over things happening in my life" with a mean of 2.84 (Good).

The findings indicate that the respondents experienced a moderate level of stress, suggesting that while stress was present, it was generally manageable. Students reported experiencing stress-related feelings such as anxiety during exams and emotional exhaustion; however, these did not strongly translate into avoidance behaviors or a complete loss of control. This suggests that respondents were able to cope with academic and personal stressors to a certain extent.

From a broader developmental perspective, this pattern suggests that students may be in a transitional stage of coping where stress is acknowledged and experienced, but coping strategies are not yet fully optimized or consistently applied.

While some students may already be developing adaptive responses such as time management or emotional regulation, others may still be relying on reactive coping methods, which can explain the presence of emotional fatigue during demanding periods.

Over time, if unmanaged, even moderate stress may accumulate and contribute to reduced motivation, concentration difficulties, or emotional strain, particularly in academically intense environments.

This interpretation is consistent with established literature on adolescent stress. The World Health Organization recognizes that moderate stress is common among adolescents due to academic demands, social expectations, and developmental transitions. Such stress is not inherently negative, as it can sometimes enhance motivation and performance when kept within manageable levels.

However, when stress becomes prolonged or poorly managed, it can lead to adverse psychological outcomes. Similarly, Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory emphasizes that stress outcomes depend largely on an individual's coping mechanisms and appraisal of stressors, while Compas et al. (2017) highlight those adolescents frequently experience stress related to academic and social domains, with varying degrees of adaptive and maladaptive coping responses.

Overall, the findings suggest that while students are generally coping with stress at a manageable level, the presence of anxiety and emotional exhaustion signals the need for proactive mental health support.

Schools may consider strengthening counseling services, integrating stress management and emotional regulation programs, and providing time management training to help students better navigate academic demands.

Early intervention and continuous support can help prevent moderate stress from escalating into chronic stress, thereby promoting improved emotional well-being, academic engagement, and overall resilience among students.

Emotional Stability

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' mental health status in terms of emotional stability. The data shown in Table 15.

Table 15 Level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of emotional stability

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I stay calm even when facing stressful situations.	3.28	1.18	Good
2	I can manage my emotions when something upsetting happens.	3.29	1.09	Good
3	I remain patient even when things don't go my way.	3.33	1.15	Good
4	I recover quickly after feeling sad or frustrated.	3.30	1.28	Good
5	I am able to express my feelings in a healthy way.	3.26	1.26	Good
6	I can stay focused even when I feel emotional.	3.20	1.18	Good
7	I avoid overreacting to small problems.	3.27	1.24	Good
8	I feel emotionally balanced most of the time.	3.34	1.15	Good
9	I stay positive even during difficult times.	3.44	1.22	Very Good
10	I rarely feel out of control with my emotions.	3.01	1.16	Good
Aggregate Mean		3.27		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.19	

Table 15 presents the level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of emotional stability. The results showed an aggregate mean of 3.27, verbally interpreted as "Good," with a standard deviation of 1.19, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Overall, this suggests that students sometimes demonstrate emotional stability in a fluctuating manner, where their ability to regulate emotions is present but not consistently sustained across situations.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I stay positive even during difficult times" with a mean of 3.44 (Very Good) indicating that students are often able to maintain an optimistic outlook when faced with challenges.

This reflects a coping behavior where positivity is used as a psychological response to stress, allowing students to adapt better in difficult academic or personal situations. This was followed by "I feel emotionally balanced most of the time" with a mean of 3.34 (Good) and "I remain patient even when things don't go my way" with a mean of 3.33 (Good), both suggesting that these behaviors are sometimes experienced by students where they are generally able to regulate their reactions and exercise patience in everyday frustrations.

Other indicators, such as managing emotions (3.29), staying calm (3.28), and avoiding overreacting (3.27), were also interpreted as Good, implying that these aspects of emotional stability are sometimes practiced. This indicates that emotional regulation is practiced but may still vary depending on the intensity of the stressor.

The lowest mean was recorded in "I rarely feel out of control with my emotions" with a mean of 3.01 (Good), which, despite being the lowest, still indicates that students sometimes experience control over their emotions.

