

Nutritional Knowledge, Attitudes and Junk Food Consumption Habits among Students of Abubakar Tatari Polytechnic (ATAP) Bauchi

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Abstract— This study was conducted to determine the nutritional knowledge, attitude and junk food consumption habits of Abubakar Tatari Ali Polytechnic, Bauchi students. The target population consisted entirely of the Polytechnic students. This is a survey research based on a research instrument developed by the researcher to measure the students' nutritional knowledge, attitude and their junk food consumption habits. A sample of 140 students was selected using purposive random sampling to select students who patronize junk food joints. The reliability analysis yielded Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.84. The collected data was analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage and Pearson correlation coefficient @ ($P < 0.05$). It was revealed in this study that most of the junk food consumers are well informed about the negative effects associated with junk food consumption, but they still patronize junk food at a regular basis without considering their health complications. The younger generation is getting addicted to junk food, which indicates a serious public health concern and urgent action should be taken to tackle this public health problem.

Index Terms— Attitudes; Junk-Food; Knowledge; Nutritional; Students

1 Introduction

Changes in our society have intensified the need for nutritious food skills to the extent that they need to become a part of youth's education for good health and survival. Good nutrition is a high priority, therefore students must know what they eat affects, how they grow, feel and behave. Junk foods are mainly made up by using a lot of saturated fats which are unhealthy after digestion and release a lot of toxins into the body. Moreover, it lacks vitamins and minerals which are necessary to have good health and immunity to fight diseases. Food habits are formed by attitudes, prejudices and taboos practiced in early days of life. Generally, the adolescents consume unconventional meals mostly disapproved by the senior family members. They have formed distinctive likes and dislikes of foods. The practice of high consumption of junk foods like magi noodles, burgers, sandwiches, hot dogs, patties, pastries, popcorn, potato chips, carbonated drinks, biscuits, muffins, toast, chocolates etc. have become common feature of adolescent's diet [1].

Ill effects of regular intake of junk foods are mainly lack of energy, poor concentration and obesity leading to inferiority complex, depression, heart diseases, high cholesterol, stunted growth, premature ageing, and tooth decay [2].

Changes in lifestyle and loss of the family tradition of eating together trigger the popularity of fast foods among young people. The shift from healthy, homemade food to more convenient, longer lasting fast foods combined with a sedentary lifestyle has resulted in global fattening and related health complications [3]. Regular eating of fast food can increase the risk of weight gain and obesity because of having a high energy density with the presence of high levels of fat and sugar in the meal, and a correspondingly low level of fiber and protein [4]. A study conducted among urban private medical students in Bangladesh showed that a quarter of respondents were overweight which is higher than the national average [5].

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive approach. The study was conducted on federal college of education, Gombe students. A total of 140 students comprising

42 females and 98 males were selected using purposive random sampling technique. Data were collected using a Questionnaire. Content validity of the tool was secured by experts on nutrition. Reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach's alpha method. A coefficient of 0.84 was obtained. The questionnaire was pre-tested with the help of 25 students of School of Health Technology not involved in the study. Before the process of data collection, formal permission from the Management of the Colleges was obtained by the investigator. Informed consent was obtained. The collected data was analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage and Pearson's correlation coefficient @ ($P < 0.05$).

Results and Discussions

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Majority of respondents were between the age of 19 and 24 years (50%). While 18 years and below constituted (16.4%) Only 8.6% of the respondents are above 30 years (mean age of the respondents is 19.37 years). Table 1 further showed that 70% of the respondents were males while only 30% were females. This result is in line with the findings of Satia et al., [6] who reported that respondents who reported usual/often eating at fast-food restaurants were more often younger and never married than those who did not. The main cause of such situation is the so called developmental factors that include more time spent with peers, independence in meal selection, and disposable income [7]. Gender also may be considered among the predictors of junk food consumption. Males are more likely to have diets higher in total fat and saturated fat compared with females [8]; [9].

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)		
18 and below	23	16.4
19 – 24	70	50.0
25 – 30	35	25
Above 30	12	8.6
Gender		
Male	98	70
Female	42	30

Respondents Knowledge of junk food and eating habits:

Table 2 below indicated that majority of the respondents (84%) had correct concept regarding junk food as a food that is high in calories, high in salt and low in nutritive value. The results showed that most of the respondents (94%) patronized junk foods.

