

Young Students' Perceptions of Factors That Can Contribute to Emotional Eating in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Maali Aloudah

Institution of Education, University of Reading, London Road Campus. Reading. UK. RG1 5EX

Dr Yota Dimitriadi*

Institute of Education, University of Reading, London Road Campus. Reading. UK. RG1 5EX

Abstract

The present study is aimed at establishing young students' perceptions of factors that can contribute to emotional eating in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It has been noted that emotional eating contributes to obesity and other negative impacts of health and therefore need to examine perceived factors that contribute to it. The study involved 60 adolescents aged from 12 to 15 years from Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. A survey questionnaire developed from the objectives of the study was used to collect data from all the 60 participants. The findings indicate that there are a number of factors such as social, physical and psychological that contribute to emotional eating. Both the literature review and the survey undertaken revealed that students were influenced by multiple factors to get into emotional eating. The study concluded that emotional eating is a complex behaviour that could result in unhealthy emotional and physical states. The study thereby recommended that there is need to address the social, physical and psychological factors that contribute to emotional eating.

Keywords: emotional eating, young students and social, physical and psychological factors

1. Introduction

According to Timmerman & Acton (2001) emotional eating is among eating disorders that causes obesity and negatively impacts health. Blackman & Kaska (2011) also notes that emotions significantly influence the habits of a person in relation to dietary as they can result in a person's unhealthy eating behaviours. Economy (2013) reports that an individual may opt for these unhealthy food knowingly or unknowingly based on their emotions and moods. Emotional eating is defined as an eating disorder where victims eat food in order to fill emotional emptiness such as loneliness, anxiety and boredom. Bruch (1964) was among the first scholars to report emotional eating in his psychosomatic theory. He referred to it as the failure to differentiate between hunger feelings and hunger pangs resulting from emotions.

Nonetheless, as observed by Jenkins, et al (2005); Allen et al., (2008) it is clear that psychological problems contribute to emotional eating and they also contribute to issues associated with eating habits, body weight and body image. Zimmer-Gembeck, et al. (2009) restates that emotional eating arises from pressure resulting from emotions. Similarly, Ouwens et al (2009) established the association between emotional eating and depression symptoms. As such, major spells of depression result in increased or reduced appetite. Studies done by Tanskanen et al., (2001); Sarlia Lahteen-Korva et al., (2004) found that depression can result in led to lesser possibility of dietary recommendation being adhered to as affected individuals seem to appear food that could be unhealthy or insufficient.

Behavioural and emotional issues like truanting, aggression, being withdrawn and lack of interest in academic work have increasingly been observed among adolescent students. According to Welsh et al., (2015) a major factor that may result in adolescent being susceptible to these psychological disorders is the social and economic environment, particularly if they live in deprived circumstances or live in rural environments. Indeed, this could be attested from the fact that emotional and behavioural problems have increased by more than 50% in children, and 70% among young adults over the last 30 years (Welsh et al., 2015). Moreover, Collishaw et al., (2004); Hagell, (2012) noted that this has resulted in academic discussion to establish if lower degrees of stress, and depression were found in earlier generation as opposed to young people of the current generation. Particularly in schools, 900,000 staff members and 7 million students spend about 6 hours each day in over 100 colleges and 1000 schools in Saudi Arabia. At school, these staff members and students usually eat calorie-rich snacks in the course of the day owing to the short time they are given for meal breaks (Ministry of Health, 2010). A number of studies have shown that the lack of a perfect curriculum, essential resources and physical activities within the Saudi schools has contributed to unhealthy eating habits of many students. This has resulted in this students becoming overweight (Al-Rethaiaa et al., 2010; Al Qauhiz, 2010). Accordingly, the present study aims at establishing factors that lead to emotional eating behaviour of Saudi Arabian adolescents aged 12-15 years.

1.1 Main study question:

What are the main factors leading to emotional eating behaviour of Saudi Arabian adolescents aged 12-15 years?

2.Literature Review

Anglé et al., (2009) found that some teenagers reacted to negative emotions by getting the urge to eat. This is what Anglé et al., (2009) describes as eating disorder. Therefore, emotional eating can be viewed as a change in food consumption as a response to emotional triggers. When this occurs, the pattern eating changes based the individual's mood; this is what is termed as emotional eating. Economy (2013) underlines that this behaviour could be a reaction to a number of emotions for example, fear, loneliness, anger and sadness. Eating can help one to satisfy his hunger or be used as way of distracting a person. Cartwright et al. (2003) holds that emotional eating is the intake of food in reaction to an individual's emotional state and due to physical hunger. Likewise Geliebeter & Aversa (2003) agrees that emotional eating occurs as a way of a person responding to strong negative or positive emotions. As such, a number of psychopathological factors like anxiety can result in emotional eating.

