



DESCRIPTIVE STUDY TO ASSESS THE KNOWLEDGE ON JUNK FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG STUDENTS AT SELECTED COLLEGE, HOSUR

Nursing

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ABSTRACT

Background of the Study: The rising consumption of junk food among adolescents and school-aged children has become a significant public health concern. Students are more likely to consume junk food because of their new found independence and opportunity to make their own choices, however they are budding adults who are still developing lifelong habits and may lack awareness of nutritional consequences. Frequent junk food consumption is linked to increased risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity, and other health hazards.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the knowledge on junk food consumption among students.
2. To determine the association between knowledge and demographic variables.

Method: Non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted for the present study. One hundred and nineteen nursing students were selected by using a simple random technique. Administered a structured questionnaire. The data collected was analysed and interpreted based on descriptive statistics. **Results:** According to the findings, most students, a total of 56 (46.06%) demonstrated an adequate level of knowledge, 52 (43.70%) possessed a moderate level of knowledge, 11 (9.25%) individuals exhibited inadequate knowledge regarding junk food and 102 (85.71%) are aware of the prevention of unhealthy eating habits. **Conclusion:** The findings of the present study reveal that students had adequate knowledge regarding junk food consumption.

KEYWORDS

Knowledge, Junk Food Consumption, Obesity, Unhealthy

INTRODUCTION

The shift towards fast food consumption during early adulthood is a known dietary trend influenced by lifestyle changes, time constraints, and increased autonomy. The food item that has low nutritional value, high fat and sugar content, and low fibre, protein, vitamins, and minerals are termed as Junk food.¹ Eating unhealthy food can harm our bodies. In South Asian countries, there is a clear rising trend of such junk food consumption, despite established evidence of the negative impacts of junk foods on the human body; the consumption of junk foods is popular among youngsters.² Potentially leading to a high prevalence of obesity, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and coronary heart disease. The World Health Organisation (2009) reported that the top five global health issues are overweight, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and high blood pressure, often caused by poor eating habits and lifestyle patterns established during childhood.³

College life provides students with independence in selecting food items, and this liberty can place them at risk of making poor food choices that may lead to significant future health problems.⁴ A South Indian study showed that students staying with friends (35.3%) consumed more junk food compared to those staying with family (13.8%), with the most common reasons for consumption being good taste (77.6%) and convenience (68.1%).¹

The university students in this age group are dependent on unhealthy food habits due to their craving for tasty and easily filling foods. The present study seeks to assess the extent of knowledge regarding unhealthy food practices among students.

METHODOLOGY

The non-experimental descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted among selected colleges in Hosur. Formal permission was obtained from the committee. Informed consent was obtained from the participants after an adequate explanation of the study. One hundred and nineteen students were selected by using a simple random sampling technique. The structured

questionnaire was administered to the students by the interview method. The students were asked to choose the correct response from the given options. The tool consisted of twenty questions on Junk food consumption. The aspects of junk food consumption involved meaning, ill effects and prevention regarding junk food. For a correct response, a score of one was given, and for incorrect answer, a score of zero was given. The tool was validated by five nursing experts.

RESULTS

The description of demographic variables shows that many students fall within the age range of 18 to 20 years. In terms of education level, 54 (54.62%) students are in the 5th semester, and 65 (45.38%) are in the 3rd semester. Regarding the dietary habits, 65 (54.62%) reported consuming 3 meals per day. However, 32 (26.89%) students reported having one meal a day and 22 (18.49%) twice a day.

Table 1 Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Level of Knowledge Regarding Junk Food Consumption. (n=119)

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE	FREQUENCY (F)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Inadequate (<50%)	11	9.24
Moderate (51-75%)	52	43.70
Adequate (>76%)	56	47.06

Table 1 exhibited that the majority, 56 (47.06%) of students had adequate knowledge about junk food consumption, 52 (43.70%) had moderate knowledge, and 11 (9.24%) had inadequate knowledge.

Table 2 depicts that 91.6% of students are aware of trendy fast-food items, and 84.87% of students are aware of unhealthy eating habits. In terms of ill effects, 96.64% of students recognised the negative impact of overeating, 95.80% of students correctly identified the causes of consuming fried foods, but only 50.42% of students are aware of the causes of consuming processed and high-sugar foods in women. In prevention, 85.71% of students are aware of the ways to prevent junk food consumption.

