

AWARENESS REGARDING HEALTH EFFECTS OF JUNK FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONGST POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Junk food is the food that is served at fast food outlets, quickly and easily processed and prepared but lack in essential nutrients with dense in calories. Such junk foods are having poor nutritive value and are not healthy. Looking to this, it was found essential to study awareness regarding health effects of junk food consumption amongst polytechnic students studying at polytechnic, Khedbrahma. All the students were purposively selected for the study. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Statistical analysis of the data was carried out. Results showed that students did not had clear idea about which foods can be considered as junk food. The level of awareness of health effects of junk food consumption among polytechnic students was checked and it was found that majority (68%) of them had medium knowledge, less than one fourth (18%) had low knowledge and only few (4%) were having high knowledge. Most of them (75.60 %) were interested in getting information about healthy snacks which can replace junk food.

Keywords: fast food, nutrients, junk foods, nutritive value, health effects, polytechnic students

INTRODUCTION

Junk food tastes good, but the effects on the health is detrimental. Junk foods have become a prominent feature of the diet of youngsters in the developing country. The junk food is also called fast food, because it is easy to prepare, cheap and tasty. But these foods have many harmful effects on health (Thamarai *at. el.*, 2015)

Fast food junctions mostly target the young generation and environment of college, influence their behavior of students to make social interaction with peers and to satisfy taste buds and hunger. (Vani, and Suryanarayana, 2016)

Junk food is the food that is served at fast food outlets, quickly and easily processed and prepared but lack in essential nutrients with dense in calories. Manufacturers set low prices with high marketing for selling fast food at high pace. Due to low in nutrient level, junk food does not contribute in maintaining health. (Khongrangjem *at. el.*, 2018)

Such junk foods are most of the time include extruded food, fast food and packaged food having poor nutritive value and are also not hygienic and healthy. Looking to this, it was found essential to study awareness and practices about junk

food consumption amongst Polytechnic students studying at polytechnic, Khedbrahma.

OBJECTIVE

To study the awareness regarding health effects of junk food consumption among polytechnic students

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted at Polytechnic in Agriculture, Khedbrahma in Sabrkantha district, Gujarat. For the sample selection, all the students studying at polytechnic Khedbrahma were purposively selected for the study. Total 90 polytechnic students were studying at polytechnic Khedbrahma. Hence, all 90 students were selected for the study purpose. A researcher made questionnaire was used for data collection to study awareness regarding health effects of junk food consumption amongst polytechnic students. Statistical analysis (frequency and percentage) of the data was carried out and level of awareness was checked.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study was carried out to check the awareness regarding health effects of junk food consumption amongst polytechnic students. Their perception regarding junk food is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 : Perception of the polytechnic students regarding junk food

(n=90)

Sr. No.	Components	F	(%)
1	What is junk food		
a	Non-nutritive food	21	23.30
b	Unhygienic food	03	03.30
c	All types of readymade foods available in market	66	73.30
2	Which food is junk food		
a	Packaged snacks	12	13.30
b	Packaged snacks + Cold dinks	08	08.90
c	Fresh snacks (Dabeli, noodles, panipuri etc.)	25	27.80
d	Packaged snacks + Cold dinks + Fresh snacks	45	50.00

Table 1 shows that students have no clear idea that which foods can be considered as junk food and believed that all types of readymade foods available in the market are junk food. They were not aware about the types of food and drinks included in junk foods. These students were students of agriculture polytechnic and that may be the reason they have are not aware about nutritional and hygiene aspects of

the food and different foods which are included in junk food. The similar results were found by Mahajan and Gothankar (2020) who conducted their study on undergraduate students of colleges in Pune. They found that majority of students perceived that the fast food is a part of normal diet and fast food consumption is measure of one's socio-economic status.

Table 2 : Awareness regarding nutritive value of junk food among polytechnic students

(n=90)

Sr. No.	Statements regarding nutritive value of junk food	F	P
1	Junk food is not a healthy food	87	96.70
2	Junk food is a poor source of various vitamins	84	93.30
3	Junk food is poor source of iron	84	93.30
4	Junk food contains more calorie and low protein	72	80.00
5	Junk food is a poor source of protein	68	75.60
6	Junk food contains essential minerals	64	71.10
7	Junk food contains essential nutrients	63	70.00
8	Junk food are high in sodium	44	48.90
9	Junk food is a rich source of carbohydrates	39	43.40
10	Junk food is a high calorie food	20	22.20

Table 2 shows that most students were aware that junk food is not a healthy food and poor source of essential nutrients. But less than half of them (44%) were aware that it is high in sodium and very few of them (20%) were aware that it is a high calorie food. A similar study was conducted on medical students and concluded that they were partly

aware of the risks related to prolonged consumption of high sodium, trans fatty acids rich junk foods and artificially added phosphate rich soft carbonated drinks. They also observed a gap between the awareness pertaining to a nutritious diet and the practice of consuming (Thamarai *at. el.* (2015).

