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A study on attitude of students towards fast food: A modern outlook

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Abstract

The current evolving lifestyle is characterized by handling multiple roles & responsibilities in a strict time schedules, keeping a sync with chase of individual goals. In this fast paced routine dietary habits have been adversely affected. Consumption of processed foods is greater than before. The increasing consumption of fast-food among youths has specially induced concerns on adverse implications towards health and well-being. The study delves into exploring the perspectives of students towards fast foods consumption. Undergraduate students in aged between 19 and 27 years were surveyed for the study to find out attributes affecting their choice for fast food. Findings indicate that students perceive fast food as a convenient and time-efficient choice, with a majority concurring on its affordability. Nevertheless, a notable portion acknowledges its role in fostering unhealthy eating behaviors and its adverse effects on overall health. The preferences of peers strongly influence students' decisions regarding fast food, while awareness regarding its nutritional value remains inadequate. The study concludes that although students generally embrace fast food for its convenience, there is a necessity for heightened awareness campaigns to enlighten them about its health hazards and nutritional composition.

Keywords: Modern outlook, students towards fast food, strongly influence students'

Introduction

In today's fast-moving and ever-changing modern lifestyles, one notable transformation lies in the realm of dietary habits, particularly among the younger generation (Madhvapaty & Dasgupta, 2000) [6]. Fast foods have seamlessly integrated into the daily routines of students, sparking concerns about its potential impact on their health and well-being (Stender *et al.*, 2007) [8]. (Jaworowska *et al.*, 2013) [4]. This introduction seeks to delve into the complex dynamics surrounding students' attitudes towards fast foods, shedding light on influencing factors and potential health repercussions.

The surge in fast-food consumption among students can be attributed to a convergence of factors, from the allure of convenience and affordability to the pervasive influence of fast-food marketing strategies (Casini *et al.*, 2013) [2], (Savelli *et al.*, 2017) [7]. The demanding nature of academic life often leads students to opt for quick and easily accessible food choices, aligning with their hectic schedules. The abundance of fast-food outlets both on and off campuses further amplifies this convenience, making indulging in such options irresistible.

Moreover, peer influence and societal norms also play significant roles in shaping students' perceptions of fast foods (Wouters *et al.*, 2010) [9], (Fortin and Yazbeck, 2015) [3]. Social gatherings frequently revolve around the consumption of these readily available and often indulgent food items, fostering a culture where fast food is socially acceptable and normalized within student communities. The social identity theory underscores the powerful impact of social dynamics on dietary choices, as individuals tend to conform to the behaviors of their social groups to enhance a sense of belonging.

However, the escalating consumption of fast foods among students raises notable health concerns. Various studies have linked frequent fast-food intake to adverse health outcomes such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic disorders, (Bahadoran *et al.*, 2015) [1]. The nutritional composition of many fast-food items, characterized by high levels of saturated fats, sugars, and sodium, significantly contributes to these health risks (Kim *et al.*, 2004) [5].

In conclusion, comprehending students' attitudes towards fast foods requires a thorough examination of the myriad factors influencing their dietary decisions. This exploration aims to provide insights into the intricate interplay of convenience, social dynamics, and health implications associated with the prevalent consumption of fast foods among students.

Methodology

The survey was conducted to understand attitude of students towards Fast Foods. In the survey, a questionnaire was being

prepared comprising statements related to fast foods, its growing trends, queries related to students' response towards fast food its impact on health, affordability, peer preferences, nutritional value, environmental impact etc. In this survey a total of 54 Agricultural Third year students participated, age group of (19-27 years).

Results and Discussion

The following conclusions were drawn:

S. No.	Statement	Strongly agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Fast Food is convenient option.	4 (7.4%)	11 (20.4%)	19 (32.9%)	37 (20%)	-
2.	Fast Food is time saving option among students.	3 (5.6%)	11 (20.4%)	16 (29.6%)	23 (42.6%)	-
3.	Fast Food perceived as negatively impacting overall student health.	-	-	3 (5.6%)	30 (55.6%)	21 (38.9%)
4.	Students perceived as affordable option.	1 (1.9%)	10 (18.5%)	6 (11.1%)	31 (57.4%)	6 (11.1%)
5.	Contribution of fast food to unhealthy eating habit is acknowledged by students.	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.4%)	7 (13%)	39 (72.2%)	3 (5.6%)
6.	Peer preferences also influence student's fast food choices.	2 (3.7%)	4 (7.4%)	10 (18.5)	29 (53.7%)	16.7
7.	Awareness of the nutritional value of fast food is low	6 (11.1%)	15 (27.8%)	8 (14.8%)	20 (37%)	5 (9.3%)

Fast food to be a convenient option

Majority of respondents (37 percent) agree with the statement followed by (35.2 percent) goes with neutral opinion however only (20.4 percent) and (7.4 percent) strongly disagree with the statement.

Fast food is believed to be as a time saving option among students

A very meagre percent goes against the statement (5.6 percent), (42.6) agree with the statement, (29.6) stated neutral opinion and (20.4 percent) disagree with the statement.

Fast food perceived as negatively impacting overall student health

Majority of respondents (55.6 percent) agree upon the statement followed by (38.9 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (5.6 percent) goes with the neutral opinion.

Students perceive fast food as an affordable option

Majority of respondents (57.4 percent) agree with the statement, (18.5 percent) disagree with the statement, (11.1 percent) act neutral and a very small percentage (1.9 percent) strongly disagree with the statement.

