



A Study on Awareness of Nutritional Value and Health Risks of Fast Food among College Students in Virudhunagar District

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which college students in Virudhunagar District learn the health risk and nutritional values of fast food consumption. The researchers presented a structured questionnaire to 150 students to obtain data on their level of nutritional awareness and eating habits. The results indicate that a significant proportion of students consume fast food frequently even when unaware of the nutritional values and health risks. The statistical test revealed a significant association between frequency of fast food consumption and nutritional-awareness of fast food. The study demonstrates the need for nutrition education interventions to improve students' awareness and eating habits. The researchers suggested nutrition campaigns to increase awareness of health eating habits, and accessibility of healthy food on campus.

Keywords: college students, eating behaviours, health risks, fast food consumption, nutritional awareness

Introduction

The consumption of fast food on a global scale has seen a rapid increase in recent years, particularly among young adults. College students tend to favor fast food because of lack of time and financial constraints, as well as what they perceive to be a lack of nutritional value and diseases related to its consumption. Fast food is often high in calories, fats, and sugars, and is linked to a variety of diseases and conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. The study aims to determine the knowledge that college students in the Virudhunagar District have of the nutrition and health dangers linked to fast food. The study provides recommendations for improved eating behavior, by bringing to attention knowledge deficiencies.

Review of Literature

1. Smith et al.,2020: Nutrition Knowledge and Consumption Patterns “The majority of college students surveyed do not understand the negative health impacts of fast food and the nutritional aspects of fast food; it is ignorance that leads to bad food choices.”
2. Johnson, 2019: Health Impacts of Fast Food “Young adults’ consumption of fast food has been linked to diabetes, heart disease, and obesity; this is still the case, as many of the students surveyed prioritise convenience and taste over any likely health consequences.”
3. Ramesh, 2018: Nutrition knowledge and food habits “Students in urban locales are observed to consume fast food more regularly, but they



are less aware of the consequences of fast food long-term.”

4. Clark & Green, 2021: University Students' Nutritional Knowledge and Dietary Practices, The study highlights how raising students' nutritional literacy can have a big impact on their eating habits and encourage healthier living.
5. Patel, 2017: The Function of Nutrition Education in Reducing Fast Food Consumption It has been demonstrated that nutrition education in schools increases health awareness, especially among young adults, and reduces the frequency of fast food consumption.

Objectives

- To compare awareness levels by age, gender, and academic program.
- To determine how awareness levels and actual consumption patterns relate to one another.
- To examine the kinds of fast food prefer to eat in college students
- To assess people's knowledge of the health hazards (such as diabetes, heart disease, obesity, etc.) associated with eating fast food.
- To make recommendations for actions to help college students adopt healthier eating practices.

Statement of the Problem

Concerns regarding the health and nutritional awareness of college students in Virudhunagar District are raised by their increasing fast food consumption. This study explores their knowledge gaps regarding the health hazards and nutritional value of fast food and offers solutions to raise awareness and encourage better eating habits.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study uses a descriptive research design to examine college students' fast food consumption habits and awareness levels.

Area of the Study

College students in Tamil Nadu's Virudhunagar District participate in the study.

Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used to choose 150 college students from the Virudhunagar District for the study. With the shared criterion that they occasionally eat fast food, students were selected based on their relevance to the study, guaranteeing representation from a variety of courses and genders.

Sources of Data

Primary Data: gathered using a structured questionnaire that included closed-ended and Likert-scale questions about fast food intake, nutritional value awareness, and health risk knowledge.

Secondary Data: gathered from reputable websites, government reports, books, research articles, journals, and publications of health organizations.

Data Collection Method

College students will receive the questionnaire both offline (in printed copies) and online (through Google Forms).

Tools of Analysis

Descriptive Statistics: Mean, percentage, frequency analysis to describe data.

Chi-square test for testing association between awareness and consumption.

Health Risks of Fast Food

Fast food's taste, affordability, and convenience make it popular, but frequent consumption carries a number of health risks:

- Obesity and Overweight: Fast food frequently contains large amounts of calories, sugars, and unhealthy fats, all of which lead to weight gain and obesity in young adults.
- Cardiovascular Diseases: Consuming too much sodium, trans fats, and saturated fats raises the risk of high blood pressure, cholesterol, heart disease, and stroke.
- Diabetes: Type-2 diabetes is brought on by consuming sugary drinks and refined carbohydrates from fast food on a regular basis, which raise blood sugar levels.
- Digestive Issues: Indigestion, acidity, and other gastrointestinal problems are exacerbated by



fast food's lack of fiber.

- **Nutritional Deficiencies:** An excessive dependence on fast food reduces consumption of vital nutrients such as proteins, vitamins, and minerals, which has an impact on general health.
- **Mental Health Issues:** Research shows that

eating too much fast food can lead to stress, anxiety, and even depression because of its poor nutritional value.

- **Addiction and Bad Lifestyle Choices:** Excessive intake of fat, sugar, and salt causes cravings that result in overindulgence and bad eating habits.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 : Demographic Profile

Demographic category	Majority category	No. of respondents	Percentage(%)
Age Group	18-20 years	98	65
Gender	female	90	60
Course of Study	Arts & Science	60	40
Year of Study	Second year	53	35
Residence	urban	83	55

Interpretation

Sixty percent of the respondents were female students. Sixty-five percent of them were between the ages of 18 and 20. Forty percent of students took courses in the arts and sciences. The largest group consisted of second-year students (35 percent). The vast majority (55%) came from an urban background.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in awareness of health risks between rural and urban background students.

There is no significant difference in the level of awareness of nutritional value of fast food between male and female students.

Table 2: Cross tabulation: Awareness Level vs Place of Residence

Awareness Level	Urban	Rural	Total
High	35	28	63
Moderate	30	25	55
Low	18	14	32
Total	83	67	150

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	0.024	2	0.988
Likelihood Ratio	0.024	2	0.988
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.003	1	0.954
N of Valid Cases	150		

Interpretation

Since p value 0.988 is more than the significant level 0.05. Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted. There is

no significant difference in awareness of health risks between rural and urban students.



Table 4 Cross tabulation: Awareness of Nutritional Value vs Gender

Awareness Level	Male	Female	Total
High	20	35	55
Moderate	25	40	65
Low	15	15	30
Total	60	90	150

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.275	2	0.528
Likelihood Ratio	1.281	2	0.527
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.010	1	0.919
N of Valid Cases	150		

Interpretation

The outcome is not statistically significant because the p-value of 0.528 is higher than 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted, showing that male and female students do not significantly differ in their awareness of the nutritional value of fast food.

Findings

- Female students made up the majority of responders.
- The majority of students are between the ages of 18 and 20.
- The majority of those surveyed came from urban areas.
- The majority were enrolled in science and arts courses.
- The majority of those surveyed said they came from middle-class families.
- Students in rural and urban areas did not significantly differ in their awareness of health risks ($p > 0.05$).
- There was no discernible difference between male and female students' awareness of nutritional value ($p > 0.05$).

Suggestion

Awareness programs should shift focus from general risks to practical dietary guidance, helping students make informed food choices. Since awareness alone has not decreased fast-food intake, behavioral change tactics (healthy canteen options, health clubs, and fitness activities) should be promoted. Colleges, medical professionals, and non-governmental

organizations can work together to improve youth health promotion.

Conclusion

The study comes to the conclusion that there are no appreciable differences in knowledge of the nutritional content and health hazards of fast food by gender or place of residence. Fast food consumption is nevertheless widespread despite awareness, necessitating focused interventions to close the knowledge-practice gap.

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