

OBJECTIVE

To discover what psychosocial factors may appear to encourage obese, overweight and normal weight adolescents to make the food choices that they do and develop risky eating habits.

METHODS

A total of eight adolescents between the ages of 11 and 18 years participated in this study. A qualitative phenomenological approach was chosen as the methodology. Qualitative face to face interviews involving unstructured open-ended questions captured demography, food and nutrition knowledge and eating habits. The data were analyzed according to Creswell 2014.

RESULTS

An equal number of male and female participants of varying ethnicities were chosen to capture differences in cultural backgrounds. BMI-for-age placed all but two (2) adolescents (75%) above the 85th percentile. Psychosocial factors identified in this study affecting the eating habits were lack of food and nutrition knowledge, autonomous dietary behaviour, family and peer influence and the lack of family support. Adolescents who expressed a greater knowledge about food and nutrition did not report better application to their purchasing nor consumption behaviours. There were no major differences among the adolescents with respecting habits as they all reported similar behaviours.

RESULTS

Figure 1: Most adolescents were above healthy weight.

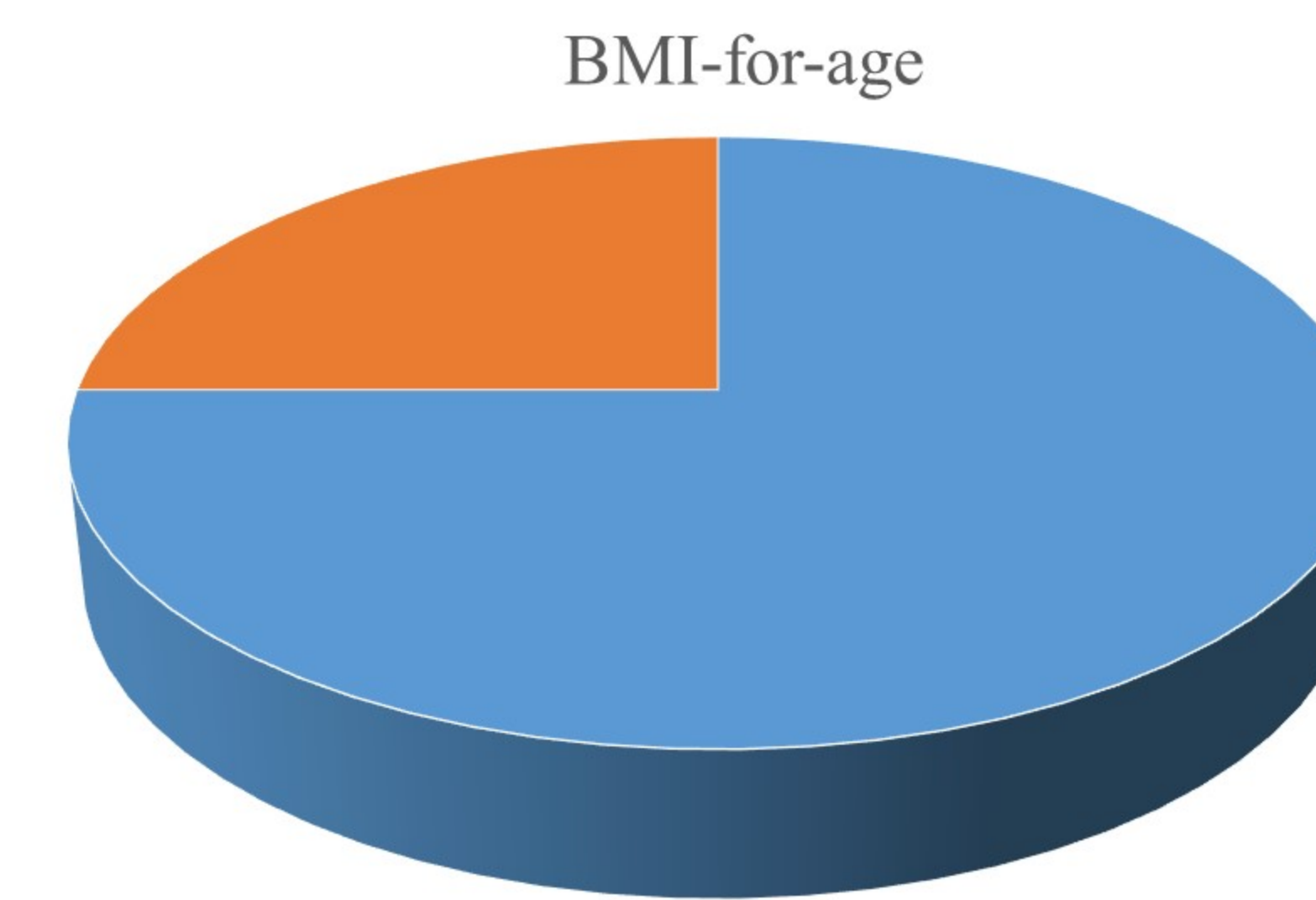
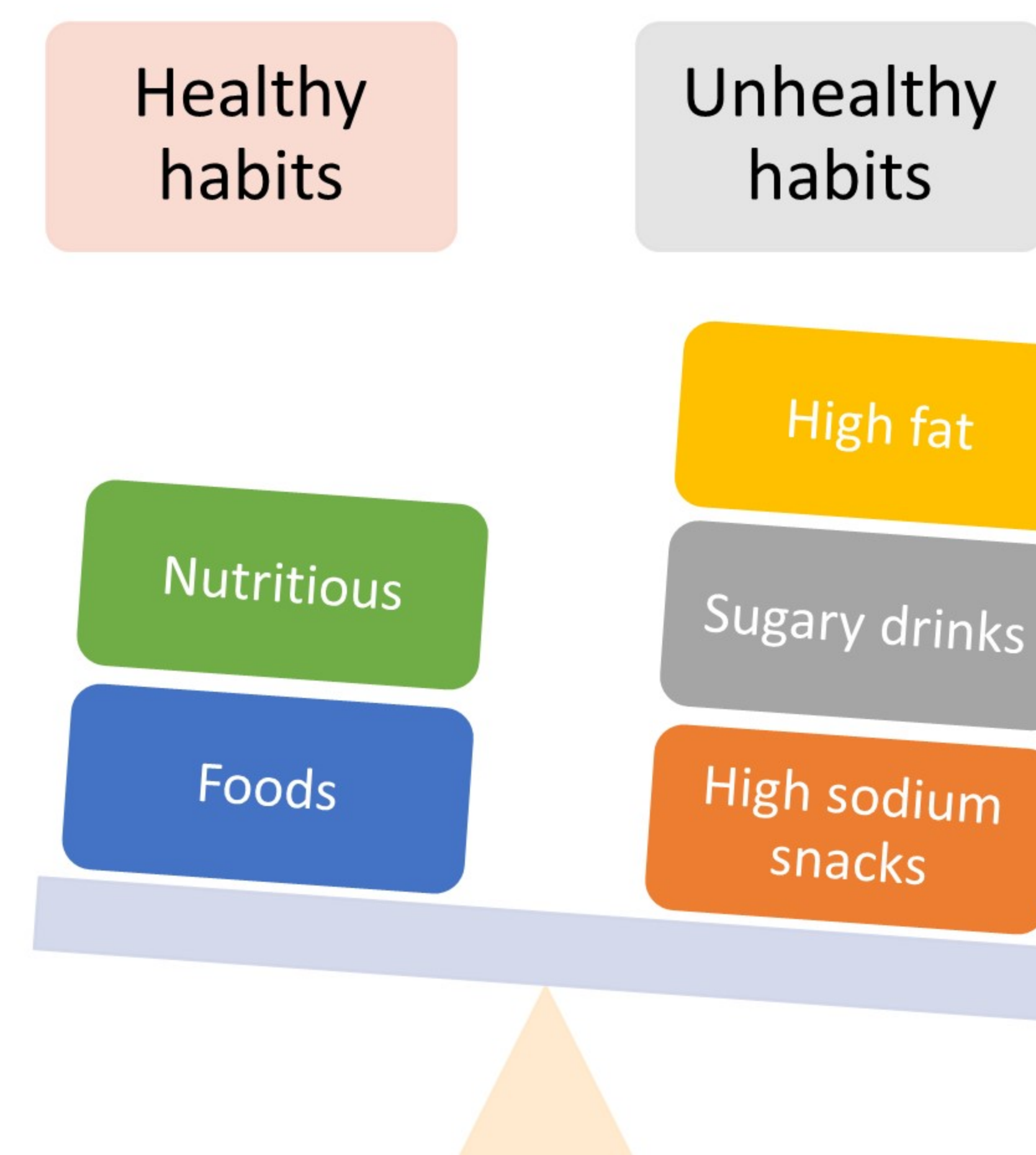