In addition, it has been observed by Goossens et al., (2009); Musaiger (2014) that negative factors like low self-confidence and physical incompetence as well result in emotional eating. Sung et al., (2010) underlined that emotional eating is normally characterised by high consumption of foods with high calories that are likely to cause increase in body weight. It was reported by ADAA (2010-16) that individuals who eat poor diet that is full calories or poor in nutrient content are likely to become overweight and experience mental health challenges for example depression. An individual could go through negative emotions owing to being overweight and owing to repeated intake of calorie-rich foods. Therefore, poor diet and bad eating habits can result in emotional eating. Musaiger (2014) established that teenagers are susceptible to emotional eating since they usually lack the required coping mechanism to manage stress, which is a leading trigger factor for emotional eating. In the same vein Cartwright et al., (2003) asserted that teenagers who are not able to manage stressful may alter their eating habits to emotional eating. Gold et al (2009) holds that the normal reaction to factors likes stress and distress is lack of appetite, though some people respond by eating a lot. This assertion is founded on Kaplan and Kaplan (1957)'s theory show in (figure 2.1) below.

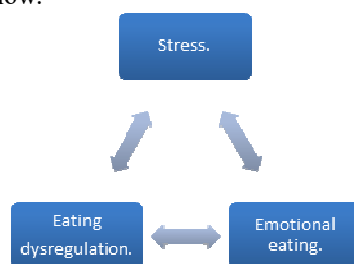


Figure 2.1: Psychosomatic Theory (source: Kaplan & Kaplan, 1957)

In a study done by Timmerman & Acton (2001) on the relationship between needs and satisfaction in relation to Maslow's Hierarch of Needs law, they researcher established that if an individual is not able to meet his/her basic needs, then he/she is likely to develop emotional eating where food is sought as a solace. Dallam (2009) found that adolescents preferred to eat fatty and sweet food as a way of handling their stress, these changes their view to health. However, it should be noted that some teenagers are able to handle stress without developing emotional eating. These adolescents understand the dangers of unhealthy eating. Zellner et al (2006) agrees with these findings when they state that eating behaviours of an individual are determined by the level of stress the person experiences. Human attributes such as attitudes and behaviours are determined by different psychological factors that include thoughts, cognitive features and thoughts. According to Goossens et al (2009) these factors impact a person's thought processes and personal relationships. More so, these factors as well trigger emotional eating who are unable to manage stress. NEDA (2012) as well underlined that; emotional eating could also result from loneliness, depression and low self-esteem. Other factors include psychopathology (Goossens et al., 2009), and perceived hunger (Alexander & Siegel, 2013).

Beyondble (2014) points that depression, which is entails going through low moods and sadness for a prolonged period of time that can even last for years, is another cause of emotional eating. Beyondble (2014) explains that feelings that cause emotional eating could come up without any reason. Apart from having a low mood that can cause depression, this could as well result in serious physical and psychological health conditions. Iliades (2016) found that a common symptom of depression is change in amount of food consumed. Iliades (2016) adds that while some individual consumer more food when depressed, others eat less food. Similarly, Beyondblue (2014) noted that depression causes an individual to feel low and demotivated. Therefore, activities such as work and hobbies that satisfies that individual becomes worthless. On many occasion, people who are depressed end up as emotional eaters, this could partly be contributed by negative feelings of the body image. Emotional eating can also arise from different physical problems that include self-induced starvation and weight loss. As observed by Goossens et al. (2009) an individual who is very anxious is more likely to suffer from emotional eating. Goossens et al. (2009) adds that the possibility of emotional eating increases with the

hormonal changes resulted from stress and the intake of unhealthy foods. Several studies carried out in the past (see, Zellner et al., 2006) have shown that stress contributes to weight gain due to a hormone referred to as cortisol that is released when a person is stressed, which leads to increased appetite making a person to eat more when stressed. However, some people avoid eating or eat less when they are stressed because they lose appetite. Besides the psychological effects that come with stress, people can experience other changes (Zellner et al., 2006). It has been observed that stress could as well determine the quality and quantity of food consumed by a person. For instance, Macht (2008) concluded that many people who eat a lot of food from stress could as well avoid taking health foods like fruits and vegetables, and instead eat unhealthy foods. In such case, unhealthy snacks replaces healthy meals since people under stress will usually seek for a quick energy source before meals. Zellner et al., (2006) established that women who are stressed are more likely to eat unhealthy and sweet foods.

