



“A Comprehensive Review On The Pattern, Determinants, And Health Impact Of Junk Food Consumption”

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ABSTRACT

The consumption of Junk food is a global issue of epidemic proportions with the rise in the consumption of the same, among the kids, teenagers, and young adults [1]. Junk food not only contains many calories, fat, sugar, and salt content; but also lacks the important nutritional values required by the body [5]. This has resulted to a lot of health related problems including obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases, and low performance in schools [6]. This is a review that has been conducted to investigate the existing literature to investigate the patterns, determinants, and health consequences of junk food consumption. Research indicates that junk food habits are so addictive and mostly likely due to peer influence, advertisement, convenience, and the taste of the food as well as change in lifestyles [4,9]. Patterns show that students tend to take it a lot during school holidays and who are not at home with their families recording higher prevalence [8]. Age, gender, socioeconomic status, and level of knowledge are some of the determinants of consumption behaviours [8]. Such health effects are so pronounced with amplified body mass index (BMI), reduced physical conditioning and metabolic diseases [3,7]. A strong association was invariably expressed between extensive consumption of the junk food and lower academic and sports performance [2,10]. Mixed method studies, cross sectional survey and co-relational studies of different contexts in the world such as India, Iran, Romania and Nepal were reviewed. It is quite apparent in this review that there is an urgent need to implement awareness programs, parent education and institutional interventions in order to contain this emerging trend [1,9]. The implication of the growing interest in nutritional education and lifestyle alternations in order to decrease the dependence on harmful food consumption habits is also noted [1].

Key Words: Junk food, Adolescents, Obesity, Physical fitness, Nutritional behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Junk food is heavy in terms of calories, saturated fats, sugars, and sodium and has little in terms of nutrients [6]. Examples of these foods are fast foods, processed snacks, sweet drinks and fried snacks [3]. The eating habits have changed over the last several decades radically as the preference has dispersed with traditional and homemade foods to the readily manufactured foods [5]. This change has come about as a result of urbanization, vigilant lives, hard-sell and the availability of fast food shops [9]. Due to the taste,

low price, and convenience, junk food is selected as a priority more often than not among school-going children and adolescents [4]. Lifestyle-related health issues have become highly notable due to the growing addiction to junk food in the world today [6].

The adolescent groups are particularly in high risk because of their age of development, peer pressure and low nutrition awareness levels [1]. These include health effects that are vast as it leads to obesity, insular resistance, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases deemed life-threatening [3,6]. Along with its contribution to physical health, over consumption of junk food is also associated with the poor academic achievement and poor physical endurance [2,10]. These issues have been dealt with in several studies in different countries. A case in point is that studies carried out in Iran, Nepal, India, and Romania have shown that the prevalence of junk food intake among adolescents is high with huge proportionality to poor health outcomes [2,3,4,7,8]. It has produced several determinants including the tastes preference, marketing, social rules, and lifestyle practices which have become key factors in junk food consumption [8,9]. The aim of this review article is to critically examine the findings of ten chosen studies with the purpose to synthesize the existing evidence on the consumption of junk food. The objective of the paper is to learn the patterns of consumption, to determine the factors which influence it, to evaluate the health outcomes and to offer the strategies of public health. In the backdrop of the increasing trend in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the junk food epidemic crisis is crucial in protecting health and growth of the younger generation [6].

OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the pattern of junk food consumption among adolescents and young adults.
2. To identify the determinants influencing junk food consumption.
3. To examine the health impacts associated with frequent junk food intake.
4. To explore existing research findings to guide awareness and intervention strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Pattern of Junk Food Consumption

Groove Consumption of junk food is very formidable across various age groups especially among the adolescents. In a PAN India survey of 13,274 children aged 9-14 years, 93 per cent of them ate packaged food and 68 per cent ate beverages containing sugar more than once in a week [9]. In an Iranian-based research, 62.2 percent of teenage girls were found using junk food as snacks with their use being even higher in teenage girls who were not staying with their families [2]. A survey carried among the students in South Indian of the medical studies found that most of them gave the reason that they ate junk food because it tasted good (77.6%) and it was convenient (68.1%) [4]. On the same note, students living with friends showed high consumption levels as opposed to staying with family [4]. This indicates to the fact that environmental as well as social aspects play a very critical role in stomach habits [8].

2. Junk food Consumption Determinants

Some of the factors that affect consumption of junk foods are:

- ✓ **Advertisement and TV exposure:** Approximately, 40 percent of children identified advertisement as one of the biggest influences on their dietary behaviour because of media exposure[9].
- ✓ **Peer Pressure:** Friends were reported to be behind almost 30 percent of things that led to consumption of junk food[8].

- ✓ **Taste and Convenience:** Most of the adolescents and young adults were found to mention taste and convenience of access as motivations[4].
- ✓ **Urbanization and Lifestyle Transformation:** Urbanization, sedentary lifestyle and the urban-stressful lifestyle are also very important factors[5,9].
- ✓ **Parental influence and supervision:** those children who were separated with their families, consumed more junk foods and the family meals and the parents involvement are also crucial[2,8].

