

A Descriptive Study to assess the Knowledge on Ill effects of Junk Food among undergraduate students at selected areas, Kanyakumari (Dt), Tamil Nadu

Beula.S.S,¹ K. Muniamma Devi²

¹Professor & HOD, ²Professor, Community Health Nursing Department, Nootan College of Nursing, Sankalchand Patel University, Visnagar, Gujarat

Abstract

The consumption of junk foods is one of the primary causes to the rise in prevalence of many diseases in developing countries among teenagers. Junk foods are typically ready-to-eat convenient foods containing high levels of saturated fats, salt, or sugar, and little or no fruit, vegetables, or dietary fibre and are considered to have little or no health benefits. Common junk foods include salted snack foods like chips (crisps), candy, gum, most sweet desserts, fried fast food and carbonated beverages (sodas) as well as alcoholic beverages. Eating junk food on a regular basis can lead to an increased risk of obesity and chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and some cancers. This study was conducted with the objectives of assessing the awareness, safety perceptions and practices about food preservatives, flavouring agents used in most junk foods. However, it is found that college students consume junk food but do not fully understand the implications on health. This study is aimed at addressing the lack of knowledge that the undergraduate students have concerning junk food and its ill effects. The objective was to assess the Knowledge on Ill Effects of Junk Food among undergraduate students at selected areas at Kanyakumari. Descriptive survey approach was used to collect data from 60 subjects, selected by purposive sampling technique. Undergraduate students require healthy diets to maintain good health. It is therefore a necessity to determine their knowledge so that if inadequate, a practical guidance may be given to them so as to prevent disease and illness.

Keywords: *Junk food, undergraduate students, awareness, ill effects, knowledge*

Corresponding Author: Beula.S.S, HOD, Community Health Nursing Department, Nootan College of nursing, Sankalchand Patel University, Visnagar, Gujarat. 9600433630, 8248466240. beulsnickson1@gmail.com

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Introduction

In today's society, the average person has at least encountered junk food once in their lifetime. It is served in our homes, sold on the street and advertised on media streams. The term 'junk food' means low –cost foods which are heavy in calories from fat

or sugar but low in fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals. According to Zimmer & Ben 2010, the word junk food has been in use since the early 1950s. Many people believe that these things do not have immediate negative consequences when combined

with a diet with well-balanced but the fact that experts have shown that eating junk foods can have a negative impact on health (Singh, Dey & Dey, 2021). Eating a lot of 'junk food' led to public health campaigns and a ban on advertising these kind of foods (WHO, 2015). Junk foods are typically ready-to-eat convenient foods containing high levels of saturated fats, salt, or sugar, and little or no fruit, vegetables, or dietary fibre and are considered to have little or no health benefits.

Maintaining a diet that is both healthful and balanced may be challenging for teenagers who lead busy lives. College days are full of educational challenges that require long attention spans and stamina. Poor nutritional habits can undermine these prerequisites of learning, as well as sap the strength that children need for making friends, interacting with family, participating in sports and games or simply feeling good about themselves. The most effective method for avoiding fast food is to promote a healthy diet that includes a variety of foods that are high in fibre, low in fat, and cholesterol, such as complete grains, vegetables, fruits as well as meals that contain only a moderate amount of sugar and salt. Junk food is linked to obesity, weight gain diabetes and other chronic health conditions because it contains additional fat, carbs and processed sugar. A study by the Scripps Research Institute found that consuming junk food has a comparable effect on the brain as addictive chemicals such as cocaine and heroin. There is an urgent need to educate the community on the aspects of healthy food habits and desired lifestyles to prevent overweight/obesity and its associated ill effects.

Objectives: To assess the knowledge on ill effects of junk food among undergraduate students.

Hypothesis: H1- Students will not have sufficient knowledge about the ill effects of junk food on health.

Assumptions

- College students are the vulnerable group exposed to the health hazardous aspects of junk foods.
- Adolescents have some knowledge regarding health hazards and prevention of junk foods.
- Adolescents have favourable attitude towards junk foods.

Review of literature:

(Saxena, 2022) Shows that any street in North India would be lined with vendors offering a variety of street delicacies, including Aloo Chaat, Papdi Chaat, and the well-known Dahi Bhalla Chaat. They are easy to prepare and are enjoyed by everybody. Chaat, which originated in the streets of northern India, is now renowned worldwide. According to legend, chaat began in Shah Jahan's kitchen. According to legend, when the Mughal emperor grew ill, his Hakim recommended him to consume foods that were easy on the stomach but rich in spices to strengthen his immune system.