Figure 2: A lack of knowledge about food and nutrition was a key issue.

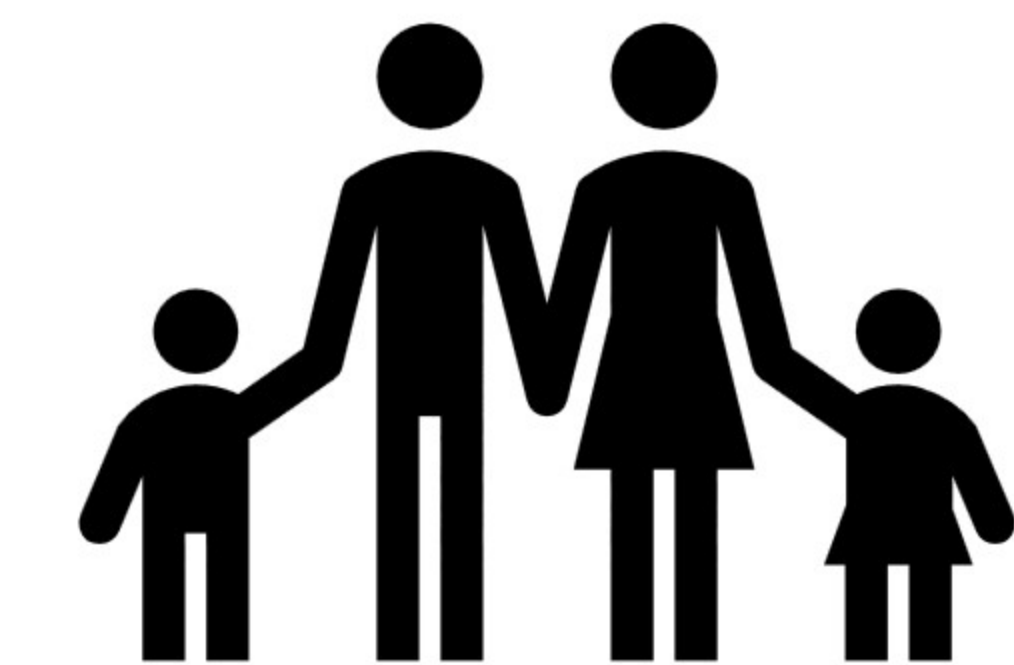


Figure 3: Knowledge did not necessarily translate into healthy behaviour.



RESULTS

Figure 4: Lack of familial support in making healthful choices was expressed by all.



CONCLUSION

Adolescents are in an at-risk population as demonstrated in their unsafe dietary behaviours. Implementing health-seeking behaviours in the home and school environment can make a positive difference in modelling behaviour.