

Original Research Article

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## Assessing Nutritional Awareness and Promoting Healthy Eating Practices among Youth

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords

Fast food, eating habits, youth, health, nutritional awareness, diseases

#### Article Info

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Despite its detrimental health effects, fast food is popular among youth. The goal of this study was to measure nutritional awareness among Banaras Hindu University college students. A random sampling approach was used to choose 100 respondents, and their fast food consumption, eating habits, nutritional awareness, and behavior were evaluated. I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews as well as a 24-hour recall. Provide information on healthy eating habits, nutritional awareness, the negative effects of fast food, diseases such as obesity, hypertension, CVD, and cancer, as well as depression linked to fast food use, and empower individuals to make healthy eating choices. The findings of this study were based on a nutritional assessment of young people (girls) The BMI (body mass index) is greater (more than 24.9) A considerable percentage of females fall into the overweight category, with one in ten falling into the obese group (BMI of 30 or more), while the remaining 48% fall into the normal range or are borderline overweight. The findings of this study revealed that while the majority of teenagers recognize the value of healthy eating habits, they also increase their consumption of fast food due to a variety of factors including flavor, cost, advertisement, simplicity of serving, and peer group. Three-quarters of college ladies are unaware of the serious negative consequences of eating fast food frequently.

### Introduction

After 63 years of freedom, India's lifestyle has changed dramatically. Food and taste preferences are no exception. Fast-food restaurants are rapidly expanding, and eating out is becoming more prevalent. Fast food is described as meals purchased without waiter service at self-service or carryout

restaurants. Fast food restaurants are very popular among teenagers. Food refers to any nutrient-dense material that people consume for the aim of sustaining life. Food that can be cooked and served rapidly is referred to as fast food. Merriam Webster recognized the term "fast food" in a dictionary in 1951. Fast food refers to food sold in a restaurant or store with low-quality preparation and provided to

customers in a packed form for takeout or takeaway. College's various environmental elements have a variety of effects on students' behaviour. College is an essential time for people since their actions are more likely to alter at this time. The most obvious argument for fast food consumption, especially among females, is that it is quick to serve, economical, handy, readily available, and an alternative to home food. Fast food restaurants are heavy in calories, saturated fat, and salt, all of which contribute to obesity, heart disease, and diabetes in humans.

Fast food can be a delightful treat for kids at times, but frequent visits to fast food restaurants are not recommended. Pizza's main crust comprises carbs; saturated fats induce weight gain and obesity; a high glycemic index causes an increase in blood glucose level; and high glycemic index causes artery blockage, which can lead to major complications such as myocardial infarction (cardiovascular disease). Drinks and desserts with a lot of sugar, like ice cream, cakes, and shakes, can raise blood sugar levels and contribute to diabetes. Fast food consumption causes a lack of energy, poor attention, high cholesterol, obesity, heart disease, stunted growth, depression, and other health problems (Chiubber, 2010).

According to Shinde *et al.*, (2017), a rise in fast food consumption leads to an increase in early and irregular menarche in females. Fast food additives and chemicals disrupt the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian axis by disrupting hormone levels.

Fast food with labels is always rich in calories, salt, and nutritional value, as well as additives that raise the risk of high cholesterol, obesity, and other disorders. Human health is harmed by fast food consumption (Daniel J. Kruger and colleagues, 2014).

Everyone has various culinary preferences and dislikes. Personal experiences, such as exposure to food, choices, family norms and rituals, encouragement to eat, and advertisement, affect and

develop these likes and dislikes through time. It's critical to understand how and why young people choose fast food. Marketers might forecast and organize their promotional strategies in this way.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Sample Selection**

The research took place at the Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

### **Setting and participants**

A total of 100 subjects between the ages of 18 and 25 were chosen. Questionnaires and interviews were utilized to gather information. Respondents were chosen using a purposeful random selection process.

### **Period of the study**

The research was place over nine months, from July 2018 to March 2019.

### **Development of Tool**

For the collation of data, a pre-tested questionnaire was created. The questionnaire was straightforward and concise. A pilot study was done to determine the questionnaire's reliability and validity. A self-made questionnaire was developed. The respondents were given a questionnaire to fill out in order to gather information about the factors that influence fast food intake

### **General information**

The schedule was used to collect data on general characteristics such as name, age, education, family details, and pocket money among college-aged students (girls).

### **Anthropometric assessment**

The anthropometric evaluation regimen included body weight and body height.