However, the lower score implies that there are instances where emotional regulation becomes more difficult, particularly during heightened stress or pressure, making this aspect the most vulnerable dimension of emotional stability among the indicators.

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a stable emotional condition, suggesting that most students are capable of regulating their emotions effectively across different academic and social situations. This stability reflects an underlying resilience that allows students to navigate everyday challenges without becoming easily overwhelmed or emotionally dysregulated.

However, the moderate nature of the scores also suggests that emotional stability is not absolute; rather, students still experience occasional fluctuations in mood and emotional responses, which is a normal part of adolescent development. These fluctuations may be triggered by academic pressure, peer interactions, or personal concerns, but they do not appear to significantly disrupt overall functioning.

From a developmental perspective, this pattern suggests that students are in a continuing process of strengthening emotional regulation skills. Adolescence is a critical stage for emotional development, where individuals gradually refine their ability to understand, manage, and respond to emotional experiences in more adaptive ways.

The findings imply that while many students have already developed foundational coping and regulation skills, there is still variability in how consistently these skills are applied across different situations. This highlights emotional stability not as a fixed trait, but as a developing capacity that can be further strengthened through guidance and practice.

This interpretation aligns with established perspectives in mental health literature. The World Health Organization emphasizes that emotional stability is a key dimension of adolescent mental health, as it supports effective stress management, psychological balance, and adaptive functioning.

Similarly, research by Gross (2015) highlights the importance of emotional regulation strategies in shaping how individuals experience and respond to emotions, while Compas et al. (2017) underscore that adolescents who develop stronger emotional regulation skills tend to exhibit better psychological well-being, academic engagement, and social functioning.

Overall, the findings suggest that although students generally demonstrate positive emotional stability, there remains room for further enhancement of emotional regulation skills. Schools can play a vital role by integrating emotional awareness activities, providing accessible counseling services, and fostering peer support systems that encourage healthy emotional expression.

Strengthening these areas can help students maintain more consistent emotional balance, improve interpersonal relationships, and support better academic performance and overall mental well-being.

Self- esteem

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' mental health status in terms of self-esteem. The data shown in Table 16.

Table 16 Level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of self-esteem

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I am not proud of what I accomplish	3.44	1.27	Very Good
2	I don't believe I am just as good as other students.	2.84	1.31	Good
3	I don't feel confident in expressing my opinions.	2.69	1.23	Good
4	I think negatively about myself.	2.75	1.31	Good
5	I hate myself when I make mistakes.	2.63	1.41	Good
6	I don't feel that I am a valuable person.	2.87	1.31	Good
7	I am not satisfied with how I look.	3.03	1.43	Good
8	I don't believe I can do things as well as most people.	2.81	1.32	Good
9	I don't feel good about myself when facing challenges.	2.83	1.30	Good
10	I think I am not worthy of love and respect.	3.07	1.42	Good
Aggregate Mean		2.90		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.33	

Table 16 presents the level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of self-esteem. The results revealed an aggregate mean of 2.90, verbally interpreted as "Good," with a standard deviation of 1.33, indicating moderate variability in responses.

This suggests that students sometimes demonstrate positive self- esteem. It is important to emphasize that the indicators used in this section are negatively worded, reflecting low self-esteem (e.g., lack of pride, feelings of unworthiness, and dissatisfaction with oneself).

Therefore, the verbal descriptions "Good" and "Very Good" refer to the frequency of experiencing these negative self- perceptions, and do not indicate a positive or healthy level of self-esteem. In this context, higher mean scores correspond to lower self-esteem among the respondents.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I am not proud of what I accomplish" with a mean of 3.44 (Very Good), indicating that students often experience a lack of pride in their achievements. This was followed by "I think I am not worthy of love and respect" (3.07, Good) and "I am not satisfied with how I look"

(3.03, Good), both suggesting that these negative self-perceptions are sometimes experienced by students. The remaining indicators, including lack of confidence in expressing opinions (2.69), negative self-perception (2.75), and feelings of low personal value (2.87), were all interpreted as Good, implying that these concerns occur at a moderate level.

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate a stable emotional condition, suggesting that most students are capable of regulating their emotions effectively across different academic and social situations. This stability reflects an underlying resilience that allows students to navigate everyday challenges without becoming easily overwhelmed or emotionally dysregulated.