(Sharma, 2015) suggesting that obesity Eating junk food may create severe health issues in the body. For example, junk food raises the risk of obesity because it includes excessive amounts of fat, processed carbs, salt, added sugars, and sweeteners. Obesity causes a variety of health issues that negatively affect your quality of life.

(Harris, 2021) In light of the fact that certain of these components have been linked to major health issues, it is crucial to understand which of them are most common. That is exactly what our intentions were. Five well-known fast food chains, including McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, KFC, and Arby's, had their menus totalled first. We next compared our results to a list of common food components and colours provided by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The end result is a list of the top 10 fast food

ingredients, arranged by kind and purpose of item.

Finkelstein et al. (2012) uncover that the problem of obesity and overweight affects individuals in various income levels and regions. Thus, low-income earners in regions such as South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as high-income earners in Europe and North America, among other regions, report heightening instances of obesity and overweight as an outcome of poor dietary habits.

A Study conducted in 2015 was aimed to assess the existing knowledge of adolescents regarding the health hazards of junk foods in a selected college and to find out association between selected demographic variables and health hazards of junk foods. 115 engineering students were tested by using non probability convenience sampling technique with structured questionnaire. Majority of study subjects 69.56% samples had Average knowledge while 24.35% samples having Good knowledge, and 6.08 % samples having Poor knowledge regarding the health hazards of junk foods. There is a significant association between expense of junk food and knowledge regarding health hazards of junk food.

An experimental study was conducted in 2011 to assess the nutritional knowledge of adolescents in Hyderabad, India. In this study 164 samples are selected from different schools belonging to eight standards and intervention group is thought about the nutrition importance with audio visual aids. Result of this study revealed that adolescents started to consume vegetables and fruits rather than the junk foods, study suggest that importance of nutrition should be emphasized in future programs.

Research Methodology:

The samples were selected from 60 school children of Sarvothaya gramam village. Descriptive survey approach was considered as appropriate to describe the knowledge of the undergraduate students on the ill effects of junk food. Descriptive research design was used in this study. The tool consists of Section A deals demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, mother's educational status, and marital status and Section B deals with modified structured self-administered questionnaire to assess the knowledge on ill effects of junk food. It consists of 22 questions each carrying four options. Each correct answer carries one mark. No mark was given for a wrong answer.

Results and Discussion

Table :1 Distribution of samples according to their demographic variables

	Demographic variable	N=60	
		Frequency	%
1	Age in years		
	a) Above 25 years	2	3.3
	b) 20- 25 years	13	21.7
	c) 18- 20 years	14	23.3
	d) Below 18 years	31	51.7
2	Gender		
	Male	29	48.3
	Female	31	51.7
3	Religion		
	Hindu	40	67
	Christian	12	20
	Muslim	8	13
4	Marital status		
	Married	0	0
	Single	60	100
5	Mother's educational status		
	SSLC	16	27.6
	Higher secondary	27	44
	Graduate	17	28.4

The analysed findings in the study reveals that

- Majority of findings 51.7% belongs to age group below 18 years
- Most of them are females and belongs to Hindu

- All are single and many of their mother's educational status were upto higher secondary level.
- The students of 58.3% of them had moderate knowledge regarding junk foods and its ill effects.

Table 2: Assessment of level of knowledge status

	%	Range	Level of knowledge	Frequency	%
1	<50	0 -13	Inadequate	12	20
2	51 – 74	14- 18	Moderate	35	58.3
3	>75	19 – 25	Adequate	13	21.7
			Total	60	100

Conclusion

The study concluded that majority of them belongs to age group below 18 years; most of them were girls belong to Hindu religion. All girls were single and their mother's educational status was up to higher secondary level.

The students of 21.7% only have adequate knowledge about junk foods and its ill effects. So community health nurse we should plan and conduct health education programme regarding ill effects of taking junk foods in future in a community area. Educate them about serious health risks which threaten the quality of life. So, undergraduate students need to endorse healthy eating habits by controlling the consumption of eating junk foods. Consumption of junk foods among adolescent students was remarkably high in undergraduate students. Regardless of inadequate knowledge on harmful consequences of junk foods, college students are consuming junk foods due to its easy availability and ready-to-use packaging.

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