Emotional eating can as well be caused by social and cultural perceptions that may change a person's eating habits and behaviours. Different societal and cultural norms may promote the eating of food that could result in either weight gain or weight loses with the objective of achieving a certain body shape. For instance, cultural beliefs and expectations could imply that individual's suppress their emotions and this could result in emotional eating. Similarly, factors that result in discrimination for example ethnicity, race, body size may as well contribute to emotional eating. These influencing factors could be caused by family members, friends or other groups. In western countries, the media seems to encourage people to have a slim body, and this is being taken up by other developed and developing nations. This kind of body image ideal could result in people changing their dietary habits hence getting into eating disorders. The findings of Stark-Wroblewski, Yanico, & Lupe (2005) support these observations as their study established that Japanese and Chinese students in the USA through social cultural perceptions changed their eating habits to be slim. This is because slim bodies were viewed as being "ideal". Likewise, Becker et al., (2002) notes that when western television programmes was introduced in Fiji, it advanced for weight-reducing dietary habits in school going girls. Aguilar & Gomez-Peresmitre (2005) did a study in Mexico and established that social and cultural pressure to have a slim body resulted in people getting dissatisfied with their bodies, hence changing their eating habits. These changes could result in eating disorders. The media is viewed as contributing to eating disorders to some level. Pictures and images of slim bodies marketed by the media advances a particular ideal, resulting in people seeking to lose weight with the objective of being "ideal". Sadly, the media distorts the truth, for example, by celebrity endorsements that are slim or desiring to be slim.

Varying cultures have varying food habits that can result in different eating disorders over time (Polivy & Herman, 2002). Also Polivy & Herman (2002) notes that people in cultures where there is scarcity of food tend to desire to add weight, as opposed to cultures where food is plenty who desire to lose weight. Polivy & Herman (2002) argues that this is normal to some extent since human nature tends to seek things that are hard to get. Peer pressure is another social factor that influences emotional eating. Polivy & Herman (2002) explains that this because peers usually encourages, criticises or inspires people in a way that influences these people to adopt a particular eating habit that could finally result in eating disorders. Adolescent girls usually change their eating behaviours as a result of peer pressure and this could include trying to gain or keep a slim body by dieting. Therefore, peer pressure and influences significantly contributes to dietary habits of vulnerable adolescent girls. Polivy & Herman (2002) noted that peer pressure influence is stronger among girls compared to boys.

Another factor that has been found to influence eating habits is parental and familial influences. According to Engel et al., (2007) parents seem to control what their children eat or the eating habits of their children. As such, parents may indirectly contribute to development of emotional eating in their children. Owing to this, it is possible for some children to understand that eating can used to satisfy emotional requirements. Engel et al. (2007) adds that familial and parental concerns regarding children and other family members in relation to diet usually normally lead in the entire family accepting emotional eating behaviours. Engel et al., (2007) further noted that children who experience high level of parental control in their formative years usually feel helpless and are not independent. These children on many occasions end up being emotional eaters. Therefore, parents who are inflexible and overprotective could cause their children to suffer eating disorders. Similarly, controlling parents usually trigger negative emotions among their children such as stress and anxiety, which may lead to emotional eating. Children who are abused and neglected when they grow up are more likely to suffer emotional eating as way of dealing with their depression and stress. More so, different emotions like bad memories, stress and fear contribute to emotional eating on some occasions.

3.Methodology

3.1 Participants

The current study involved 60 adolescents aged from 12 to 15 years from Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. All these participants were given a consent form informing them of what was contained in the study and why they should take part in the study. In addition, the participants were as well informed what they were required to do, the benefits and risks of taking part in the study, timelines involved, confidentiality and the type of questions they

should expect. All the 60 participants took part in the study from the beginning to the end.

