

Fast-Food Consumption Behavior among College Students in Imphal

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ABSTRACT

Due to increased urbanization, globalization and commercial advertisements as well as abundant fast-food outlets, college going students are getting indulge in eating these types of food. This study is done to find out the demographic profile of the college students, preference towards fast food consumption, frequency of fast-food consumption and nutritional information over decision making. It was found that majority (86%) of male respondents were between the age of 18-19 years whereas, majority of female (80%) were between 20-22 years. Most of the respondents consumed fast food in canteen and noodles (54.7 %) is the most consumed fast food followed by Pizza (22.1%). Majority of them take tea/coffee and soft drinks along with fast food. It was also found that majority *i.e.*, 60% male consumed fast food only once in a week, whereas 53.7% female consumed twice a week. Taste is the main factor influencing the consumption of fast food *i.e.*, 70.6% male and 71.6% female and nutritional information has least influenced on their decision to buy fast-food *i.e.*, 5.9% male and 20% female. It was also observed that majority of the respondents spend Rs. 100-500 in a week on fast-food *i.e.*, 85.9% male and 63.2% female and 90.5% of female respondent consumed fast food as alternative to meal. Although maximum of the respondents says that fresh food is better than fast food for health, still the consumption of fast food is high among college students.

Key Words : Fast food, college students, Fast food consumption, Respondents

INTRODUCTION

Fast food is the food that can be easily and quickly prepared, and served quickly at outlets called fast food outlets. Fast foods are rich in calories but deficient in most of nutrients. Fast food is prepared and made available by restaurants or stores priority placed on "speed of service" and is presented in a neatly packaged product (Oexle *et al.*, 2015). Besides that, the phenomenon in having to eat away from continues to increase and has become more noticeable. New branches of fast food are made available at more strategic location, these include around educational institutions, hospitals, gas stations, market places, terminals and others (Ismail, 2016). Consumption of fast food has become almost a global phenomenon, as more and more people are lured by it day in and day out irrespective of their demographic

characteristics (Narayan and Prabhu, 2015).

Due to increased urbanization, globalization and commercial advertisements as well as abundant fast-food outlets, college going students are getting indulge in eating these types of food. The consumption of various types of fast food is increasingly germinating in all components of the world, each in developed and developing countries. Researches reported that fast food consumption is one of the reasons for metabolic disorders such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and breast cancer etc.

Fast food consumption can be influence by lack of time, socializing, delicious taste, advertisements etc. Nilesh Rojekar *et al.* (2021) reported that large percentage of children consume fast food due to television advertisements and delicious taste of fast food. Studies have also reported that some people have other reason why they choose fast food restaurants as their primary

chosen to eat, because it is a way to spent their time with family, friend or someone special.

Ever since the fast-food industry set its footprints in India, it has transformed the food culture and habits of the people. These changes have become prominent and significant after independence. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), fast foods are quick alternative to home-cooked meals. They are also high in saturated fat, sugar, salt and calories. In spite of huge demand of fast food from larger section of people of the society, but consumption of too much of fast food may result into cardiac disease or obesity. Therefore, there is a need of strict supervision of fast food companies (Hesamedin *et al.*, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The study is designed to know the fast food consumption behavior of college students in Imphal. The study was carried out from October- November 2022, among college students of both male and female of D.M. College of Arts and GP Women's College, Imphal. A total of 200 participants *i.e.*, each consisting 100 each male and female college students have been selected for the study. The study objective and questionnaire were briefly explained to students. A structured questionnaire consisting of close ended questions were distributed to participants.

Data was obtained from the participants using a semi-structured self administered questionnaire which included details on knowledge, attitude and factors affecting consumption of fast food. Statistical analysis was done by using frequency and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic profile:

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the

respondents. Majority (86%) of male respondents were between the age of 18-19 years whereas, majority of female (80%) were between 20-22 years and majority of the respondents both male and female resides in urban area. Maximum *i.e.*, 81% of male and 74% of female parents are self employed and government employee respectively. All the respondents are pursuing under graduation programme, among which majority (60%) of the female respondents are in 1st semester and majority (56%) male respondents are in 3rd semester.

Fast Food Consumption Behavior:

It was found that out of the 200 respondents 90 % *i.e.*, 180 (95 female and 85 male) consumed fast food and another 10% do not consumed fast food. This shows that consumption of fast food is more among female than male.

