

IMPACT OF BREAKFAST ON SCHOOL CHILDREN: ACADEMIC, BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTH PERSPECTIVES

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Breakfast is often considered the most important meal of the day for school children, as it breaks the overnight fast and provides essential energy for learning and daily activities. However, skipping of breakfast has become a global concern with significant implications for children's health, behavior, and educational outcomes. This review evaluates the effects of breakfast consumption on students' academic performance, cognitive functions, behavior, and well-being. It also examines factors influencing breakfast habits and the role of school breakfast programmes in promoting academic success of students. The review synthesises findings from 35 peer-reviewed academic sources published between 2015 and 2025, retrieved from Google Scholar, PubMed, and ResearchGate. These include 20 original research articles and 15 reviews conducted in the USA, China, Ethiopia, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, and Sri Lanka. Participants ranged from 6 to 19 years old, with sample sizes from 22 to over 54,000. Methods included cognitive tests, surveys, interviews, academic record analysis, and, for this review, thematic analysis, content analysis, and descriptive summarisation. Over 76% of the reviewed studies reported a strong positive link between regular breakfast consumption and improved academic performance, especially in mathematics, science, languages, and creative arts. Cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and problem-solving were enhanced in 40% of the studies. Low-glycemic, nutrient-rich breakfasts improved attention and mental clarity in 22.9% of studies. Breakfast consumption positively influenced motivation (8.6%), emotional regulation (14.3%), classroom behavior (17.1%), school attendance (22.9%), and physical health (17.1%). In contrast, skipping of breakfast was associated with poor concentration (20%), emotional instability and anxiety (17.1%), and increased risks of obesity and chronic diseases (11.4%). Sociodemographic factors such as gender (8.6%), parental education (5.7%), and socioeconomic status (5.7%) influenced breakfast habits. School-based nutrition programmes were highlighted in 25.7% of studies as effective in promoting academic engagement and reducing inequality worldwide. These findings support the need for inclusive, evidence-based breakfast policies in the world.

Keywords: Academic performance, Attitude, Breakfast, Health, School children