However, the moderate nature of the scores also suggests that emotional stability is not absolute; rather, students still experience occasional fluctuations in mood and emotional responses, which is a normal part of adolescent development. These fluctuations may be triggered by academic pressure, peer interactions, or personal concerns, but they do not appear to significantly disrupt overall functioning.

This pattern suggests that students are in a continuing process of strengthening emotional regulation skills. Adolescence is a critical stage for emotional development,

Table 17 Level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I feel nervous and anxious even without a clear reason.	3.25	1.28	Good
2	I often have trouble concentrating because of worry.	3.25	1.17	Good
3	I feel restless or find it hard to relax.	3.19	1.20	Good
4	I avoid social interactions because I feel uncomfortable or afraid.	2.91	1.09	Good
5	I often worry about things I cannot control.	3.44	1.19	Very Good
6	I feel sad or empty most of the time.	3.06	1.18	Good
7	I lose interest in activities I usually enjoy.	2.96	1.20	Good
8	I feel tired or have low energy even after resting.	3.23	1.29	Good
9	I feel worthless or think poorly of myself.	3.11	1.30	Good
10	I think about wanting to escape or disappear when I'm feeling down.	3.24	1.39	Good
Aggregate Mean		3.16		Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation			1.23	

where individuals gradually refine their ability to understand, manage, and respond to emotional experiences in more adaptive ways.

The findings imply that while many students have already developed foundational coping and regulation skills, there is still variability in how consistently these skills are applied across different situations. This highlights emotional stability not as a fixed trait, but as a developing capacity that can be further strengthened through guidance and practice.

This interpretation aligns with established perspectives in mental health literature. The World Health Organization emphasizes that emotional stability is a key dimension of adolescent mental health, as it supports effective stress management, psychological balance, and adaptive functioning.

Similarly, research by Gross (2015) highlights the importance of emotional regulation strategies in shaping how individuals experience and respond to emotions, while Compas et al. (2017) underscore that adolescents who develop stronger emotional regulation skills tend to exhibit better psychological well-being, academic engagement, and social functioning.

Overall, the findings suggest that although students generally demonstrate positive emotional stability, there remains room for further enhancement of emotional regulation skills. Schools can play a vital role by integrating emotional awareness activities, providing accessible counseling services, and fostering peer support systems that encourage healthy emotional expression. Strengthening these areas can help students maintain more consistent emotional balance, improve interpersonal relationships, and support better academic performance and overall mental well-being.

Presence of Anxiety or Depressive Tendencies

This sub-section presents the survey results of the respondents' mental health status in terms of presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies. The data shown in Table 17.

Table 17 presents the level of the respondents' mental health status in terms of the presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies. The results revealed an aggregate mean of 3.16, verbally interpreted as "Good," with a standard deviation of 1.23, indicating moderate variability in responses. This suggests that students sometimes experience anxiety or depressive tendencies; however, these are not severe enough to indicate a clinical-level concern.

Among the indicators, the highest mean was observed in "I often worry about things I cannot control" with a mean of 3.44 (Very Good), indicating that students often experience excessive worry. This was followed by "I feel nervous and anxious even without a clear reason" and "I often have trouble concentrating because of worry", both with a mean of 3.25 (Good), suggesting that these experiences sometimes occur among students.

Other indicators such as feeling restless (3.19), low energy (3.23), and thoughts of escape when feeling down (3.24) were also interpreted as Good, implying that students sometimes experienced these symptoms. In this context, higher mean scores correspond to a greater presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies among the respondents.

The lowest mean was observed in "I avoid social interactions because I feel uncomfortable or afraid" with a mean of 2.91 (Good), which still indicates that students sometimes avoid social interactions, though less frequently compared to the other indicators.

The findings indicate that the respondents experienced a moderate level of anxiety and depressive tendencies, suggesting that while these symptoms were present, they were not at a severe level. The relatively higher scores in worry related items indicate that students commonly experienced anxiety related to uncontrollable situations, which may be associated with academic pressure and personal concerns.

Overall, the results suggest that respondents were experiencing manageable but noticeable levels of emotional distress.

