



# Factors Influencing the Consumption of Fast Food among Young Adults

**S. Rajini<sup>1\*</sup>, K. Kannan<sup>2</sup> and Tamil Selvi<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Community Medicine, Sri Lakshmi Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences, Puducherry, India.*

<sup>2</sup>*Sri Lakshmi Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences, Puducherry, India.*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Community Medicine, Sri Lakshmi Narayana Institute of Medical Sciences, Puducherry, India.*

## **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** The habit of consuming the fast- foods and packed foods are increased among the people in developing countries. Besides, several studies showed that the fast- food eating brings higher risks for developing the physiological imbalances such as obesity, over – weight even in younger generation. The fast foods ensure for important features such as easy availability, tastes good, convenient, and has friendly- packing than the traditional food items. Due to such kind of life style modifications, the ratio of fast – food habitats in younger and adolescents are highly increasing in compare to the older and middle aged people. The increase is inevitable in different age groups in recent years. These food habit modifications make a turn in traditional systems and attract the great attention against the public health concern.

**Objective:** The present study aimed to investigate the factors that influence the fast-food consumption in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was carried out to examine the preference, prevalence and pattern of fast food consumption among the young adults.

**Results and Discussion:** The study showed that many of the students unavoidably skipping the morning foods due to study pressure, morning – hurry and they had them at late- morning hours from the fast- foods outlets such as canteens or other hotels. Though, 90.7% of the students know the importance and negative consequences of break- fast skipping that are related to consumption of excessive fast- food habits, they have been severely addicted with the fast- foods.

**Conclusion:** As a conclusion, the present study showed the importance of initiating the specific health programs, dietary guidelines and effective awareness for addressing the unhealthy issues related with the fast- food consumption among the student community.

*Keywords: Diet; health; food- addiction; fast foods; knowledge.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The habits of consuming the fast- foods and take way foods originated in western population and eventually spread between the countries due to the modern civilizations. Due to over population, the specified consumption has increased attention among adolescent population in developing countries. Though, most of them aware about the unhealthy issues related with the fast- food habits, the easy availability, friendly packing, cost- effective make those foods as attractive ones than the traditionally available [1]. Our life style modifications are directly correlated with the food- habits and the fast – food consumption inevitably associated with the nutritional and physiological risks. The morning hurries and work pressure make as too busy to consume breast fast at timings [2]. The student population is the key concern for nutritional related health risks. The life style changes and loss of familial food preparations triggering the popularity of the fast food habits among the younger people. This transition of the food habits make the people to move from dynamic to sedentary life style and much more complications associated with food habits. Those health risks are varying with geographical, seasonal, age- related factors found within countries to countries [3]. Particularly, this sedentary life style make people highly prone for over- weight and obesity due to the content of higher sugar and fat level and lesser possibility for to burn the calories associated with them. Besides, the fast foods contain low level of fibre and proteins than the sugar and fats. In a recent study showed that the quarter of its responders from urban population were obeys and its average was higher than country's national average. Thus dietary habitats and life style practices are said to be the important determinants for over-weight and the number of the younger population that change in to fast food habits are ever increasing in our country [4]. The cost effectiveness is another important factor that trigger the student

community in to the fast food habits. Thus, the most of the students have the chance to taste them and getting in to the addiction because of the tasteful ingredients during the food processing. These make them addicted and bring the health consequences that resulting in the educational decline. Most of them eat those foods during the social gathering and become addicted. The increased guidance and awareness could impulse the positive response and slow rise of withdrawal of fast food behaviour [5]. The aim of the present study was to examine the preference, prevalence and pattern of fast food consumption among young adults.