Place of fast food consumption:

Majority of male respondents (62.4%) often consume fast food at canteen while 1.2% often consume at departmental store whereas among female respondents, 82.1% often consume fast-food at canteen while 2.1% often consume at roadside (Table 2).

Most consumed fast food:

The most consumed fast food among female were as follows: noodles (54.7 %), Pizza (22.1%), others (19.0%) which includes fried rice, momo, sandwich, hot dog, pancakes etc., and French fries (4.2%). Sixty two percent (61.2%) male mostly consumed such as fried rice, momo, sandwich, hot dog, pancakes etc. followed by noodles (32.9 %). It was found that the most consumed fast food among both male and female respondents was noodles (Table 3).

Description	Male		Female	
	Respondents (N=100)	Percentage (%)	Respondents (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20	86	20	20
	20-22	14	80	80
Place of residence	Urban	64	69	69
	Rural	36	31	31
Educational Qualification	Under Graduate	100	100	100
	Post Graduate	0	0	0
Parent's Occupation	Self Employed	81	19	19
	Govt. employee	16	74	74
	Unemployed	3	7	7

Table 2: Place of fast food consumption

Sr. No.	Place	Male		Female	
		Frequency (N=85)	Percentage	Frequency (N=95)	Percentage
1.	Canteen	53	62.4%	78	82.1%
2.	Department store	1	1.2%	10	10.5%
3.	Restaurants	8	9.4%	5	5.3%
4.	Roadside	3	3.5%	2	2.1%
5.	Others	20	23.5%		

Consumption of beverages while eating fast food:

It was also found that majority of the respondents' drinks beverages sometimes while consuming fast food *i.e.*, 50.6 % male and 47.4 % female, while 48.2 % of male and 10.5 % female always drink beverages while eating fast food. Whereas 1.2% male and 42.1 % female do not drink beverages while eating fast food.

Table 4 shows the most common beverage taken by the respondents along with fast food. Among male coffee/tea (63.5%) was mostly taken along with fast foods, followed by soft drinks (25.9%), fresh fruit juice (9.4%) and energy drinks (1.2%) whereas among female respondents, the most common consumed beverage was

fresh fruit juice (50.5%), followed by coffee/tea (27.4%), soft drinks (20%) and energy drinks (2.1%) drinks.

Frequency of eating fast food:

From Table 5 it was found that consumption of fast food among male respondent is less as compared to female.

Majority *i.e.*, 60% male consumed only once in a week, followed by 24.7 % twice per week, 14.1% thrice per week and 1.2% more than thrice a week. Whereas among female, 12.6% consumed once per week followed by 53.7% twice per week, 5.3% thrice per week and 23.2% in female eat fast food more than thrice a week.

Table 3 : Most consumed fast food

Sr. No.	Food Items	Male		Female	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Pizza	2	2.4%	21	22.1%
2.	Noodles	28	32.9%	52	54.7%
3.	Frenchfries	3	3.5%	4	4.2%
4.	Others	52	61.2%	18	19.0%

Table 4: Beverages taken while eating fast food

Sr. No.	Items	Male		Female	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Softdrinks	22	25.9%	19	20.0%
2.	Coffee/tea	54	63.5%	26	27.4%
3.	Fresh fruit juice	8	9.4%	48	50.5%
4.	Energy drinks	1	1.2%	2	2.1%

Table 5 : Frequency of fast food consumption

Frequency of consumption	Male		Female	
	Frequency (N=85)	Percentage	Frequency (N=95)	Percentage
Once/week	51	60.0%	12	12.6%
Twice/week	21	24.7%	51	53.7%
Thrice/week	12	14.1%	5	5.3%
More than thrice	1	1.2%	22	23.2%
Don't know			5	5.2%

Table 6: Factors influencing choice of fast food consumption

Influencing factors	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Time	1	1.2%	Nil	
Delicious taste	60	70.6%	68	71.6%
Changing lifestyles	8	9.4%	25	26.3%
Advertisement	5	5.9%	2	2.1%
Convenience	11	12.9%	Nil	

Factors influencing choice of fast food consumption:

Regarding factors influencing the choice of fast-food consumption, maximum of the respondents were influenced by taste *i.e.*, 70.6% male and 71.6% female another 12.9% of male are influenced by convenience whereas 26.3% of female are influenced by changed in life style (Table 6).