3.2 Survey instrument

The researcher used questionnaire as survey instruments to collect data. Indeed, Brace (2004) notes that questionnaire construction is needed by a researcher to collect information from participants. However, Brace (2004) agrees that questionnaire development is a delicate and crucial research process that needs to be carried out with care. A researcher has to have good research skills to formulate the appropriate questions that can be used to get reliable and valid information from participants. Adhering to these observations by Brace (2004), the researcher opted for the questionnaire since he wanted to collect relevant information from students/participants in relation to their personal perceptions. Accordingly, the study focused on the people as their views, motivation, behaviours and beliefs, as suggested by Babbie (1990). The present study was undertaken in Saudi Arabia, in Riyadh City, and it comprised a sample size of 60 students aged 12-15. The questionnaire contained 34-item structured questions drawn from the objectives of the study and the scope of the study. The questionnaire focused on four main areas:

- 1) Demographic information of the participants
- 2) Personal factors that result in emotional eating
- 3) Psychological factors resulting to emotional eating
- 4) Sociocultural factors resulting to emotional eating.

The researcher sought the services of three experts to validate the survey instrument and make sure that it collected relevant information to meet the aims of the study. More so, test-retest using Cronbach alpha method giving a coefficient of 0.85 was used to establish the internal reliability of the survey instrument. This measurement indicated that the instrument was reliable and suitable to be applied for the study. The Likert scale contained five items as follows, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. Accordingly, 1 represented “strongly disagree”; while 5 represented “strongly agree”. This is how the results were coded. To conduct the survey, the researcher was assisted by four research assistants to administer the questionnaires. The process was completed well as all the 60 participants took part in the study.

3.3 Data analysis

To analyse data collected on students' perceptions of factors leading to emotional eating, the researcher used descriptive analysis. This is used because descriptive analysis allowed the researcher to explain the general attributes of the data. The results obtained were summarised with the help of graphs and tables. In addition, the researcher followed the advice of Briggs, Coleman & Morrison (2012) who noted that SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is an effective tool for data analysis, and therefore used SPSS to further analyse the data.

4. Results

4.1 Table 1: Demographic information

Demographic information	Boy		Girl	
	N	%	N	%
1. School grade				
Year 7	10	33.3%	10	33.3%
Year 8	10	33.3%	10	33.3%
Year 9	10	33.3%	10	33.3%
2. Age				
12 Years	3	10%	2	6.7%
13 Years	9	30%	10	33.3%
14 Years	10	33.3%	12	40%
15 Years	8	26.7%	6	20%
3. Gender				
Boy	30	50%		
Girl	30	50%		
4. Weight				
I don't know	4	13.3%	4	13.3%
36- 45	4	10%	7	23.3%
46- 55	6	20%	7	23.3%
56- 65	12	40%	7	23.3%
66 and more	5	16.7%	5	16.7%
5. Period				
Don't have (boy)	30	100%		
Not yet	-	-	3	10%
11	-	-	5	16.7%
12	-	-	17	56.7%
13	-	-	4	13.3%
14	-	-	0	0
15	-	-	1	3.3%
6. I live with				
Parents	29	96.7%	28	93.3
Mother	1	3.3%	2	6.7%
Father	0	0	0	0
Others	0	0	0	0
7. My position among my brothers and sisters				
1. The eldest	12	40%	8	26.7%
2. In the middle	12	40%	16	53.3%
3. The youngest	6	20	6	20%
8. The educational level of my father				
No education	0	0	2	6.7%
Secondary or less	6	20%	13	43.3%
Bachelor or more	24	80%	15	50%
9. The educational level of my mother				
No education	1	3.3%	2	6.7%
Secondary or less	11	36.7%	15	50%
Bachelor or more	18	60%	13	43.3%
10. Kind of house				
Villa	19	63.3%	8	26.7%
Flat	6	20%	15	50%
Floor	5	16.7%	7	23.3%

The number of student who took part in the study was 60. Girls were 30 (50%), and boys also 30 (50%). Their ages ranged between 12 and 15 years. They all were in year 7 to year 9 in their grade schools. In addition,

their weight showed that they majority of the boys (40%) were between 56 and 65 kilograms, while for girls it was evenly distributed with 23% of the in the following brackets 36-45; 46-55; and 56-65. Many of the participants lived with their parents with 96.7% of the boys and 93.3% of the girls staying with their parents. Asked their position in the family for the boys, 40% were eldest, 40% middle and 20% the youngest. For girls, 26.7% were eldest, 53.3% middle and 20% youngest. On education status all the boys had some level of education, while only 6.7 girls had no any education. Accordingly for boys, 20% had secondary or less education level, while 80% had bachelor or more education. For girls 43.7% had secondary or less education level, while 50% had bachelor or more. Regarding the kind of house they lived in for boys, 63.3% stayed in villas, 20% in flats, and 16.7% in floors. For girls, 26.7% stayed in villas, 50% in flats, and 23.3% in floors.