The fast foods contain large amount of fat and oil and lower level of other nutrients such as proteins, salts, energy and micronutrients. Several studies already showed about the negative consequences of the fast foods. They increase the ricks of diabetes even at younger ages [6]. Similarly, the strong relation between the rise of diabetes and central adipose with the fast food consumption had been shown in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry regions. A number of recent reviews showed that strong positive relationship between the diabetes and the fast food items and some organizations such as the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research suggested minimal fast-food consumption because of the possible association between fast-food intake and weight gain [7]. The studies showed that even the frequent consumption of the fast foods during the teenage could contribute the substantially possibility for developing the obese at late years. In addition, at the primary to secondary school transition the students have more chances to access the fast food habits and continue with them until the old age [8]. This behaviour is particularly important because the specific habitual play an important role in determining their health to the entire life span. Therefore, it is necessary to study both the positive and negative views fast food consumption for

analysing its impacts on the people life [9]. This study was carried out to investigate the views of adolescents toward factors that positively or negatively affect the consumption of fast food. To the best of our knowledge, there is limited data about the adolescents' views about factors encouraging or discouraging the consumption of fast food in Tamilnadu and Puducherry.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A cross-sectional study was carried out among young adults (between 18 and 30 years age) from different family and social background and different types of food habits but all residing in the state of TamilNadu and Pondicherry. A total of 50 of them were selected randomly from a group of 200 participants during Sep, 2017 – Aug, 2019. The gender equality was maintained in selecting the participants. All of the participants were informed about the objective of the study and informed consent was taken from the willing participants. The questioner based interrogation was practiced personally. The question are was semi- structured type and

contained the questions regarding the age, sex, meal patterns, fast-food preference, fast food consumption per week, the cause behind the consumption of fast food, and socioeconomic status [10-13].

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study showed that the male students had more habituated than the female students on fast food consumption. The preference for fast food was found to be 100% and 97% in male and female student population respectively. The frequently used fast food varieties were fried chicken, pizzas, burgers, noodles and soft drink. The students informed that the qualities such as good taste, easy accessibility, increased convenience, and more pocket-friendly nature attracted them much closer towards the fast food dishes (Fig. 1A – 1L). Apart from this, the study also revealed that the higher proportion of the students who expressed their fast food loving were from the middle income families. These results are in accordance with the previous study done by Majabadi et al., [14].

# Have you heard of organic foods?

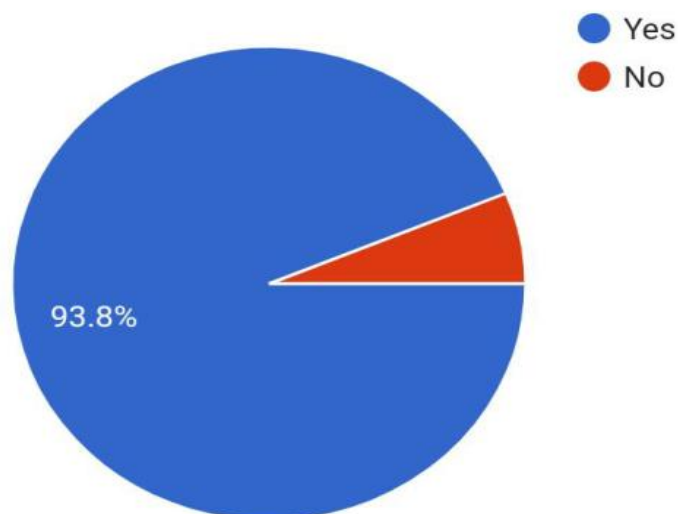


Fig. 1A. Most of the study participants aware of the organic foods

Do you think that the youngsters today have the power to spread awareness and prevent the consequences of fast food consumption? If yes why can't you be an example?

