

Factors Affect Fast Food Consumption among Senior Secondary School Students in Muzaffarpur City, Bihar

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of fast food consumption, especially among students, raises concerns about its impact on nutrition and health. The link between excessive fast food consumption and issues like weight gain and obesity is well-documented. However, there's a gap in addressing effective methods, strategies, and policies to tackle this issue. This study conducted in Muzaffarpur city, Bihar, involving 200 respondents selected through random sampling, utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews to delve into the experiences and perspectives of individuals regarding fast food consumption. This approach likely provided valuable qualitative insights into the challenges and potential solutions related to this issue.

KEYWORDS: *Fast food, consumption, senior secondary, obesity, factors*

How to cite this paper: Dr. Sujata Kumari "Factors Affect Fast Food Consumption among Senior Secondary School Students in Muzaffarpur City, Bihar" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-8 | Issue-2, April 2024, pp.612-616,

URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd64732.pdf



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INTRODUCTION

The growth of the Indian fast food industry is indeed impressive, driven by innovation, investments, and changing consumer preferences. Fast food's popularity has soared due to its convenience and affordability, but it's also important to be mindful of its nutritional content, as it can be high in calories, fat, sugar, and salt (Bander and Bender, 1995).

Fast food encompasses a wide range of food items that are quickly prepared and packaged for takeaway, appealing to various demographics such as the younger generation, working women, and busy households with disposable income (Gopinath and Kalpana, 2019). Fast food is defined as a food's focus on mass production for commercial purposes, prioritizing speed over culinary quality. This often results in neglecting important aspects of culinary science (Fryar CD et al., 2018). Junk food tends to be high in fat, salt, and sugar, which are contributors to obesity and various health issues. Examples like burgers, pizza, and fried chicken are common culprits due to their high levels of these unhealthy components (Singh S Ankal et al., 2021). Food corporations have indeed been successful in influencing consumer

choices and replacing fresh, healthy options with fast food and processed food. This shift can be attributed to various factors, including aggressive marketing strategies, convenience, and the widespread availability of fast food options. The impact of these changes on public health has been significant, contributing to the rise of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and other health issues. Monitoring such trends is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the food industry and implementing strategies to promote healthier eating habits. The labels on fast food products often reflect low nutritional value, high calorie content, and the presence of additives that can contribute to health issues like obesity and other diseases. Research has shown that frequent consumption of fast food is indeed harmful to human health, leading to various negative outcomes. Moreover, studies have indicated a correlation between the concentration of fast food outlets in local areas and increased rates of obesity and poor nutritional status among residents, highlighting the environmental impact of fast food availability on health outcomes. (Kruger et al., 2014). India's restaurant scene

is indeed undergoing a renaissance, fueled by these factors and catering to evolving consumer preferences.

The rapid growth of the fast food sector in India, with a staggering 48% annual development rate, indicates its significance in the food industry. The projection of reaching a billion dollars insales by 2018 highlights the immense potential and demand for fast food in the Indian market.

The evolving tastes and lifestyles, coupled with a burgeoning middle class, have spurred the growth of India's fast food market. The appeal of Indian cuisine, with its diverse cooking styles and ingredients, contributes to this trend. As people become more adventurous with their culinary choices, the fast food market in India continues to flourish, reflecting changing eating habits and preferences.

The shift in eating habits towards simplicity and ease of digestion reflects the demands of contemporary lifestyles. Fast food meets these demands by offering convenient, quick-to-prepare meals that fit into busy schedules without compromising on taste or nutrition. This evolution in eating habits aligns with the needs and preferences of modern consumers.

The rapid growth of fast food ideas in India is reshaping eating habits, fueled by factors like rising disposable income, changing consumer preferences, and a burgeoning population. These elements contribute to the dynamic landscape of the country's food industry. Access to Western cuisine, the rise of nuclear families, and the increasing participation of women in the workforce are indeed significant factors driving the evolution of dining out patterns and the expansion of the fast food business in India. These societal changes contribute to the diversification of food preferences and the growing demand for convenient dining options.