Table 3 : Awareness regarding health effects of junk food among polytechnic students

(n=90)

Sr. No.	Statements regarding health effects of junk food	F	P
1	Junk food may cause indigestion, acidity, gas etc. gastrointestinal discomforts	82	91.10
2	Junk food is a poor source of vitamin A and over consumption may lead towards Vitamin A deficiency	77	85.60
3	Junk food may cause tooth decay	77	85.60
4	Junk food may cause worm infection	77	85.60
5	Junk food causes cardiovascular diseases	73	81.10
6	Junk food cause food born diseases and food poisoning	73	81.10
7	Junk food may hinder in good growth, (height and weight)	72	80.00
8	Junk food consumption can lead to constipation	67	74.40
9	Junk food may cause anemia	67	74.40

Sr. No.	Statements regarding health effects of junk food	F	P
10	Junk food consumption may lead towards underweight or overweight	64	71.10
11	Junk food may lead towards high BP in young age	63	70.00
12	Junk food may cause diabetes in young age	60	66.70
13	Junk food is harmful for overall health	58	64.40
14	Junk food adversely affect daily meal pattern	57	63.30
15	Junk food may cause skin diseases i.e. acne, skin infection	51	56.70

Junk food may cause health related issues, diseases and physiological disorders upon short or long term consumption due to its high calorie, fat, sugar and sodium content as well as low protein, vitamin, iron and fiber content. Hence, to check the awareness of students, various health effects caused by junk food consumption is asked to them. Table 3 depicts the data regarding health effects of

junk food among respondents. It shows that almost more than half of the respondents were well aware about various health hazards of junk food consumption. Surprisingly, Mahajan and Gothankar (2020) found quite a different result and reported that the majority of student respondents of their study said that fast food consumption has no harmful effect on body.

Table 4 : Awareness regarding junk food among polytechnic students

(n=90)

Sr. No.	Awareness regarding junk food among polytechnic students	F	P
1	Reading of Nutritional information on packet		
a	Always	09	10.00
b	Sometimes	68	75.60
c	Never	13	14.40
2	Reading of Ingredients of the junk food		
a	Always	07	07.80
b	Sometimes	70	77.80
c	Never	13	14.40
3	Interested in knowing about health and nutritional effects of junk food and healthy snaking choices		
a	Yes	78	86.70
b	No	12	13.30
4	Interested in lecture /PPT / pamphlet about healthy and nutritious snacks which can replace junk food		
a	Yes	68	75.60
b	No	22	24.40

Table 4 shows that most of the students (75.60 %) said that they sometimes read the packet for nutritional information. Most of them (77.80 %) said they sometimes read ingredients of junk food. This may be due to students less concern about the actual nutritive value and the ingredients used in the foods they are consuming. Thamarai *at. el.* (2015) also noticed that only 12.3 % had the habit of seeing list of ingredients on the label. It is found that 86.70 % respondents were interested about health and nutritional effects of junk food and healthy snaking choices. Most of them (75.60 %) were interested in lecture /PPT / pamphlet about healthy and nutritious snacks which can replace junk food. As students

were having medium level of awareness, they are interested to gain more information about health and nutritional effects of junk food and healthy snaking choices. Dave, 2022 conducted a study in the same study area i.e. Khedbrahma taluka of Sabrakantha district on effect of media on health and nutritional awareness of farmers. The study concluded that electronic media especially mobile and internet are more preferred and found to be more useful in getting information on health and nutrition as compared to print media. Looking to this informative material can be prepared in soft copy and disseminate among the students to make them aware about health effects of junk food.

Table 5 : Awareness of health effects of junk food consumption among polytechnic students

(n=90)

Sr. No.	Awareness level	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low (< 15)	18	20.00
2	Medium (15 to 24)	68	75.56
3	High (> 24)	04	04.44
Mean = 19.12		S.D.= 4.58	

The level of awareness of health effects of junk food consumption among polytechnic students was checked and it was found that majority (68%) of them had medium knowledge, less than one fourth (18%) had low knowledge and only few (4%) were having high knowledge.

Mahajan and Gothankar (2020) found in their study that about 37% of the students had very poor knowledge, 40% of the students had poor knowledge, 13% had average and only 10% had good knowledge regarding fast food consumption and its health effects. Another study revealed that about 23% students were having adequate knowledge about effect of fast-food consumption on health whereas 42% students was having inadequate knowledge about ill effect of fast-food consumption on health. (Madanl at. *el.*, 2021)

CONCLUSION

The present study on awareness regarding health effects of junk food consumption amongst polytechnic students of Khedbrahma shows that students did not had clear idea about which foods can be considered as junk food. Majority students said that they sometimes read nutritional information and ingredients of the food on packet of the junk food. Most students were aware that junk food is not a healthy food and poor source of essential nutrients. The level of awareness of health effects of junk food consumption among polytechnic students was checked and it was found that majority (68%) of them had medium knowledge, less than one fourth (18%) had low knowledge and only few (4%) were having high knowledge. Most of them (75.60 %) were interested in lecture /PPT / pamphlet about healthy and

nutritious snacks which can replace junk food. Looking to this informative material can be prepared in soft copy and disseminate among the students to make them aware about health effects of junk food. It is suggested that students should teach at least about basics of food and nutrients in their syllabus or such informational lectures should be covered in NSS activity or seminars / awareness programmes should be organized for students.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest among researchers.

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