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Aspects of Knowledge Regarding Junk Food Consumption. (N=119)

ASPECTS OF KNOWLEDGE	CORRECT RESPONSE	IN-CORRECT RESPONSE
	%	%
Meaning of junk food:		
1) The unhealthy diet, according to the WHO.	53.78	46.22
2) The trendy fast foods	91.6	8.4
3) According to FSSAI, what is considered as junk food	38.66	61.34
4) The unhealthy eating habit	84.87	15.13
5) The food item that is considered unhealthy when consumed in excess	89.08	10.92
Ill effects of junk food:		
1) The type of food that includes health risks	83.19	16.81
2) The Ill effects of consuming fast food.	92.44	7.56
3) The impact of junk food on mental health	62.18	37.82
4)The common risk associated with consuming junk food	92.44	7.56
5) In women, the causes of taking processed and high sugar food	50.42	49.58
6) Effects of consuming large amounts of fried foods	95.8	4.2
7) The main health risk of consuming too much salt	89.92	10.08
8) Effects of consuming large amounts of red meat and processed meats	82.35	17.65
9) Negative impact of overeating	96.64	3.36
Prevention:		
1) The best way to prevent unhealthy eating habits	85.71	14.29
2) An effective strategy to control junk food cravings	85.71	14.29

Table 3. Association Between Knowledge and Selected Demographic Variables (N=119)

S.No	Level of knowledge	Inadequate		Moderate		Adequat		Chi Square & p value
		F	%	F	%	F	%	
1	AGE							$\chi^2=4.8557$ $p=0.0276$
	18 - 20 years	8	6.72	47	39.50	42	35.29	
	21 - 24 years	3	2.52	5	4.20	14	11.76	
2	LEVEL OF EDUCATION							$\chi^2=0.6448$ $p=0.4220$
	3th semester	6	5.04	30	25.21	28	23.53	
	5th semester	5	4.20	22	18.49	28	23.53	
3	MEALS PER DAY							$\chi^2=21.4247$ $p=0.0000$
	1	6	5.09	17	14.29	32	26.89	
	2	2	1.68	5	4.20	15	12.61	
	3	3	2.52	30	25.21	9	7.56	

Table 3 depicts that there was a significant association found between the level of knowledge and age group, the meals per day, at $p<0.05$. There was no significant association found between the level of knowledge and level of education.

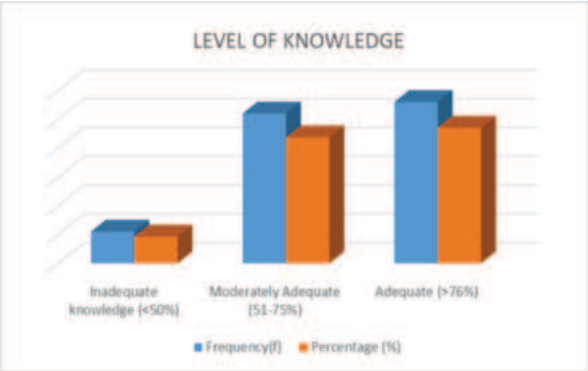


Fig 1: Percentage Distribution of Student's Level of Knowledge

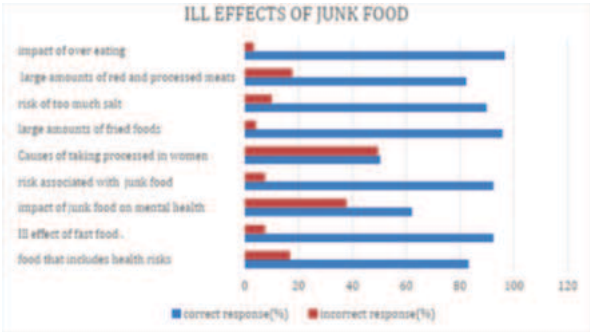


Fig.2: Percentage Distribution of Knowledge on Ill Effects of Junk Food Among Students.

DISCUSSION

The present study results are consistent with a similar study conducted to assess the knowledge, attitude, and factors associated with junk food consumption among medical students. The study surveyed 121(50.4%) of the respondents who had adequate knowledge of junk food consumption.⁵

A similar study conducted on junk food consumption patterns by undergraduate students is consistent with the results revealed that about 23% students had adequate knowledge about the effects of fast-food consumption on health, whereas 42% students had inadequate knowledge about the ill effects of fast-food consumption on health.⁶

The above results are consistent with the Similar study conducted on junk food consumption among undergraduate college students revealed that there is a statistically significant association between the students' year of study $P=0.004$ and their knowledge score.⁷

A study on junk food awareness among medical students reported that 91.4% of students were aware of junk food consumption, and 92% were consuming junk food. The results showed that students had adequate knowledge of junk food, despite their consumption of junk food being higher.⁸

Nursing Implications

There is a considerable gap in knowledge on the ill effects and prevention of junk food. Nurse educators should emphasise more on preparing students to impart information on the consumption of junk food and its preventive measures.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that students had adequate knowledge regarding junk food consumption. The study found that there is a significant association with age group and number of meals per day. Enhancing knowledge on the benefits of taking regular meals and the ill effects of junk food consumption will improve their health.

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