The fast food trend in India not only reflects the country's globalization but also signifies the emergence of new markets previously unseen in the region. As more people choose to dine out, the fast food industry presents substantial opportunities for competitors to expand their consumer base and cater to evolving tastes and preferences.

Literature review:

Technology is reshaping the way we approach cooking. From smart appliances to recipe apps, it's altering how we buy, prepare, and think about food. Our relationship with cooking is evolving as convenience and innovation blend with traditional culinary practices. Convenience is definitely a significant factor contributing to the popularity of junk food. The ease and speed with which it can be obtained and consumed make it a tempting option,

especially for individuals with busy lifestyles (Dunn KI et al. 2011). Compared to preparing a healthy meal, which often requires more time and effort, junk food is readily available and requires minimal preparation.

Understanding the appeal of convenience can inform efforts to promote healthier eating habits by making nutritious options more accessible and convenient (Thompson OM et al, 2004).

Indeed, cooking skills play a crucial role in expanding food choices and promoting healthy eating habits. Without the ability to prepare a variety of nutritious meals, individuals may resort to less healthy options or rely on convenience foods, potentially limiting their dietary diversity and overall health outcomes (Murcott, 1995).

Cooking skills empower individuals to make informed and healthier food choices aligned with nutrition guidelines. By knowing how to prepare meals from scratch using fresh ingredients, people can better control the quality and nutritional content of their diets, ultimately supporting their overall health and well-being (Hartmann, Dohle and Siegrist, 2013).

The investigation of children's views on cooking revealed a clear preference for pizza and burgers, possibly influenced by frequent dining out or the increasing popularity of pizza consumption at home. The persistent preference for chips and other fast foods in children's meals suggests that from an early age, children develop preferences for processed foods high in fat.

This early exposure and preference for unhealthy foods can have long-term implications for their dietary habits and health outcomes (Attar, 1990).

The home environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's dietary habits and overall health. Research indicates that the availability and accessibility of fruits and vegetables at home are positively associated with higher consumption among children. Conversely, easy access to unhealthy foods like sweetened beverages and unhealthy snacks correlates with increased energy intake in children. This underscores the importance of creating a supportive home environment that encourages healthy eating habits by providing easy access to nutritious options and limiting the availability of unhealthy choices (Qstbye et al, 2013).

With the rise of busier consumer lifestyles and more dual-working families with children, there's a growing emphasis on quick meal solutions. This trend is driven by the need for convenience and time-saving options in meal preparation (Atkins and

Bowler,2001). Consumers often seek ways to combine mealtime with other activities such as shopping, work, or traveling, reflecting a shift towards multitasking and maximizing efficiency in daily routines. As a result, there's an increasing demand for convenient and easily accessible food options that fit into these fast-paced lifestyles. The increase in eating moments per day reflects the modern lifestyle's tendency towards snacking and quick, on-the-go meals, which aligns with the rising consumption of fast food (Hansoon,2002). Additionally, the faster pace of life in big cities has prompted people to seek quicker meal solutions to accommodate their shortened lunch hours and hectic schedules. This shift towards more frequent but smaller eating moments and the preference for fast food options are both influenced by the demands of contemporary urban living, where convenience and efficiency are paramount.

The study on consumer characteristics influencing fast food consumption in Turkey found that several factors significantly impacted the frequency of fast food consumption. These factors included age, income, education, household size, presence of children, and consumer attitudes towards the price of fast food, health concerns, and child preferences. Understanding these variables provides valuable insights into the drivers behind fast food consumption habits in Turkey and can inform strategies for promoting healthier eating habits within the population (Akbay, Tiryaki and Gal,2007).