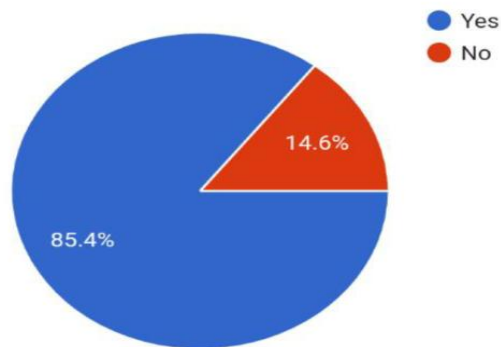


Fig. 1B. Most of the study participants aware of the ill effects of the foods

Age

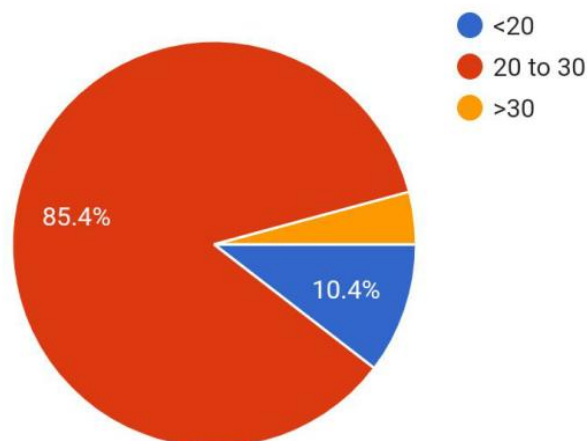


Fig. 1C. Most of the study participants were between 20 – 30 years old

## Socio economic status

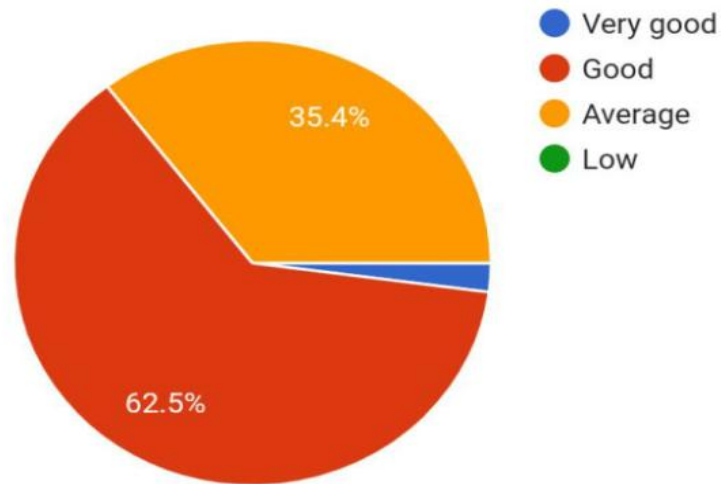


Fig. 1D. Middle income category students strongly prefer the fast- foods

## How often do you consume fast food?

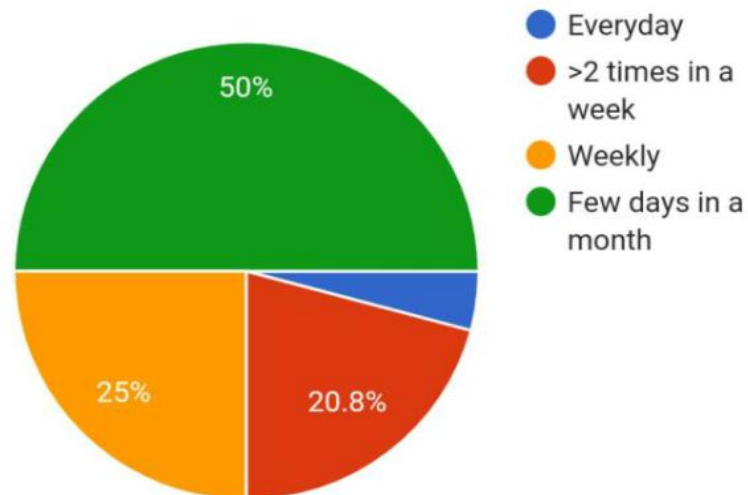


Fig. 1E. Most of the study participants consume fast- foods everyday

### Do you consume fast food with your family?

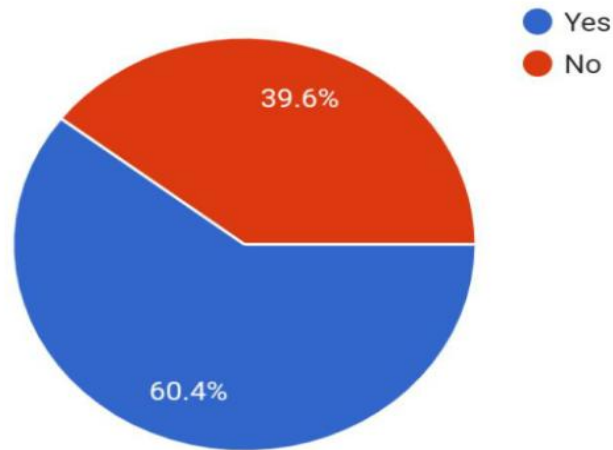


Fig. 1F. Most of the study participants consume fast- foods with family members

### How often do you consume fast food with your family?

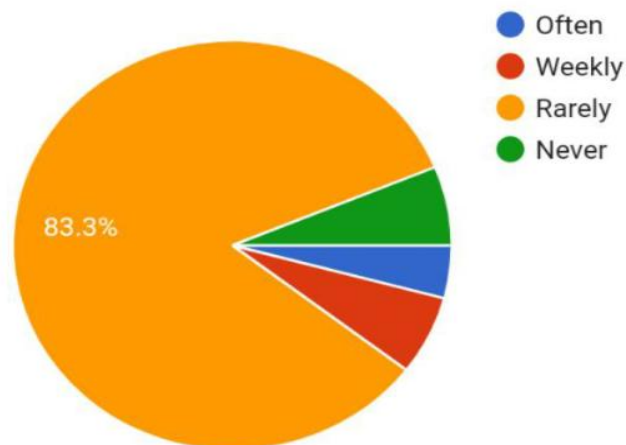