## **Dietary Intake**

Pizza, burgers, chocolate, ice cream, cookies/cake, chowmein, spaghetti, Maggi, and other fast-food items were all documented in terms of frequency of consumption. The fast-food frequency questionnaire rates fast-food consumption in terms of daily, 5-6 times per week, 2-4 times per week, once per week, and never.

## **Statistical Analysis**

To get at meaning and logical inference via frequency and percentage, the obtained data were categorized and tabulated according to the purpose.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Analysis**

It was discovered that the majority of respondents (57%) were between the ages of 21 and 23, while the 17% were between the ages of 24 and 26, and the remaining 26% were between the ages of 18 and 20. In terms of economic class, it was discovered that the upper-middle and lower-middle classes have the most responders, while the upper class has the least. 48% of those surveyed are overweight, while 16% are underweight.

### **Analysis**

It was discovered that the majority of respondents (94%) engaged in mild physical activity, while only 4% engaged in moderate physical activity. It was discovered that the majority of respondents (66%) get up after sunrise, while 34% wake up before sunrise, and the least number of respondents exercise for an hour daily.

### **Analysis**

A majority of respondents (52%) ate 2-3 meals per day, 30% ate 4-5 meals per day, 13% ate 0-1 meal per day, and 5% ate 6 or more meals per day. A home-based meal was used by 51 percent of

respondents, while a hostel meal plan was used by 49 percent of respondents. Breakfast was skipped by a maximum of 43% of respondents on occasion, 28% of respondents on a daily basis, 19% of respondents never skipped breakfast, and 10% of respondents skipped breakfast twice a week. It was discovered that the majority of respondents (73%) did not consume dairy products, while 27% consumed dairy products and 67 percent consumed fleshy food. The remaining respondents did not consume fleshy food in their diet. It was discovered that the majority of respondents (38%) consumed fruits occasionally, while 33% consumed fruits once a week, and 29% consumed fruits daily.

### **Analysis**

It was shown that 43% of respondents ate fast food more than twice a week, 35% ate fast food twice a week, 15% ate fast food once a week, and only 7% of respondents never ate fast food. The majority of respondents (52%) missed dinner in favour of fast food, while 29% skipped lunch in favour of fast food. After they left home, the majority of respondents (81%) increased their fast consumption habits. Maggie, momos, and pasta were favoured by the majority of respondents (47%); 34 percent liked chips, chocolates, and cookies; and 19 percent selected healthier foods such as oats (11%) and fruits (8 %). The majority of respondents (72%) agreed that fast food intake causes obesity, while 17% disagreed and 11% were unsure.

### **Analysis**

Fast food is not healthy for your health, according to the majority of respondents. Fewer people are aware of fortified and enriched foods, as well as different nutrients. The majority of responders (79%) had no idea what fortified and enriched items were. A total of 64% of respondents were unaware of different nutrients, 36% were aware of different nutrients, and only 29% were aware of the effects of chemicals found in fast food. The majority of respondents agree that fast food and carbonated beverages are rich in salt and sugar.

**Table.1** General information

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n=100)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Age</b>		
18-20	26	26%
21-23	57	57%
24-26	17	17%
<b>Economic Class</b>		
Upper	9	9%
Upper middle	58	58%
Lower middle	28	28%
Upper lower	5	5%
Lower	00	00
<b>Respondent</b>		
Hosteller	49	49%
Non-hosteller	51	51%
<b>BMI</b>		
<18.50 (Under weight)	16	16%
18.50 to 24.99 (Normal)	48	48%
25 and above (Overweight)	36	36%

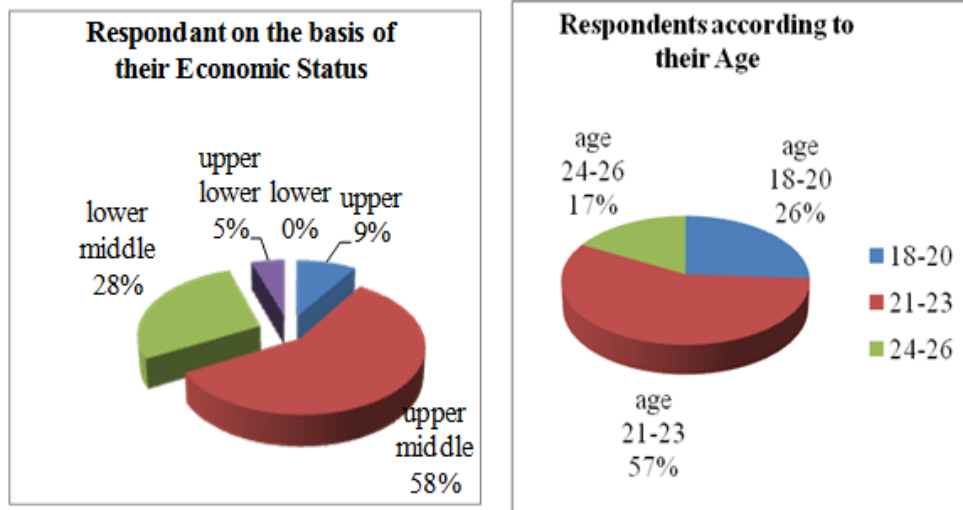
**Table.2** Attitude towards physical activity