4.2 Table2: Psychological factors

Psychological factors	Never		Little				Sometimes				Usually					
	B N	%	G N	%	B N	%	G N	%	B N	%	G N	%	B N	%	G N	%
1. When I am feeling "down" a little snack will lift my mood	4	13.3	2	6.7	15	50	7	23.3	4	13.3	8	26.7	7	23.3	13	43.3
2. When I'm down I have more desire to eat	8	26.7	7	23.3	11	36.7	9	30	8	26.7	5	16.7	3	10	9	30
3. When I am pressured or working under a deadline I have the urge to snack	5	16.7	8	26.7	7	23.3	5	16.7	14	46.7	13	43.3	4	13.3	4	13.3
4. I eat more when I am stressed, worried or afraid than when I am calm	12	40	10	33.3	10	33.3	9	30	5	16.7	8	26.7	3	10	3	10
5. When I am irritated, I eat more	13	43.3	11	36.7	6	20	12	40	5	16.7	6	20	6	20	6	20
6. When I get angry, eating will make me feel better	6	20	5	16.7	12	40	8	26.7	4	13.3	10	33.3	8	26.7	7	23.3
7. I eat more than usual when I am bored	7	23.3	11	36.7	5	16.7	5	16.7	7	23.3	5	16.7	11	36.7	9	30
8. Eating makes me feel better when I am bored	3	10	6	20	8	26.7	5	16.7	12	40	8	26.7	7	23.3	14	46.7
9. When I am alone my appetite is increased and then I eat more	6	20	5	16.7	7	23.3	7	23.3	8	26.7	6	20	9	30	12	40
10. I eat less when other people are around	3	10	3	10	8	26.7	5	16.7	8	26.7	10	33.3	10	33.3	12	40
11. If I'm feeling good, I don't worry about the type or quantity of food I eat	8	26.7	3	10	8	26.7	7	23.3	5	16.7	10	33.3	9	30	10	33.3
12. When I'm happy, having a favourite snack makes me feel even better	3	10	5	16.7	1	3.3	1	3.3	9	30	4	13.3	16	53.3	20	66.7

When asked questions on various psychological factors that affect their eating behaviours it was interesting to note that the responses given differed slightly based on the gender of the students. For example 13 girls reported that they “usually” eat a little snack when feeling “down”, as opposed to 7 boys. Similarly, 9 girls said that when they are feeling “down” they usually had a more desire to eat, while only 3 boys reported that they had a desire to eat something when feeling down. When asked if they ate more when stressed, worried or afraid, majority (12/40%) of the boys replied “never”, as opposed to 10 girls. When irritated, 43.3% of the boys said that they never eat more against 36.7% of the girls, but a similar number of 20% agreed that they usually eat more. When asked if eating when they are angry will make them better, 20% of the boys said never, 40% said a little, 13.3% said sometimes and 26% said usually. This was nearly similar to girls as 16.7% said never, 26.7% said a little, and 33.3% said sometimes, while 23.3% said never. Most boys (36.7%) said that they usually ate more when bored, while only 30% of girls agreed that they ate more. More so, both the boys and girls reported that when they are alone they “sometimes” and “usually” ate more. 26.7% of the boys and 10% of the girls disagreed that when they were feeling good they “never” worried about the type of quantity of food they ate, while 30% of the boys and 33% of the girls reported that they “usually” worry. 10% of the boys and 16.7% of the girls said that they “never” get happy by having a favourite snack, while 13.3% boys and 53.3% of the girls said “sometimes” it makes them feel even better to have snack when they are happy.

4.3 Table 3: Social factors:

	Disagree				Neutral				Agree			
	B		G		B		G		B		G	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Social factors: Parents award</i>												
13. When I do a good job, my parents reward me with food.	15	50	6	20	-	-	-	-	15	50	24	80.1
<i>Social factors: Body shape</i>												
14. My father has influenced my interest in my body shape.	11	336.7	21	70	-	-	-	-	19	63.3	9	30
15. My mother has influenced my interest in my body shape	11	36.7	15	50	-	-	-	-	19	63.3	15	50
16. My siblings have influenced my interest in my body shape	14	46.7	22	73.3	-	-	-	-	16	53.3	8	26.7
17. My friends have influenced my interest in my body shape	13	43.3	11	36.7	-	-	-	-	17	56.7	19	63.3
18. My famous people have influenced my interest in my body shape	26	86.7	23	76.7	-	-	-	-	4	13.3	7	23.3
19. My social media has influenced my interest in my body shape.	19	63.3	18	60	-	-	-	-	11	36.7	12	40
<i>Social factors: food choices</i>												
1. Food choices has influenced by parents.	9	30	15	50	-	-	-	-	21	70	15	50
2. Food choices has influenced by siblings.	15	50	20	66.7	-	-	-	-	15	50	10	33.3
3. Food choices has influenced by friends.	13	43.3	16	53.3	-	-	-	-	17	56.7	14	46.7
4. Food choices has influenced by social media.	18	60	18	60	-	-	-	-	12	40	12	40
5. Food choices has influenced by food brand.	18	60	16	53.3	-	-	-	-	12	40	14	46.7