3. Effects of Junk food on Health

The inadequate nutritious contents of junk food has a direct effect on health. Several researchers verify that junk food causes obesity with high levels of association [3,6]. According to a study carried out on the Romanian population, junk food consumption was higher among obese people than it was among non-obese respondents[3]. A case study conducted in Kamayaran, Iran showed that there was a negative correlation between junk foods intake and the physical fitness indicators, muscle endurance ($r -0.249$), strength ($r -0.241$), and flexibility ($r -0.134$) [7]. Moreover, having a high BMI has also been associated with high consumption of ultra-processed foods such as pizza and burgers[5]. These results are consistent with long-term investigations demonstrating that there is an increase in insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes risk[6]. The other effects imparted are; low energy levels, short attention span, behavioral problems, and digestive problems[1,3].

4. Differences of Gender and Age

Research has produced mixed outcomes between the gender. A study demonstrated that school kids in Durg city were more unfit, especially boys in comparison to girls; when the individuals who consumed regularly junk food and those who did not were put under review [10]. In a different study, the rate of junk food addiction was, however lower among the female respondents as opposed to the males[2]. One age bracket that has the highest risk is that of 13-17 years, where there are evident increase on preference on junk foods among the middle adolescents[1,9].

5. Social and Behavioral Pseudofactors

The sociocultural behaviors are very strong in the consumption of junk food [8]. Social events/gatherings, get-together with friends were some of the most important factors that contributed to advancing the consumption[4,8]. Unhealthy food has never been more accessible as the number of the food delivery apps and fast-food restaurants continues to increase [6]. Although this is common knowledge to many, the short-term benefits of enjoyment of taste and social approval of peers tends to overshadow the long-term health issues [9]. In some cases, students ate junk food due to stress or boredom, which means that they had a tendency to eat emotionally[4,8].

5. Academic performance Relation

Poor diet has also been linked to low performance of academics. One of the studies published in Iran pointed out that the consumption of unlimited junk food was related to the reduction in the grade point averages in adolescent girls[2]. This decline is due to poor concentration, memory and cognition ability brought about nutritional deficiencies [1,2].

7. Policy and Regulatory View

Nonetheless, the scanty evidence does not mean that there is the implementation of the dietary regulations [9]. The rising consumption of junk food is found in the availability of packaged foods in the school canteens, lack of any superior nutritional education and poor policy of advertisement [1,9]. Not many countries developed the bans in advertising junk food to children or sugar-sweetened beverage taxation [3,6]. Nevertheless, there are still no consistent policies on the international level.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

To establish the patterns, parameters and health consequences of eating junk food, this review appraised up to date research. The consumption of junk food is becoming frightening especially in the adolescents and school-going children [1,6]. In the review, it was established that there is wide intake of junk food because of various reasons including exposure to media, peer pressure, taste, convenience, and change in lifestyle [4,8,9]. It was more likely that students living with their friends and under the minimal control of parents would eat junk food [2,4]. The adverse health effects on health like obesity, diabetes, lack of physical fitness, and low academic performance were reported in a consistent manner across research [2,3,6,7]. Distinctively, the relationship between high intake of junk food and the increased levels of BMI is substantial whereas the effect on muscle strength and endurance is negative [3,5,7]. In a few of the studies boys were more likely to exhibit low levels of physical performance relative to that of girls [10]. The youths are enjoyment on junk food despite knowing it's bad effects since it is addictive and easy to obtain [6,9]. These results authored the desperate necessity of modifications on a policy level, nutritional training, parental surveillance, and behavior-altering measures [1,8,9]. The research notes that one needs a multi-pronged effort that includes the schools, families, media and government policy to reduce eating of junk food [1,9]. Encouraging the consumption of the healthier options and raising awareness about the long-term effects could enable the younger generation to consume foods that will have more beneficial effects on their bodies [1,9].

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Junk food is easy to carry and it appeals well unless taken in moderation because it has severe health implications. It has been noted in this review that the majority of the affected are the adolescents and this is mostly influenced by the social and environmental factors [8,9]. The overuse of them will result in obesity, inability to remain fit and chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension [3,6]. With all the knowledge about the dangers it causes, junk food is still a popular option as it tastes good, is cheap and sells itself. To prevent this increasing public health problem, there is need to create awareness about healthy eating habits among the school going children and adolescents [1,9]. Schools, families and healthcare professionals should work collaboratively to inculcate healthy lifestyle among the adult citizens by commencing it at an early age [1]. Essential steps in this direction may include nutritional education, control of junk food promotion and availability of healthy food. They include self-control and conscious decision-making. Our society needs to nurture a culture that renders more value to nutrition than convenience so that we can protect the future generations [1,9].

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