According to World Health Organization, adolescents commonly experience symptoms of anxiety and mild depressive tendencies due to academic demands, social pressures, and developmental changes. While occasional feelings of worry and sadness are considered normal, persistent symptoms may affect cognitive functioning, behavior, and overall well-being if not properly addressed. The results highlight the importance of strengthening mental health support systems within the school. Although the levels of anxiety and depressive tendencies were generally moderate, early intervention is necessary to prevent these symptoms from worsening.

Schools may implement counseling programs, mental health awareness campaigns, and stress management activities to help students cope with emotional challenges. Providing a supportive environment can enhance students' emotional resilience, well-being, and academic performance.

SUMMARY ON THE LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

This sub-section presents the summary of the survey results of the respondents' mental health status in terms of stress levels, emotional stability, self-esteem, and presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies. The data shown in Table 18.

Table 18 Summary on the level of the respondents' mental health status

Components	WM	SD	Verbal Description
Stress levels	3.18	1.17	Good
Emotional stability	3.27	1.19	Good
Self-esteem	2.90	1.33	Good
Presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies	3.16	1.23	Good
Grand Mean	3.13		Good
Grand Standard Deviation		1.23	

Table 18 presents the summary of the respondents' mental health status across four components. The results revealed a grand mean of 3.13, verbally interpreted as "Good," with a grand standard deviation of 1.23, indicating moderate variability in responses. This suggests that students sometimes experience the different aspects of mental health measured in the study.

Among the components, emotional stability obtained the highest mean of 3.27 (Good), indicating that students sometimes demonstrate emotional stability. This was followed by stress levels with a mean of 3.18 (Good) and presence of anxiety or depressive tendencies with a mean of 3.16 (Good), both suggesting that these conditions are sometimes experienced. Meanwhile, self-esteem recorded the lowest mean of 2.90 (Good), which also indicates that positive self-esteem is sometimes demonstrated by the respondents.

Despite differences in mean scores, all components reflect a moderate level of occurrence. The findings indicate that the respondents generally exhibited a moderate and stable level of mental health. This suggests that while students experienced certain levels of stress, anxiety, and self-related concerns, these were not severe and remained within manageable levels. The slightly lower mean in self-esteem implies that self-perception may be an area of concern compared to other mental health dimensions.

According to World Health Organization, adolescents typically experience varying levels of stress, emotional fluctuations, and self-esteem challenges as part of normal development. However, maintaining these within manageable levels is essential for overall well-being.

Research suggests that balanced emotional stability and effective coping mechanisms contribute significantly to better mental health outcomes and academic performance among students.

The results highlight the importance of sustaining and enhancing mental health support programs in schools. While the overall mental health status of the respondents was generally good, targeted interventions particularly in improving self-esteem may further strengthen students' psychological well-being.

Schools may implement comprehensive programs that focus on emotional regulation, confidence-building, and stress management to support students holistically. Promoting positive mental health can lead to improved academic engagement, better social relationships, and overall student development.

RESPONDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This portion presents the level of academic performance of the respondents. The data shown in Table 19.

Table 19 Level of academic performance of the respondents

Level	Numerical Range	f	%
Outstanding	90-100	43	28.48
Very Satisfactory	85-89	36	23.84
Satisfactory	80-84	40	26.49
Fairly Satisfactory	75-79	25	16.56
Did not Meet the Expectations	Below 75	7	4.64
Total		151	100.00
Mean		84.87	
St. Dev.		6.19	

Table 19 presents the level of academic performance of the respondents based on their 3rd quarter grades. The data revealed that 43 respondents or 28.48% achieved an Outstanding rating (90–100), which was the highest proportion. This was followed by 40 respondents or 26.49% with a Satisfactory rating (80–84), and 36 respondents or 23.84% with a Very Satisfactory rating (85–89). Meanwhile, 25 respondents or 16.56% obtained a Fairly Satisfactory rating (75–79), and only 7 respondents or 4.64% fell under Did Not Meet Expectations (below 75).

The overall mean grade was 84.87, interpreted as Satisfactory, with a standard deviation of 6.19, indicating moderate variation in academic performance among the respondents.

The findings indicate that respondents generally demonstrate satisfactory academic performance, with a substantial proportion of students achieving Outstanding and Very Satisfactory levels.