When asked the social factors affecting their eating, the findings were mixed. For example, 80.1% girls agreed that when they did a good job their parents rewarded them with food, as opposed to 50% boys. Similarly, 50% boys disagreed on this as opposed to 20% girls. On the body shaped, 30% of the girls stated that they fathers had influenced their interest on their body shape as opposed to 63.3% of boys. Similarly, when asked how their mothers had influenced their body shaped 50% of the girls disagreed, none remained neutral, and 63% agreed. For the boys, 36.7% disagreed, 0% was neutral and 63.3 % agreed. On asked if their siblings influenced their body shapes, 73% girls disagreed, 0% were neutral and 26% agreed. When it came to boys, 46.7% disagreed, 0% was neutral and 53.3% agreed. Majority of the boys (86.7%) disagreed that famous people influenced their interest in body shape, and only 13.3% agreed. Likewise 76.7% also disagreed, with only 23.3% of the girls agreeing that famous people influenced their body shapes. Social media also did not influence 63.3% of the boys, and 60% of girls, with only 33.7% boys and 40% girls agreeing that social media influenced. When it came to food choices, 30% of the boys and 50% of girls disagreed that parents influenced them, while 70% of boys and 50% of girls agreed that parents had an influenced. When asked if friends influenced them, 43.3% of the boys and 53.3 % of the girls disagreed, while 56.7% of the boys and 46.7 of the girls agreed. On social media, the numbers were even with 60% of boys and 60% of girls disagreeing that social media influenced them, while 40% of the boys and 40% of the girls agreed that indeed social media influenced their food choices. On the influence of food brand, 60% of the boys and 53.3% of girls disagreed that they were influenced, whereas 40% of boys and 46.7 of the girls agreed that food brands influenced them. For instance, Macht (2008) concluded that many people who eat a lot of could from stress could as well avoid taking health foods like fruits and vegetables, and instead eat unhealthy foods. In such case, unhealthy snacks replaces healthy meals since people under stress will usually seek for a quick energy source before meals. Zellner et al., (2006) established that women who are stressed are more likely to eat unhealthy and sweet foods.

4.4 Table 4: Personal factors:

Personal factors:	Disagree				Neutral				Agree			
	B	G	N	%	B	G	N	%	B	G	N	%
1. I eat even I am not hungry.	12	40	6	20	-	-	-	-	18	59.9	24	78
2. I award myself by eating.	4	13.3	2	6.7	-	-	-	-	26	86.6	28	93.3
2. I cannot resist food and eat continuously.	7	23.3	6	20	1	3.3	-	-	22	93.4	24	80
1. I am more prone to eating during period.	-	-	23	76.7	30	50	-	-	-	-	7	23.3
2. I am more prone to eating during fasting days.	7	23.3	20	66.7	-	-	-	-	23	76.7	10	33.3
3. I am more prone to eating during weekend and holidays.	16	53.3	11	36.7	-	-	-	-	14	46.7	19	63.3
4. I am more prone to eating during social and religious events.	16	53.3	21	70	1	3.3	-	-	13	43.3	9	30
5. I am more prone to eating during meeting with friends or relative.	15	50	22	73.3	-	-	-	-	15	50	8	26.7
1. The food that would be more appealing to me is healthy food.	11	46.7	18	60	-	-	-	-	19	63.3	12	40
2. The food that would be more appealing to me is fast food.	7	23.3	10	33.3	-	-	-	-	23	76.7	20	66.7
3. The food that would be more appealing to me is snack.	10	33.3	11	36.7	-	-	-	-	20	66.7	19	63.3
1. The drink that would be more appealing to me is water.	14	46.7	18	60	-	-	1	3.3	16	53.3	11	36.7
2. The drink that would be more appealing to me is soft drinks.	13	43.3	14	46.7	-	-	-	-	17	56.7	16	53.3
3. The drink that would be more appealing to me is juices.	11	36.7	15	50	-	-	-	-	19	63.3	15	50
4. The drink that would be more appealing to me is energy drinks.	29	96.7	24	80	-	-	-	-	1	3.3	6	20