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n=100)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Physical activity</b>		
Light	94	94%
Moderate	4	4%
High	2	2%
<b>Wake up in morning</b>		
Before sunrise	34	34%
After sunrise	66	66%
<b>Exercise</b>		
Yes	28	28%
No	72	72%

**Table.3** Eating habits

Variables	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
<b>No. of meal</b>		
0-1	13	13%
2-3	52	52%
4-5	30	30%
6 or more	5	5%
<b>Meal plan</b>		
Hostel meal plan	49	49%
Home based	51	51%
<b>Skipped breakfast</b>		
Twice a week	10	10%
Daily	28	28%
Sometimes	43	43%
<b>Consume of dairy product</b>		
Consume daily	27	27%
Not consume	73	73%
<b>Include Fleshy food (chicken, mutton, fish)</b>		
Yes	33	33%
No	67	67%
<b>Consume fruits</b>		
Daily	29	29%
Sometime	38	38%
Once a week	33	33%

**Fig.1**



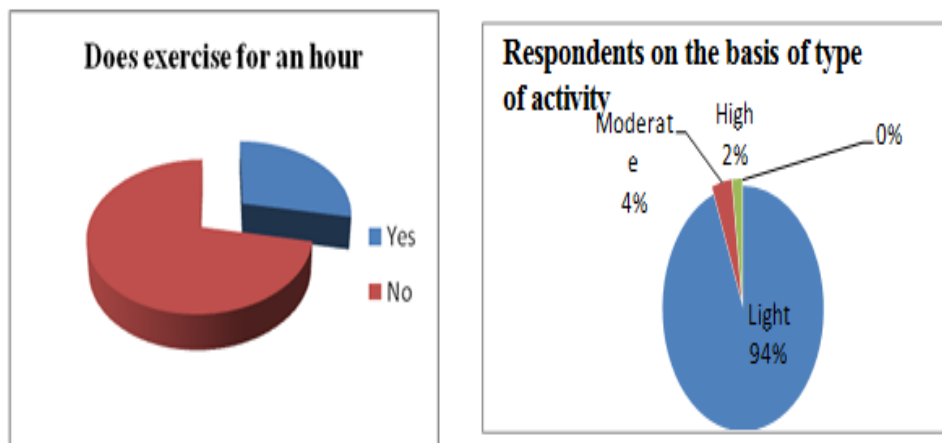
**Table.4** Fast food consumption pattern

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency (n=100)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Eating Fast food</b>		
<b>Once a week</b>	15	15%
<b>Twice a week</b>	35	35%
<b>More than twice</b>	43	43%
<b>Never</b>	7	7%
<b>Skipped Meal</b>		
<b>Breakfast</b>	4	4%
<b>Lunch</b>	15	15%
<b>Break</b>	29	29%
<b>Dinner</b>	52	52%
<b>Change in Eating Habit of fast food after left home</b>		
<b>Yes</b>	81	81%
<b>No</b>	19	19%
<b>Fast food preference</b>		
<b>Chips and cookie</b>	34	34%
<b>Maggie, momos, pasta</b>	47	47%
<b>Fruits</b>	8	8%
<b>Oats , chocolates</b>	11	11%
<b>Fast food consumptions result in overweight</b>		
<b>Agree</b>	72	72%
<b>Not agree</b>	17	17%
<b>Not sure</b>	11	11%
<b>Place (prefer fast food)</b>		
<b>Street</b>	58	58%
<b>Restaurant</b>	16	16%
<b>Canteen</b>	26	26%
<b>Home</b>	0	0