This suggests that most learners are able to meet or even exceed academic expectations, reflecting a generally positive academic standing within the group. However, the presence of students who fall within lower performance categories indicates that academic success is not uniform across all respondents. This variation highlights that while many students are performing well, a segment still faces challenges that may hinder their full academic potential.

This uneven distribution of academic performance suggests that achievement is likely shaped by a combination of interrelated factors rather than ability alone. Differences in study habits, learning strategies, nutritional practices, and emotional well-being may all contribute to variations in academic outcomes.

In particular, students who consistently perform at higher levels may be benefiting from more stable routines, healthier lifestyle practices, or stronger coping mechanisms, while those with lower performance may be experiencing disruptions in one or more of these areas. This implies that academic performance should be understood as a multidimensional outcome influenced by both behavioral and psychosocial factors.

This interpretation is supported by the Department of Education, which recognizes that academic performance is affected by multiple interconnected determinants, including students' physical health, nutritional intake, and psychological well-being.

Empirical studies further reinforce this view, showing that adequate nutrition particularly regular breakfast consumption enhances concentration, memory retention, and cognitive functioning, all of which contribute to improved academic outcomes (Adolphus et al., 2013; Rampersaud et al., 2005). In addition, mental health has been widely identified as a critical factor influencing students' ability to focus, engage, and perform effectively in academic tasks.

Overall, the results suggest that while the majority of students are performing at satisfactory to high levels, targeted support is still necessary to address the needs of those with lower academic outcomes.

Schools may strengthen academic intervention programs such as remedial instruction, tutoring, and individualized learning support, while also integrating nutrition and mental health initiatives to address underlying contributors to performance disparities.

By adopting a more holistic approach that supports both academic and non-academic needs, schools can help ensure more consistent achievement and enable a greater proportion of students to reach higher levels of academic success.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN BREAKFAST SKIPPING HABITS AND DAILY DIETARY PATTERNS

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their daily dietary patterns. The data shown in Table 20.

Table 20 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their daily dietary patterns

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Breakfast Skipping Habits and Daily Dietary Patterns	0.521*	Moderate Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 20 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their daily dietary patterns. The results showed a Spearman's rho value of 0.521, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Thus, there was a statistically significant correlation between breakfast skipping habits and daily dietary patterns.

The results suggest that breakfast skipping has a meaningful influence on students' mental health, indicating that students who frequently skip breakfast are more likely to experience psychological and emotional challenges. From a practical perspective, this relationship can be explained by the role of breakfast as the body's primary source of energy after an overnight fast. Without adequate nourishment at the start of the day, students may experience fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating, which can negatively affect their emotional stability and overall mental well-being.

Furthermore, breakfast skipping may not only be a nutritional concern but also a behavioral indicator of underlying lifestyle patterns. Students who skip breakfast may be experiencing time constraints, poor sleep habits, or stress, all of which can contribute to declining mental health.

The observed relationship may therefore reflect a combination of physiological and psychosocial factors. In addition, skipping meals can disrupt blood glucose levels, which are essential for proper brain functioning and emotional regulation, further explaining its association with mental health outcomes.

According to World Health Organization, breakfast is considered a key component of a healthy diet, as it influences overall food intake and nutritional quality throughout the day. Studies have shown that adolescents who regularly eat breakfast are more likely to consume fruits, vegetables, and balanced meals, while those who skip breakfast tend to rely more on unhealthy snacks and irregular eating patterns (Rampersaud et al., 2005; Adolphus et al., 2016). This supports the significant correlation observed in the present study.

The results highlight the importance of promoting regular breakfast consumption as a foundation for healthy dietary behavior. Schools and families should encourage students to develop consistent breakfast routines, as this can positively influence their overall eating habits.

Nutrition programs and awareness campaigns may focus on the role of breakfast in maintaining balanced diets. Improving breakfast habits can serve as a practical and effective strategy to enhance students' overall nutritional status and well-being.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN BREAKFAST SKIPPING HABITS AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their mental health status. The data shown in Table 21.

Table 21 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their mental health status

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Breakfast Skipping Habits and Mental Health Status	0.269*	Negligible Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 21 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their mental health status. The results revealed a Spearman's rho value of 0.269, indicating a negligible positive correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, a statistically significant correlation existed between breakfast skipping habits and mental health status.