When asked the questions on personal factors, 40% of the boys and 20% of the girls disagreed that they ate when hungry, with 59.9% of boys and 78% of girls agreeing. 13.3% of boys and 6.7% of girls stated that they award themselves by eating, while 86.6% of boys and 93.3% of girls agreed. When asked if they cannot resist food and eat continuously, 23.3% of the boys and 20% of the girls disagreed, 1% of the boys and 3.3% of the girls remained neutral, while 93.4% boys and 80% girls agreed. 23.3% of the boys and 66.7% disagreed that they were not prone to eating during fasting days, while 76.7% boys and 33.3% agreed. Similarly, 53.3% and 36.7% disagreed that they were prone to eating during weekends and holidays whereas 46.7% boys and 63.3% girls disagreed on the same. When asked if they were prone to eating during social events 53.3% boys and 70% disagreed, 1% boys and 3.3% girls remained neutral, and 43.3 boys and 30% girls agreed. 50% of the boys and 70% of girls disagreed that they were more prone to eating during meetings with friends or relative, while 50% of boys and 26.7 girls agreed. 46.7 of the boys and 60% of girls disagreed that healthy food was more appealing to them, whereas 63% of the boys and 40% of the girls agreed. On fast food, 23.3% of the boys and 33.3% of the girls disagreed that fast food was appealing while 76.7% of the boys and 66.7 of the girls agreed. Water as a drink was more appealing to 46.7% of boys and 60% of girls, while 53.3% of the boys and 36.7 of the girls disagreed. When asked if soft drinks were appealing to them, 43.3% of the boys and 46.7 of the girls disagreed, while 56.7% of the boys and 53.3% of the girls agreed. If asked if juices would be more appealing, 36.7% of the boys and 50% of the girls disagreed, while 63.3% of the boys and 50% of the girls agreed. On energy drinks 96.7% of the boys and 80% of the girls disagreed that energy drink would be more appealing, with only 3.3% of the boys and 20% of the girls agreed.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that emotional eating is one of the eating orders that cause obesity and negatively impacts health, and it is strongly influenced by the habits and the behaviours of a person in regard to dietary. A person could engage in emotional eating deliberately or unknowingly as a result of their emotions. Still, emotional psychological problems and other issues contributes to emotional eating that is known be associated with eating habits, weight loss or gain and body image. Indeed, adolescent students have been found to suffer most with behavioural and emotional issues like truanting, aggression, being withdrawn and lack of interest in academic work, which can lead them to emotional eating as coping mechanism.

One of the leading factors that have been found to contribute towards emotional eating is personal factors. From the survey carried varying personal factors such reaction to anger, reaction to emotional states and social activities are some of issues that lead to emotional eating. For example, majority of the participants agreed that they were prone to eating more during weekends and on holidays. They as well agreed that that different foods appeal to them particularly snacks. This finding echoes those by Economy (2013) that established that emotional eating could be a reaction to different emotions like fear, sadness and loneliness. However, it can as well be stated that personal factors are related to psychological factors since for example, a person may be bored or angry, and this will affect his/ her eating behaviours. Indeed, the survey established that the participant tended to eat more when bored, lonely or stressed. The findings are similar to those by Cartwright et al. (2003) who found that emotional eating arises from the way a person responds to negative or positive emotions. Personal factors like eating when not hungry could be associated with emotional eating. This was brought out in the survey

when majority of participants agreed that they tend to eat even when they are not feeling hungry. Indeed this agrees with Macht (2008) who found that when faced with personal issues and stress tend to eat a lot. Sadly, the choice of their food may not be health since many of them want to get a quick energy source as noted by Zellner et al (2006), and this was established in the survey when many students agreed that fast food and snack would be more appealing to them, yet these type of foods are associated with unhealthy foods in terms of nutrients.