**Table.5** Nutritional awareness

Variables	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
<b>Fast food is not good for health</b>		
Strongly agree	54	54%
Agree	35	35%
Neutral	9	9%
Disagree	2	2%
<b>Awareness regarding fortified and enriched products</b>		
Agree (yes)	21	21%
Disagree (no)	79	79%
<b>Knowledge regarding different nutrients</b>		
Agree (yes)	36	36%
Disagree (no)	64	64%
<b>Awareness about the chemical present in fast food</b>		
Agree (yes)	29	29%
Disagree (no)	71	71%
<b>fast food has a lot of saturated fat, salt, calories</b>		
Strongly agree	43	43%
Agree	38	38%
Neutral	19	19%

**Fig.2**



**Fig.3**

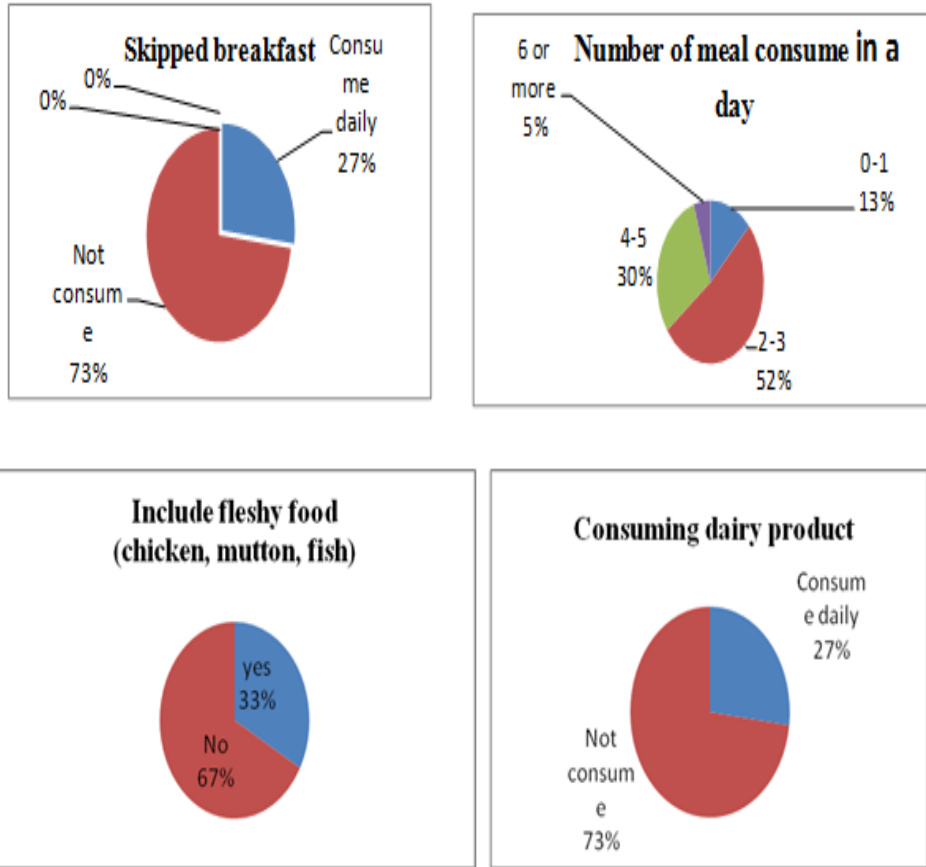
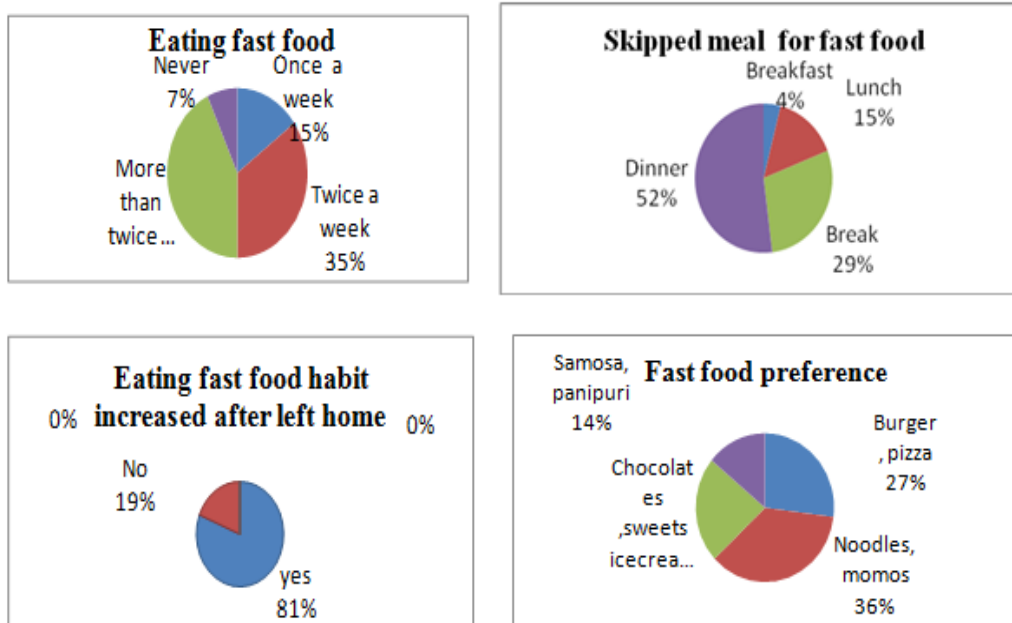
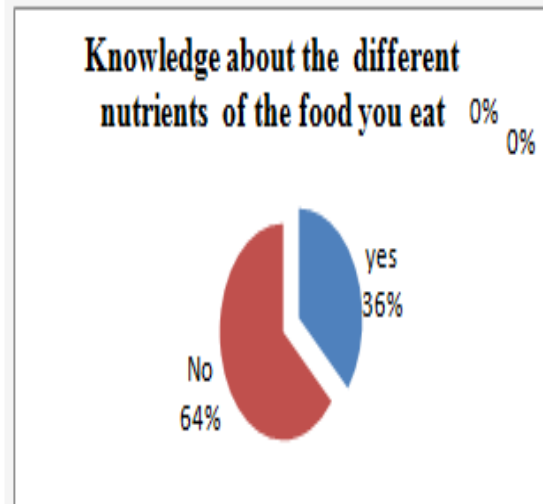
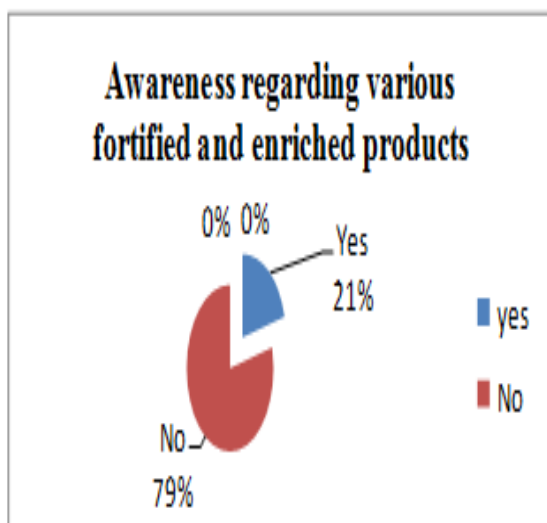