The findings indicate that students' overall dietary patterns play a significant role in shaping their mental health. Students who maintain balanced and nutritious diets are more likely to experience better psychological well-being compared to those with irregular or unhealthy eating habits.

This relationship can be attributed to the essential role of nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and omega-3 fatty acids in supporting brain function and emotional regulation.

From an analytical standpoint, consistent dietary patterns contribute to stable energy levels and improved neurotransmitter functioning, both of which are critical for maintaining a positive mental state. Poor dietary habits, on the other hand, may lead to nutritional deficiencies that can negatively affect mood, increase susceptibility to stress, and impair cognitive processes.

Additionally, unhealthy eating behaviors may be associated with other risk factors such as sedentary lifestyle and poor sleep, further compounding their impact on mental health.

The strength of the relationship suggests that diet is an important, though not exclusive, determinant of mental health. Psychological well-being is influenced by multiple factors, including social support, academic pressure, and personal coping mechanisms. Nevertheless, the findings highlight that promoting healthy eating habits can serve as a preventive strategy for mental health issues among students.

According to World Health Organization, mental health among adolescents is influenced by multiple factors, including lifestyle behaviors such as diet, as well as social, emotional, and environmental conditions. Research suggests that dietary habits, including regular breakfast consumption, are associated with improved mood, cognitive functioning, and overall psychological well-being among adolescents (O'Neil et al., 2014; Hoyland et al., 2009).

However, evidence also indicates that the correlation between breakfast consumption and mental health is often indirect and may be influenced by other contextual factors such as stress levels, sleep patterns, and socio-environmental conditions. This may help explain findings in the present study showing a significant but weak correlation between breakfast consumption and mental health outcomes.

The results suggest that promoting regular breakfast consumption may contribute to improved mental health, but it should not be considered a standalone solution. Schools should implement holistic mental health programs that address multiple factors, including nutrition, emotional support, stress management, and social well-being. Integrating nutrition education with mental health initiatives can help create a more comprehensive approach to supporting students' overall wellbeing.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN BREAKFAST HABITS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their academic performance. The data shown in Table 22.

Table 22 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their academic performance

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Breakfast Skipping Habits and Academic Performance	-0.063	Negligible Negative	0.440	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 22 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' breakfast skipping habits and their academic performance. The results showed a Spearman's rho value of -0.063, indicating a negligible negative correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.440 was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there was no statistically significant correlation between breakfast skipping habits and academic performance.

The findings indicate that breakfast skipping habits did not significantly influence the academic performance of the respondents. Although the correlation was negative, suggesting that more frequent breakfast skipping may be associated with slightly lower academic performance, the r correlation was very weak and not statistically significant.

This implies that students' academic performance may be influenced more by other factors such as study habits, teaching quality, motivation, and learning environment rather than breakfast consumption alone.

From a broader perspective, breakfast consumption supports memory retention, attention span, and problem-solving skills all of which are critical for academic success. Students who skip breakfast may struggle to keep up with classroom discussions and tasks, leading to lower academic outcomes over time.

However, the relationship may not be strongly pronounced in all cases, as students can compensate through other factors such as strong study habits or external academic support.

It is also important to consider that breakfast skipping may be linked to other lifestyle behaviors, such as inadequate sleep or poor time management, which can independently affect academic performance. Thus, the observed relationship may reflect a combination of interrelated factors rather than a direct causal effect.

According to Department of Education, academic performance is influenced by multiple factors, including cognitive ability, study practices, teaching strategies, and socio-environmental conditions. While proper nutrition is important for learning, research suggests that its direct effect on academic performance may vary and is often mediated by other variables such as student engagement and support systems (Adolphus et al., 2013; Hoyland et al., 2009).

These findings indicate that breakfast habits alone may not be sufficient to significantly predict academic outcomes, as academic outcomes, as academic performance is shaped by a complex interaction of behavioral, cognitive, and environmental factors.

The results suggest that while promoting regular breakfast consumption remains important for students' health and well-being, it should not be solely relied upon to improve academic performance.