Psychological factors are among the leading causes of emotional eating. This came out clearly from the survey when many students agreed that sometimes or usually, they engaged in emotional eating owing to these factors. For example, when feeling “down” or stressed, these students tended to eat more. This agrees with Zellner et al., (2006) who found that stress contributes to weigh gain as people seem increase or lose their appetite when stressed. Likewise Macht (2008) as well established that people eat a lot due to stress. The findings from the survey as well indicated that majority of students ate more when they felt irritated; this is possible because food help to calm their minds. Emotional eating can as well be caused by varying physical problems for example self-induced starvation. Indeed, this is bought in the findings as 76.7% and 33.3% girls agreed that they were prone to eating more when they are fasting. Indeed, the results agrees with the observations of Goossens et al. (2009) who noted that the potential of getting into emotional eating rises with hormonal changes, as it happens when a person is fasting. Similarly, it was found from the survey that many participants ate even in cases where they were not hungry, a fact that arises from personal behaviour of a person.

The results from the survey as well indicate that social and cultural perceptions can as well change the perceptions of a person in regard to eating habits and behaviours. This is well captured in the survey when majority of participants agreed that their parents, siblings and friends influenced them at different level in the type food they eat. Indeed, Wroblewski, Yanico, & Lupe (2005) in their study found that people are affected by social cultural perceptions and friends in their eating habits as they sake to adapt to the existing cultural behaviours when it comes to eating. The findings of the survey as well underlines the fact that teenagers are at a higher risk to engage in emotional eating from parental and familial influences. For example, the survey revealed that the participants several social factors influence their decisions in relation to body shapes, which ultimately influenced their eating behaviours. For instance 63.3% of the girls and 30% of the boys agreed that their father’s opinion influenced their body shape. Similarly, majority of the participants agreed that their mothers, siblings and friends as well influenced their body shapes. The finding shows that parents and family can influence the eating behaviour as established by Engel et al., (2007) who noted that parents seem to control what their children eat or the eating habits of their children. Therefore, parents are in a position to directly or indirectly contribute to emotional eating among their children. In addition, Polivy & Herman (2002) who found that peer pressure from friends and sibling together with other social factors for example views of the parents tend to push young people towards emotional eating. This is because peers usually encourages, criticises or inspires people in a way that influences their eating habits. In addition, many adolescents particularly girls want to have a slim body and this could influence their eating behaviours. Indeed results from the survey indicate that 40% of girls are influenced by social media to change their eating behaviours.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The present study was sought to establish young students’ perceptions of factors that can contribute to emotional eating in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. From the findings, the study can conclude that emotional eating which can as well be referred to stress eating arises when a person uses food to feel better. An individual eats to with the objective of satisfying emotional needs and not because he/she is feeling hungry. Emotional eating as well can involve eating a sway to reward one’s self or to celebrate. However, this is not the best way of addressing the real problem. Indeed, emotional eating is caused by psychological, personal and social cultural factors that act singularly or in a combination to drive an individual towards emotional eating. Behavioural and emotional issues that result in stress among adolescents’ students are likely to lead to emotional eating. The negative emotions among this group are likely to result in the urge to eat more or unhealthy foods. In many cases teenagers are susceptible to emotional eating since they usually lack the required coping mechanism to manage stress. But, it should be noted that not emotional eating does not occur among all teenagers.

Physical problems such as self-induced starvation and weight loss can also result in emotional eating since this creates anxiety among individual. In additions, changes in eating patterns could result in hormonal changes resulting in stress that eventually result in emotional eating. Similarly, social and cultural perceptions have been established to influence a person’s eating habits and behaviours. For example, western society tends to promote slim bodies as perfect images which could influence individuals’ eating behaviours. Parents and family members like siblings also influence eating habits of children. Indeed, parents tend to control what their children eat and therefore play an important role in emotional eating, as they can contribute negatively or positively.

Certainly, emotional eating is not caused by one factor but several. The study can conclude that personal, psychological, sociocultural and physical factors all influence students or young people to engage in emotional eating. The underlying factor is that people try to deal with their negative emotions, particularly stress by eating

more or unhealthy foods to satisfy these emotions, which creates more problems to the.

In order to deal with emotional eating, the present study gives the following recommendations:

- Individuals particularly adolescents should adopt healthy coping as a way of finding ways to deal with negative feels that do not lead them to more problems such as exercising, or taking to a supportive group will help to deal with stresses that may drive one to emotional eating.
- Being able to deal with hard time that presents individual with emotional and social challenges will be a good way of dealing with emotional eating. Individual should challenge themselves to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating healthy food and the right amounts even when under stress.
- Parents should know the important role they play in shaping and influencing their children's eating behaviours and thereby should advice their children to keep eat well and avoid putting any pressure on them.
- Establish the core personal, psychological, sociocultural and physical factors that are causing emotional eating and address them individually.

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