Fig. 1G. Most of the study participants consume fast- foods with family members occasionally

## What attracts you towards fast food?

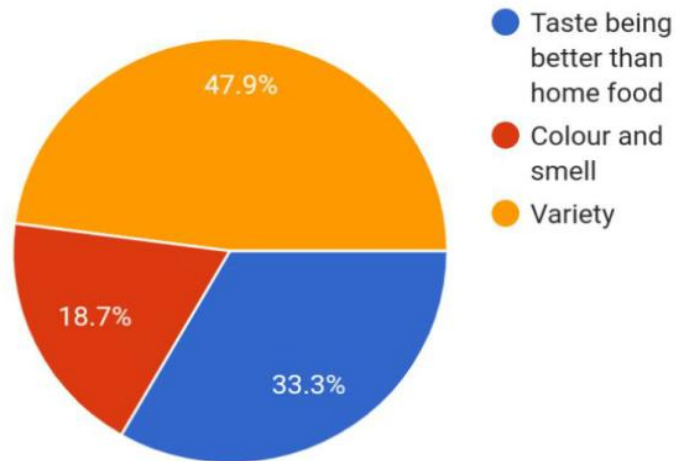


Fig. 1H. Most of the study participants informed that the fast- foods were tasty

## Are you addicted towards fast food?

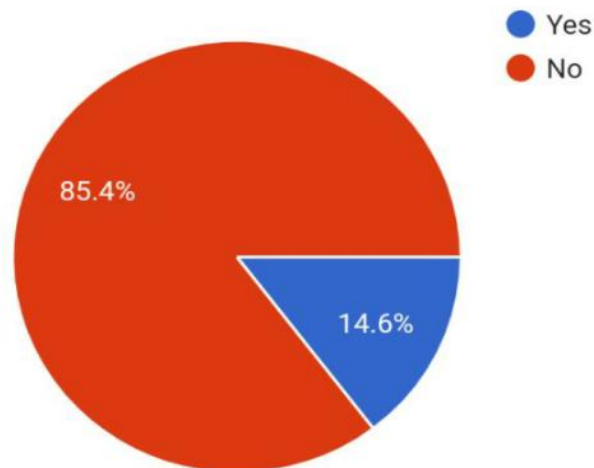


Fig. 1I. Most of the students did not show addiction towards the fast - foods

Do you travel long distances just to enjoy the fast foods there?

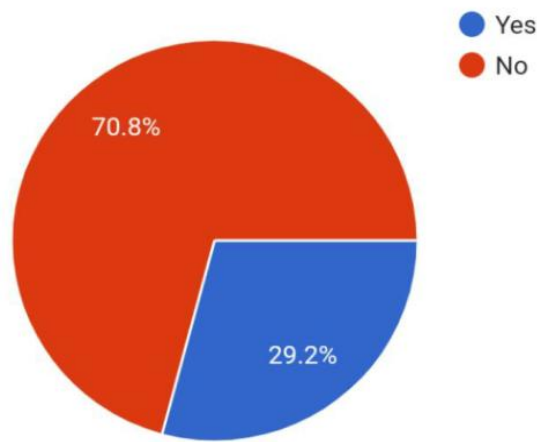


Fig. 1J. Most of the study participants consume fast- foods even after long travel

Have you been forced to consume fast food even when you were not interested due to peer pressure?