Schools should adopt a multifaceted approach that includes academic support programs, effective teaching strategies, and mental health services. Nutrition interventions should be integrated with broader educational and psychological support systems to enhance students' overall performance.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN DAILY DIETARY PATTERNS AND MENTAL HEALTH STATUS

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their mental health status. The data shown in Table 23.

Table 23 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their mental health status

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Daily Dietary Patterns and Mental Health Status	0.389*	Weak Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 23 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their mental health status. The results showed a Spearman's rho value of 0.389, indicating a weak positive correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.000 was less than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, a statistically significant correlation existed between daily dietary patterns and mental health status.

The findings indicate that better daily dietary patterns were associated with better mental health outcomes, although the strength of the correlation was weak.

This suggests that students who practiced healthier eating habits such as consuming balanced meals and maintaining regular meal timing tended to experience improved emotional stability, lower stress levels, and better self-esteem. However, since the correlation was weak, dietary patterns were only one of several factors influencing mental health.

The weak relationship may be due to the indirect nature of nutrition's effect on academic performance. While proper diet supports brain function and energy levels, these benefits may not immediately translate into improved grades or measurable academic outcomes. Additionally, variations in students' learning environments, teaching quality, and personal motivation may overshadow the impact of dietary patterns.

Another possible explanation is that students' dietary habits may not vary significantly enough to produce a strong correlation, or that self-reported dietary data may not fully capture actual nutritional intake. This could result in an underestimation of the true relationship between diet and academic performance.

According to World Health Organization, proper nutrition plays a significant role in supporting brain function and emotional well-being. Studies have shown that balanced diets rich in essential nutrients contribute to improved mood, reduced anxiety, and better cognitive performance among adolescents (O'Neil et al., 2014; Jacka et al., 2017).

However, mental health is multifactorial and influenced by social, psychological, and environmental factors, which explains the weak but significant correlation observed.

The results highlight the importance of promoting healthy dietary patterns as part of mental health interventions. Schools should integrate nutrition education with mental health programs to encourage students to adopt balanced eating habits.

While improving dietary patterns alone may not fully address mental health concerns, it can serve as a supportive factor in enhancing students' overall wellbeing.

A holistic approach that combines nutrition, emotional support, and stress management is recommended to achieve better mental health outcomes.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN DAILY DIETARY PATTERNS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their academic performance. The data shown in Table 24.

Table 24 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their academic performance

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Daily Dietary Patterns and Academic Performance	0.055	Negligible Positive	0.501	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 24 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' daily dietary patterns and their academic performance. The results revealed a Spearman's rho value of 0.055, indicating a negligible positive correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.501 was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the decision not to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, there was no statistically significant correlation between daily dietary patterns and academic performance.

The findings indicate that daily dietary patterns did not significantly influence the academic performance of the respondents. Although the correlation was positive, suggesting that better dietary patterns might be associated with slightly higher academic performance, the correlation was very weak and not statistically significant.

This finding highlights the complexity of academic achievement, which is influenced by multiple interacting variables. Factors such as study habits, teaching effectiveness, motivation, and access to learning resources may play a more dominant role in determining students' performance.

While nutrition supports cognitive functioning, its effects may be subtle, cumulative, and difficult to capture through short-term academic measures. This implies that students' academic performance was likely influenced more by other factors such as study habits, learning environment, motivation, and teaching strategies rather than dietary patterns alone.

Additionally, the non-significant result may be influenced by methodological factors such as sample size, measurement tools, or limited variability in dietary patterns among respondents. It is also possible that the benefits of healthy eating are more evident in long-term cognitive development rather than immediate academic performance.

This finding is consistent with the Department of Education, which emphasizes that academic performance is shaped by a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. While proper nutrition contributes to cognitive functioning, its direct effect on academic achievement is often indirect and may not be immediately reflected in students' grades. This supports the finding of a non-significant correlation in the present study.

The results suggest that while promoting healthy dietary patterns is important for students' overall well-being, it may not directly translate into improved academic performance.

Schools should implement a comprehensive approach that combines nutrition programs with academic support, effective teaching practices, and student motivation strategies. Addressing multiple factors simultaneously can better enhance students' academic outcomes.

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATION BETWEEN MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

This portion presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' mental health and their academic performance. The data shown in Table 25.