Influence of nutritional information on decision of buying fast food:

Regarding influence of nutritional information on decision to buy fast food, majority of the respondents are sometimes influence (*i.e.*, 83.5% male and 80% female) by nutritional information on their decision to buy fast-food. Only 5.9% male and 20% female respondents are really always influence by nutritional information on their decision to buy fast food. Another 10.6% of male respondent are never influence by nutritional information (Table 7).

Table 7: Influence of nutritional information on decision of buying fast food

Description	Percentage	
	Male	Female
Yes, always	5.9%	20%
Yes, Sometimes	83.5%	80%
Never	10.6%	Nil

Awareness about chemical present in fast foods and its safety levels:

It was found that though majority (74.7%) of female respondents were aware about the chemicals present in fast food and 25.3% are partially aware, but males are least aware about chemicals present in fast food *i.e.*, only 23.5 % are aware and 64.5% are partially aware (Fig. 1). It was also found that still some respondents are unaware about presence of chemicals in fast-food *i.e.*, 11.8% male respondents.

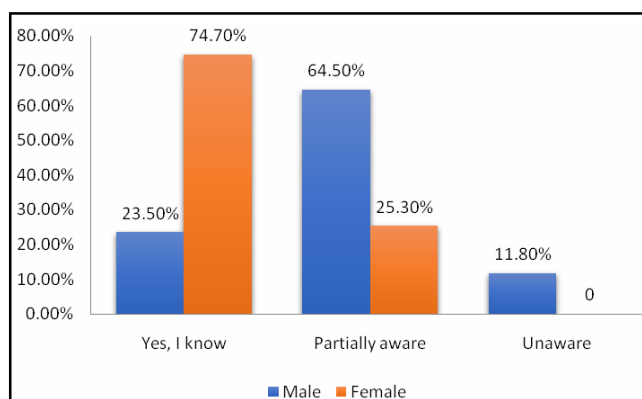


Fig. 1 : Awareness about presence of chemicals in fast foods

Expenses on fast food consumption:

Fig. 2 depicted that majority of the respondents spend Rs. 100-500 in a week on fast-food *i.e.*, 85.9% male and 63.2% female. Fourteen per cent (14.1%) of male and 33.7% of female spend Rs. 500-1000 in a week and another 3.1% female spend above Rs.1000. Compare to male, expenses on fast food is more among female.

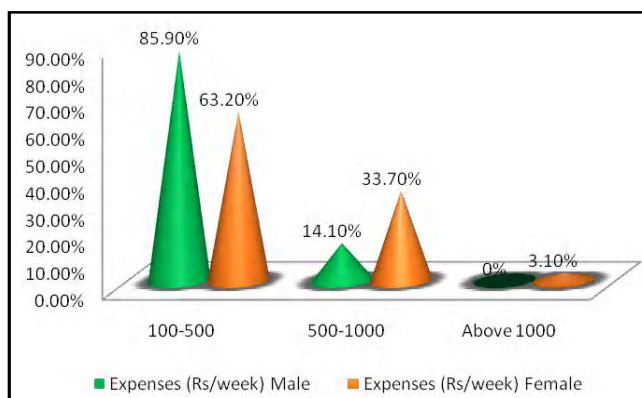


Fig. 2 : Expenses on fast food (Rs./week)

From Fig. 3, it was found that majority (90.5%) of female consumed fast food as alternative to meal. But majority of male respondents (68.2%) do not consumed

as an alternative to meal, only few *i.e.*, 12.9% male consumed as an alternative to meal. The consumption of fast food is relatively higher among female as compared to male.