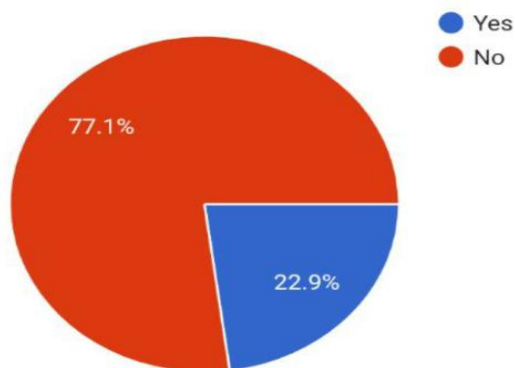
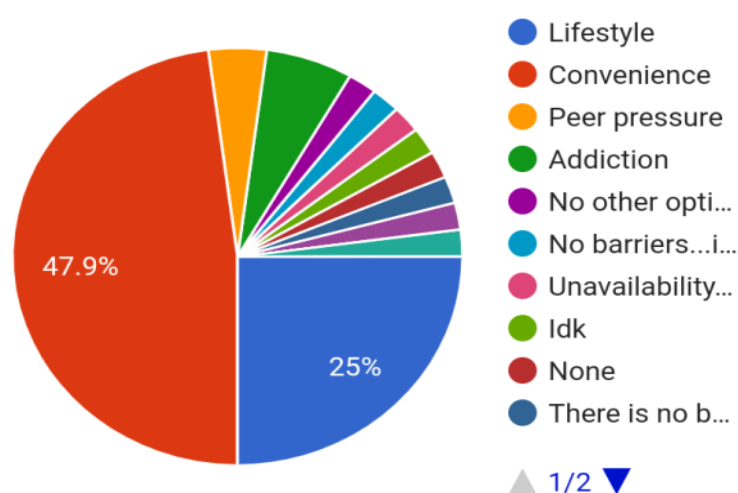


Fig. 1K. Most of the study participants consume fast- foods due to peer pressure



## What is the barrier that is preventing you from choosing healthy/organic foods over fast foods?

48 responses



**Fig. 1L. Most of the study participants preventing healthy/organic foods over fast- foods**

The food- eateries and restaurants were easily assessable, availability of greater variety of options than traditionally or home- made foods, the affordability and readiness also important causes that make fast- foods as favourite ones. Finally, the fast- food restaurants contribute the chance for social gathering with their friends particularly for adolescents [15]. Meantime, the study also revealed that the participants had a number of factors that inhibit them from fast- food consumption. They were, the concerns about the health threats regarding the fast- food consumption; negative effects of the ingredients that were added to fast- food preparations; most of their parents declared the fast- foods as a threat for good health. Adolescents are concerned about their figure and believe that fast foods will eventually lead to obesity. The consumption of fast food gives adolescents a feeling of modernism and a sense of belonging to a higher social class. Similarly, previous study also showed such kind of reflection on student's mind about the fast- food consumption [16].

Specific health education programs, dietary guidelines and effective public awareness campaigns could be initiated to address the unhealthy lifestyle of young adults and improve their health. Apart from this, few expressed tat eating fast- foods was like a habit to show their wealth, a kind of ritual and an entertainment [17]. The quick approach and speediness on the preparations were also the motivating factors for consuming the fast- foods. The students from the service class informed that their parents did not have enough time for preparing the traditional foods. Meantime, most of the participants did not have adequate knowledge regarding the hygiene in the fast food preparation. Some of them concerned about the quality of the ingredients [18]. Few of them informed that they only prepared the traditional foods due to the family emotions associated with the traditional foods, but lacking in the fast- foods. They added that the home- foods are in safer side since they were prepared with qualified ingredients and in houses rather than the restaurants.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The fast food habits become as modernized life style method among the student community. Improved and persistent awareness programs are required to habits of traditional food consumption among the students.

#### CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

As per international standard or university standard guideline participant consent and ethical approval has been collected and preserved by the authors.

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#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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