Fig.4







The most crucial component in a child's performance is proper nutrition. The current experimental study was conducted at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi to test and assess awareness about health and nutrition, as well as to promote healthy eating habits among young women (girls). According to the findings of the study, the majority of respondents enjoy eating fast food, with the majority of fast food consumers being between the ages of 21 and 23, and accepting that fast meals are unhealthy. It may be concluded that fast food consumption is increasing day by day among travellers, who, despite being aware of the negative consequences of fast food consumption, prefer to eat fast food over healthy foods. Fast food consumption increased during dorm days, according to the youth (female). Taste, speed of service, peer pressure, and advertising are all factors that have increased the consumption of fast food. Youth (girls) understand the necessity of eating healthy food, however they are unaware of the nutritional and fortified foods available.

A survey found that the majority of young women (girls) do not exercise or walk for an hour for physical fitness, and that only a small percentage of respondents include daily fruits and dairy products in their diet. As a result, today's youth are increasingly overweight. Physical inactivity is the

second leading cause of obesity in children and adolescents. As a result of receiving information about healthy eating habits and nutritional awareness, the majority of young women (girls) agree to change their eating habits and move toward healthier foods rather than fast food eat only once or twice a week, and others agree to eat fast food once a month in exchange for an hour of walking and yoga.

### **Recommendations**

Nutritious diet has a significant impact on performance in competitive events such as studies, games, and cultural activities during the growth phase. Because of this and the findings of this study, it would be beneficial to have a nutritionist on staff in colleges and universities. A nutritionist raises nutritional knowledge and encourages youth to eat healthily. Nutritional education is required of college students in order to support healthy dietary choices.

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