The connection between high-sugar and high-fat foods and increased cravings is well-supported by scientific research. Consuming such foods can trigger biochemical responses in the brain that lead to heightened cravings for similar foods, creating a cycle of consumption. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for addressing and potentially mitigating the challenges associated with excessive consumption of fast food (Dallackar M, et al.2019). Indeed, the sensory appeal of junk food, including its alluring smell and taste, can contribute to its enjoyable consumption experience. Additionally, various social, economic, and psychological factors play a role in individuals' choices regarding junk food consumption. Social influences, such as peer pressure and the influence of friends, can significantly impact one's dietary habits and decisions.

Understanding these factors can help develop more effective strategies for promoting healthier eating behaviors (Fung C et al, 2013).

Methodology:

This study was conducted in Muzaffarpur city, Bihar. A total of 150 subjects were selected between the age group of 12 to 18 years. For data collection questionnaire and interviews method was used. A random sampling method was used to select respondents. The study was conducted from September 2023 to February 2024 over a period of 6 months.

Developed a pre-tested questionnaire for collecting information. Simple and brief questionnaires were developed. questionnaire included sections for gathering general information such as name, age, education, family details, and pocket money among college-going girls. Additionally, I collected anthropometric data like body weight and height. Then thoroughly covered dietary intake by recording the frequency of consuming various fast foods such as pizza, burgers, chocolate, ice cream, cookies/cake, chow mein, pasta, and Maggi. Using the fast-food frequency questionnaire with options ranging from daily to never, you assessed consumption patterns over an 8-month period. The 24-hour recall method likely provided valuable insights into participants' recent eating habits.

Result and Findings:

Table 01 classification of responded based on their likely of fast food

Fast food	Frequency	Percentage
Highly like	100	50
Like	60	30
Neither likes nor dislike	12	06
Dislike	20	10
Highly dislike	08	04

According to table 01, It was found that 50% of the respondents highly like fast food, 30% were like, and on the other hand only 10% dislike fast food consumption, 06% says that neither like nor like fast food and only 4% dislikes fast food.

Table 02 Classification of respondents based on frequency of consuming fast food

Fast food consumption patterns	Frequency	Percentage
Every day	86	43
Four to five times in a week	70	35
More than twice	30	15
Rarely	14	07

According to table 02 It was found that 43% of respondents ate fast food everyday, 35% said that they consume 5 to 4 times a week, 15% ate more than twice in a week and 7% of respondents rarely ate fast food.

Triple three classification of respondents based on the main factors for consuming fast food

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Model lifestyle	42	21
Lack of mothers cooking skills	20	20
Environment at home	12	06
Advertisement and media	34	17
Attractive taste and smell	72	36
Lack of time	20	10

According to table 03 It was found that 73% respondents were consuming fast food because of attractive taste and smell of fast food, 42% said about modern lifestyle, 35% influence by in media and advertisement for consuming fast food, 20% respondents consume fast food due to lack of mother cooking skills and only 18% were said that lack of time is responsible for consuming fast food.

Conclusion:

Fast food often prioritizes convenience and taste over nutritional value, which can contribute to various health issues. Marketing tactics aimed at the younger generation can make it even more enticing despite its negative effects. Promoting healthier alternatives and educating about balanced diets could help mitigate these risks. Fast food consumption can have significant impacts on health, including contributing to obesity, heart disease, and other health issues. Factors influencing fast food consumption habits can include convenience, affordability, taste preferences, advertising, cultural influences, and socioeconomic status. Analyzing these factors can provide insights into patterns of fast food consumption and help inform strategies for promoting healthier eating habits.

It's concerning to see that despite awareness of the harmful effects of fast food, its consumption among the younger generation continues to rise. The criteria identified, such as taste, freshness, consistency, advertising influence, and social status, shed light on why this trend persists. These factors not only drive individual consumption but also contribute to the proliferation of fast-food restaurants in society, creating a cycle that reinforces unhealthy eating habits.

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