The contribution of fast food to unhealthy eating habits is acknowledged by students

Majority of respondents (72.2 percent) agree with the statement, (13 percent) goes with the neutral opinion (7.4 percent) disagree with the statement however (5.6 percent) strongly disagree with the statement and only (1.9 percent) strongly disagree with the statement.

Peer preferences strongly influence students' fast-food choices

(16.7 percent) strongly agree with the statement, (53.7 percent) agree with the statement followed by (18.5 percent) goes with the neutral opinion and only (3.7 percent) strongly disagree.

Fast food nutritional value awareness is low among students

(37 percent) agree with the statement followed by (27.8 percent) disagree with the statement, (14.8 percent) goes with the neutral opinion however (11.1 percent) strongly disagree and lastly (9.3 percent) strongly agree.

Choosing fast food is a popular choice for socializing among students

Majority of respondents (48.1 percent) agree with the statement followed by (24.1) goes with the neutral opinion however (18.5 percent) strongly agree with the statement then (7.4 percent) disagree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

Availability of fast food significantly affects students' dietary choices

(14.8 percent) strongly agree with the statement followed by (68.5 percent) agree with the statement, (13 percent) goes with the neutral opinion, (1.9 percent) strongly disagree and (1.9 percent) disagree with the statement.

Marketing of fast food has a noticeable influence on students' food choices

Majority of respondents (64.8 percent) agree with the statement followed by (22.2 percent) goes with the neutral opinion and (13 percent) strongly agree with the statement.

Environmental impact affects fast food choices on students

Majority of respondents (50 percent) goes with neutral opinion followed by (40.7 percent) agree with the statement however (7.4 percent) disagree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

You are likely to seek out of healthy food as compared to fast food

Majority of respondents (50 percent) agree with the statement followed by (24.1 percent) goes with neutral opinion however (13 percent) disagree with the statement, (9.3 percent)

strongly agree with the statement and lastly (3.7 percent) strongly disagree with the statement.

The taste of fast- food plays a significant role in students' preference

Majority of respondents (63 percent) agree with the statement followed by (20.4 percent) strongly agree with the statement, (13 percent) goes with neutral opinion however (1.9 percent) strongly disagree and again (1.9 percent) disagree with the statement.

Fast-food options effectively cater to diverse dietary preference

(59.3 percent) agree with the statement followed by (27.8 percent) goes with the neutral opinion, (9.3 percent) disagree with the statement, (1.9 percent) strongly disagree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly agree with the statement.

Socio economic factors strongly influence student's access to fast-food

Majority of respondents (64.8 percent) agree with the statement followed by (20.4 percent) goes with neutral opinion, (7.4 percent) disagree with the statement, (5.6 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

Fat- food contributes to a lack of variety in students' diet

Majority of respondents (64.8 percent) agree with the statement followed by (20.4 percent) goes with neutral opinion, (7.4 percent) disagree with the statement, (5.6 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

In shaping students' attitude cultural factors play a significant role towards fast food

Majority of respondents (44.4percent) agree with the statement followed by (33.3 percent) goes with neutral opinion, (14.8 percent) disagree with the statement, (1.9 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (14.8 percent) strongly disagree.

Consideration of nutritional information is low when students choose fast food

Majority of respondents (46.3 percent) agree with the statement followed by (16.7 percent) goes with neutral opinion however (16.7percent) disagree with the statement, (18.5 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

Potential health- risks of fast food are well informed to the students

(59.3 percent) agree with the statement followed by (22.2 percent) strongly agree, (14.8 percent) goes with neutral opinion however (3.7percent) disagree with the statement.

Awareness campaigns have a notable impact on students' perception of fast-food

Majority of respondents (50 percent) agree with the statement followed by (24.1 percent) goes with neutral opinion however (11.1percent) disagree with the statement, (13 percent) strongly agree with the statement and (1.9 percent) strongly disagree.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the attitudes of students towards fast food consumption. It is evident that fast food is widely perceived as a convenient and

time-saving option among students, with a significant portion of respondents expressing agreement. However, concerns regarding its negative impact on health and contribution to unhealthy eating habits are also prevalent among the surveyed students. Despite the convenience and affordability associated with fast food, a considerable proportion of students recognize its adverse effects on health and acknowledge the importance of considering nutritional information when making food choices. Moreover, the influence of peer preferences, marketing strategies, and socio-economic factors on students' fast food choices underscores the complexity of this issue. Additionally, cultural factors play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes towards fast food, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive approaches in promoting healthier dietary habits among young individuals. Furthermore, the findings suggest that awareness campaigns can have a positive impact on students' perceptions of fast food, indicating the importance of educational interventions in fostering healthier food choices.

Implications

These findings have several implications for policymakers, educators, and health professionals involved in promoting healthy eating habits among students.

Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive educational programs that raise awareness about the nutritional content and health implications of fast food consumption. These programs should target not only students but also their peers and families to create a supportive environment for healthier food choices.

Secondly, interventions aimed at reducing the influence of marketing strategies and peer preferences on students' fast food choices are warranted. This may involve implementing policies to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods in educational institutions and promoting positive peer influences through peer-led initiatives.

Moreover, efforts to improve access to affordable and nutritious food options, particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, are essential in addressing disparities in dietary habits among students.

Overall, addressing the complex interplay of factors influencing students' attitudes towards fast food requires a multi-faceted approach involving collaboration between stakeholders from the education, healthcare, and policy sectors. By implementing evidence-based interventions and promoting a culture of health and wellness, we can empower students to make informed and healthier food choices, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and future success.

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