Table 25 Test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' mental health status and their academic performance

Variables	Spearman's rho	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Result
Mental Health Status and Academic Performance	-0.028	Negligible Negative	0.730	Do not reject Ho	Not Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

Table 25 presents the test of significance of the correlation between the respondents' mental health status and their academic performance. The results showed a Spearman's rho value of -0.028, indicating a negligible negative correlation between the two variables. The computed p-value of 0.730 was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the decision to not reject the null hypothesis. Thus, there was no statistically significant correlation between mental health status and academic performance.

The findings indicate that the respondents' mental health status did not significantly influence their academic performance. Although the correlation was negative, suggesting that poorer mental health might be associated with slightly lower academic performance, the correlation was extremely weak and not statistically significant.

This implies that variations in students' academic performance were likely influenced by other factors beyond mental health, such as study habits, instructional quality, and learning environment.

From an analytical standpoint, mental health affects not only cognitive functioning but also students' attitudes toward learning and their ability to cope with academic challenges. Students experiencing stress, anxiety, or emotional distress may struggle with focus, memory retention, and task completion, leading to poorer academic outcomes. In contrast, students with stable mental health are better equipped to manage academic demands and maintain consistent performance.

The strong relationship observed emphasizes that academic success is not solely dependent on intellectual ability but also on emotional and psychological stability. Schools and educators must therefore prioritize mental health support as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve academic outcomes.

This finding is supported by research from the World Health Organization, which highlights the strong link between mental health and academic performance. Research suggests that moderate levels of stress and emotional challenges do not always directly translate into poor academic outcomes, especially when students are able to cope effectively (Lazarus & Folkman, 1985; Compas et al., 2017).

The results suggest that although mental health is an important aspect of students' overall well-being, it may not directly determine academic performance in this context.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that the respondents demonstrated generally inconsistent breakfast consumption and irregular dietary patterns, reflecting variability in their daily eating behaviors.

Despite these inconsistencies, the respondents exhibited an overall generally positive mental health condition, suggesting that emotional and psychological functioning among students remains within an acceptable range, although areas of vulnerability are still evident. In terms of academic performance, the respondents attained satisfactory levels, indicating that most learners are meeting the expected academic standards despite variations in nutrition and well-being.

The results further suggest that students' eating behaviors and dietary routines are meaningfully connected with their overall well-being, particularly in terms of emotional and psychological functioning.

This highlights the role of consistent nutrition practices in supporting students' mental health. However, academic performance appears to be influenced by a broader set of factors beyond nutrition and mental health, indicating that learning outcomes are shaped by multiple academic, behavioral, and environmental conditions.

From a professional perspective, particularly in teaching and school-based roles, these findings emphasize the importance of integrating nutrition awareness into student support initiatives. Educators and school personnel may benefit from strengthening early identification of students with irregular eating habits and providing guidance or interventions that promote healthier routines.

While academic performance may not be directly shaped by dietary behaviors, supporting students' well-being can still contribute to improved classroom engagement, focus, and behavior.

In terms of program development, the results support the creation of school-based nutrition and wellness programs that promote consistent eating habits, particularly breakfast consumption. These programs may include nutrition education sessions, parent involvement strategies, and school initiatives that encourage healthy meal routines. Mental health support components may also be integrated to address students' emotional needs alongside physical well-being.

For policy implementation, the findings highlight the need for strengthened school health policies that promote accessible and sustained nutrition programs within the educational setting.

Policies that support feeding programs, nutrition monitoring, and collaboration with families and local health units may help reinforce healthier dietary behaviors among students. Additionally, policies that integrate mental health awareness with nutrition education may provide a more holistic approach to student development and well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that schools strengthen nutrition-focused initiatives that promote regular and balanced meal consumption, particularly breakfast, alongside programs that support students' mental health through counseling and stress management services.

Nutrition and wellness concepts may also be integrated into classroom activities to increase awareness of healthy eating and its link to well-being, while ensuring continued academic and emotional support for students with irregular eating habits or signs of stress.

Lastly, strengthening existing school and community health policies and expanding future research to include factors such as physical activity, sleep, and motivation are encouraged to further enhance student well-being and development.

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