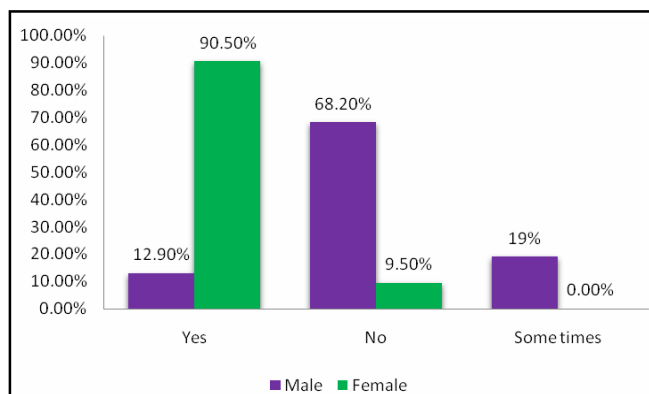


Fig. 3 : Consumption of fast food as alternative to meal

Opinion on consumption of fresh food as better choice than fast food for health:

From Fig. 4, it was found that majority of the respondents both male and female says that fresh food is better than fast food for health but few of them are still not sure about the health effects of fast food consumption. Although majority of respondents says that fresh food is better than fast food still the consumption of fast food is high among college students.

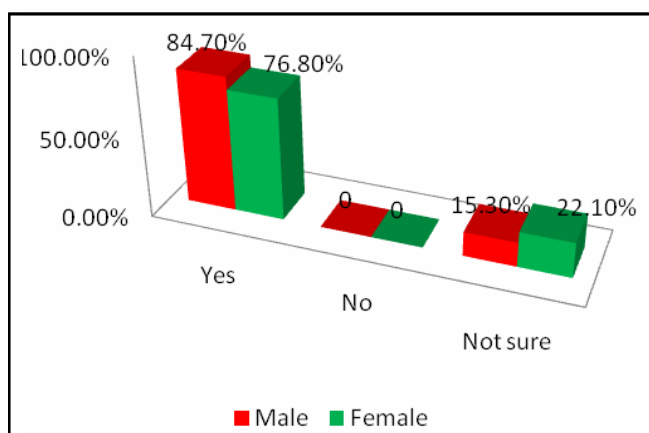


Fig. 4 : Opinion on consumption of fresh food as better than fast food for health

Discussion:

This study dealt with “Fast-Food Consumption Behavior among College Students in Imphal”. Results of the study shows that majority of male respondents were

between the age of 18-19 years whereas, majority of female were between 20-22 years and maximum of the respondents both male and female resides in urban area. Maximum of the respondents parents are employed.

Regarding fast food consumption, majority of male respondents often consume fast food at canteen and Noodles, Pizza and French fries are the most consumed fast food, of which noodles is consumed by maximum of the respondents.

Noodles is the most favorite junk food among young people of all age groups whether eaten as a snack, tiffin or midnight hunger pangs, noodles are the first choice. Noodles are processed foods, which lead to weight gain. They are low in fibre and protein, which does not make it the best option for weight loss and does not keep full. A person who ate instant noodles twice a week or more had a higher risk of being affected by metabolic syndrome. It is loaded with saturated fatty acids or trans-fat. It contains MSG (monosodium glutamate), a common food additive used to enhance flavour in processed foods. MSG consumption leads to weight gain, increased blood pressure, headache and nausea. Noodles are high in sodium; it may cause an increase in blood pressure and also an increase in cardiovascular diseases (Neha Rathi, *et al.*, 2017).

It was also found that majority of the respondents’ drinks beverages while consuming fast food and tea/ coffee is the most common beverage taken by male while majority of female takes fresh fruit juice.

Regarding frequency of fast food consumption majority of the respondents consumed fast food twice a week and the frequency is more among female compared to male. Also maximum of the respondents are influenced by taste. Only few are really influenced by nutritional information on their decision to buy fast food. And majority of male respondents are not aware about chemicals present in fast food. Though female are more aware about the presents of chemical in fast food and its harmful effect on health the consumption as an alternative to meal is very high and they also expended more on fast food as compared to male.

Conclusion:

Finding of the study shows that consumption of fast food among college students is very common. In spite of the health effect and presence of chemicals in it, majority of them replaced their meal with fast foods and spend a huge amount in buying fast food. The consumption of

fast food adversely affects human health in long run, but it was observed that consumption of it has become increasing. Fast food is associated with higher body mass index, less successful weight-loss maintenance and weight gain. Fast food reduces the quality of diet and provide unhealthy choices especially among youngsters raising their risk of obesity. As students, day to days schedule is rather hectic due to pack class schedules and back-to-back assignments, students end up, eating on the go than eating clean, option for fast-food as it saves their time and simplifies their lives. Although consumption of fast food adversely affect human health in long run but it was observed that consumption of it has been rapidly increasing.

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