Table 2: Respondents Knowledge and utilization of Junk food

Statements	Yes	No
Junk food is the food that is high in calories, high in salt and low in nutritive value.	84	16
Do you take junk food	94	06

Preferences of junk food

Table 3 indicated that 41% of the respondents consumed sweet snacks such as cake every day and 37% of them consumed 2 to 3 times per week, 21% consumed 1 to 2 times per week. The result also indicated that 38% of respondents consumed yoghurt every day. 43% of them consumed 3-4 times per week and 8% of them reported to have consumed rarely. Table 3 further reveal that 53% of the respondents consumed soft drinks daily. It can also be observed from table 3 that 31% of the respondents consume sugary drinks on daily basis, whereas 42% of the respondents consumed these drinks 3-4 times per week. The frequency of consumption of fast foods available such as fried yams and potato chips was comparable to sweet and salty items. Still 43% of the respondents reported consuming fried yams and potato chips. 36% consumed meat daily, 53% consumed fish 1-2 times a week.

Table 3: Junk Food Preference and Frequency of Consumption (n=140)

Food item	Daily Consumption	1-2 times a week	3-4 times a week	Never
Bread	12	21	28	39
Cake	41	37	12	10
Other flour food	25	24	51	00
Yoghurt	38	22	43	07
Sweets	12	41	10	37
Sweet juices	31	26	42	01
Soft drinks	53	21	34	02
Fried yam/potatoes	20	43	30	07
Meat	31	36	32	01
Fish	18	53	25	04

Factors influencing respondents for consumption of junk food:

The most primary influencing factors for consumption of junk food reported by the respondents (50%) were that it is easily available it is cheap 35.7% and 30% attributed their consumption of junk food to lack of suitable options. Others influencing factors were 37.1% of the respondents agreed to the consumption being influenced by peer group. 12.8% of the respondents agreed of consuming junk food due to impulsive response to advertisements. The findings of this study is similar to the report of Young and Nestle [10] that fast food consumption had increased among consumers due to its ready availability.

Table 4: Factors influencing respondents consumption of junk food

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Advertisement	18	12.8
Junk foods are cheap	50	35.7
Easy access	70	50.0
Influence of friends	52	37.1
Lack of other suitable options	42	30.0

Knowledge of the respondents regarding the ill health effects of junk food consumption:

Table 5 below indicated that about 68% of the respondents have agreed that heart diseases are caused by consumption of junk food. 72% of them agreed that there were harmful chemicals added in junk food. The results further reveals that 82% of the respondents reported obesity as an effect of junk food consumption, 62% of them reported high blood cholesterol level, and 68% reported heart disease and 69% reported hypertension as a possible effect of junk food consumption. Less number of respondents had knowledge that

cancer could be caused due to consumption of junk food. The findings of this study concurs with the findings of Chibber [2] who reported that the ill effects of regular intake of junk foods are mainly lack of energy, poor concentration and obesity leading to inferiority complex, depression, heart diseases, high cholesterol, stunted growth, premature ageing, and tooth decay

Table 5: Effects of taking junk foods (n=140)

Which of the following effects of junk food are you aware of?

Effect	Percentage Response
Obesity	82
High blood cholesterol	62
Hypertension	69
Cancer	49
Heart diseases	68
Harmful chemical additives	74

Respondents' knowledge and attitude towards junk food

Table 5 below indicated that there is a negative relationship ($r = .313$, $P < .005$), between dietary habit and nutritional knowledge. The negative relationship between the two variables means that despite the students knowledge of nutritional value of junk food they still patronise it. This finding is in line with the findings of Story et. al, [8]) who reported that knowing how and why to eat healthfully is important, but knowledge alone does not enable people to adopt healthful eating behaviors. A study conducted by Dave et al[11] revealed that the frequency of fast-food intake was not found to be significantly associated with perceived healthfulness of such food. This concurs with the findings of this study.

Table 5: Respondents knowledge and attitude towards junk food

Variable	n	r	p
Dietary habit	140	-0.313	0.05

Summary

Junk food has serious health and social effects. They exposed students to a diet characterized by foods high in energy, fats, and added sugars, and low in nutrients. It was revealed in this study that most of the junk food consumers are well informed about the negative effects associated with junk food consumption, but they still patronize junk food at a regular basis without considering their health complications. The younger generation is getting addicted to junk food, which indicates a serious public health concern and urgent action should be taken to tackle this public health problem.

Conclusions:

The aim of this study was to examine the nutritional knowledge and pattern of fast food consumption among the respondents. The prevalence of fast food consumption among them was high. Approximately half of the respondents mentioned that they consumed fast food few times a week and about one-third had the meal every day. Snacking was observed to be a predominant phenomenon amongst them. It was also observed that most of the respondents spend their pocket money on consuming junk food. It is also evident that the respondents were aware of the consequences of consuming junk food still they preferred to consume junk food because, it is easily available, and low in cost. Though majority of the students were well informed about the negative effects associated with excessive junk food consumption, they still cherished it. Specific health education programs, dietary guidelines and effective public awareness campaigns could be initiated to address the unhealthy life-style of the students.

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