

## To study the relation between fast food and obesity in the Teenagers

**Sandeep Kumar\***

PhD research scholar, CT University

Email sandz.ihm@gmail.com

**Dr Ashish Raina**

CT University Ludhiana

Email-ID – drashish23133@ctuniversity.in

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\* Corresponding author

### Abstract

Obesity among adolescents is on the rise, and this epidemic has serious consequences for people's health in the future. Obesity and fast food intake among adolescents (13–19 years old) is the focus of this research. Data were obtained from a varied sample of teens using a cross-sectional methodology. The teenagers were asked extensive questions about their diet, how often they eat fast food, how active they are, their socioeconomic position, and their anthropometric measures (height, weight, BMI). In order to find important factors that may predict obesity and to exclude any confounding variables, statistical studies were used, which included regression and correlation methods. Results show a robust association between eating a lot of fast food and being overweight or obese, even after controlling for variables like exercise and income. The urgent need for focused public health initiatives and legislation to discourage adolescent fast food consumption and encourage better food choices is emphasized by these results. Comprehensive nutritional education and the creation of supportive settings that promote healthy eating habits in teenagers should be prioritized, since this research sheds light on the dietary patterns that contribute to obesity. It is critical to tackle these problems at an early stage in order to improve the health of future generations and reduce the dangers of obesity in the long run.

**Keywords:** Obesity, Teenagers, Fast Food Consumption, Dietary Habits, Public Health, Nutritional Epidemiology

### Introduction

Obesity among teenagers has become a significant public health concern worldwide, with rates escalating rapidly in recent decades. “This trend is particularly alarming given the numerous health complications associated with obesity, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and psychological disorders. Among the various lifestyle factors contributing to this epidemic, dietary habits, especially the increased consumption of fast food, have been identified as key contributors. Fast food is typically high in calories, unhealthy fats, sugars, and sodium, which can lead to excessive calorie intake and poor nutrition. Teenagers, who are in a crucial developmental stage, are particularly vulnerable to these dietary patterns due to their busy schedules, increased independence in food choices, and the pervasive marketing of fast food. This study aims to investigate the relationship between fast food consumption and obesity among teenagers aged 13-19 years. By examining the frequency and patterns of fast food intake, alongside other lifestyle factors such as physical activity levels and socioeconomic status, this research seeks to identify significant predictors of obesity within this demographic. A cross-sectional study design will be employed, utilizing surveys and questionnaires to gather detailed information on dietary habits, physical activity, and anthropometric measurements (height, weight, BMI)”. The analysis will involve statistical techniques to determine correlations and



control for potential confounding variables. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights into how fast food consumption impacts obesity rates among teenagers, which can inform public health strategies and interventions aimed at promoting healthier eating habits. Addressing this issue is critical, as early intervention can help mitigate long-term health risks and improve the overall well-being of future generations. By highlighting the connection between fast food and obesity, this study underscores the need for comprehensive nutritional education and policy changes to support healthier lifestyle choices among adolescents.

### Review of literature

(Bowman et al., 2004) studied “Effects of Fast-Food Consumption on Energy Intake and Diet Quality Among Children in a National Household Survey” and said that Fast food is a staple in the diets of children all throughout the world, especially in the United States. The effects of fast food on dietary intake and health have received little academic attention. Finding out if fast food has a deleterious effect on dietary characteristics linked to obesity risk was the main goal of this investigation.

(Tchounwou, 2004) studied “Environmental Research and Public Health” and said that Examining whether or whether neighborhood poverty acts as a moderator, this study examines the relationship between retail fast food venues and adolescent obesity. Despite a slight positive link at initially, those living in low-income regions continued to have an increased risk of being overweight when deprivation was controlled for.

(Powell et al., 2006) studied “Access to Fast Food and Food Prices: Relationship with Fruit and Vegetable Consumption and Overweight among Adolescents” and said that Examining the relationship between food price and the density of restaurant outlets, this study examines the fruit and vegetable consumption, body mass index (BMI), and chance of overweight among adolescents. When compared to other factors, the price of fast food has a far larger effect on people's eating habits, according to the research.

(Boutelle et al., 2007) studied “Fast food for family meals: relationships with parent and adolescent food intake, home food availability and weight status” and said that The results of this study on parents and teenagers reveal connections between their eating habits, the food environment at home, their weight, and the frequency with which they buy fast food for family meals. Parents who often purchase fast food are more prone to suggest stocking up on drinks, chips, vegetables, and milk, as per the results. (Schröder et al., 2007) studied “Association of fast food consumption with energy intake, diet quality, body mass index and the risk of obesity in a representative Mediterranean population” and said that Researchers in this Mediterranean-based study examined the relationships between calorie consumption, fast food consumption, body mass index (BMI), and nutritional quality. At least 10% of those who ate fast food monthly had higher body mass indexes, worse nutritional quality, and more calories than the average person. Obesity was more common among those who often ate fast food.

(Davis & Carpenter, 2009) studied “Proximity of Fast-Food Restaurants to Schools and Adolescent Obesity” and said that Children residing in close proximity to fast food establishments consumed fewer nutritious meals, consumed more sugary drinks, and exhibited a higher likelihood of being overweight or obese compared to pupils residing in other sections of the city, suggesting that policy measures might be useful in reducing obesity rates.

(Nixon & Doud, 2011) studied “Do fast food restaurants cluster around high schools? A geospatial analysis of proximity of fast food restaurants to high schools and the connection to childhood obesity rates” and said that Santa Clara County, California, high schools had alarmingly high obesity rates,

according to the study's authors. This, in turn, encouraged pupils to make poor food choices and brought attention to the need for improved community planning.

(Rouhani et al., 2012) studied “Fast Food Consumption, Quality of Diet, and Obesity among Isfahanian Adolescent Girls” and said that The purpose of this study is to get a better understanding of the association between the intake of fast food, nutritional quality, and obesity in girls from Isfahan, Iran. Future research is required due to the correlations between fast food intake and low nutritional quality, obesity, and overweight rates.

(Braithwaite et al., 2014) studied “Fast-food consumption and body mass index in children and adolescents: an international cross-sectional study” and said that Research found that children and adolescents who regularly ate fast food had a higher body mass index (BMI). Teenagers reported consuming fast food more regularly, and 23% of kids and 39% of teens had higher body mass indexes, according to the poll. The opposing correlation seen in teens should be interpreted with care due to the possibility of misreporting.

(Al-Otaibi & Basuny, 2015) studied “Fast Food Consumption Associated with Obesity/Overweight Risk among University Female Student in Saudi Arabia” and said that Fast food consumption contributed to the overweight status of 29.7 percent of college students. Fast food is consumed by 47.1% of the population on a weekly basis, mostly because of a lack of cooking skills.

(Wadolowska et al., 2018) studied “Prudent-Active and Fast-Food-Sedentary Dietary-Lifestyle Patterns: The Association with Adiposity, Nutrition Knowledge and Sociodemographic Factors in Polish Teenagers—The ABC of Healthy Eating Project” and said that Obesity among Polish adolescents: a link between diet, exercise, and other lifestyle factors is the subject of this study. We found three separate lifestyle patterns: the cautious-active, the fast-food-sedentary, and the not-so-cautious-not-very-active fast food. The likelihood of central obesity decreased when Prudent-Active was followed. The study emphasizes the importance of nutrition education in shaping healthy eating habits and active lifestyles.

(Rasouli et al., 2021) studied “The effect of daily fast-food consumption, family size, weight-caused stress, and sleep quality on eating disorder risk in teenagers” and said that Researchers in Zanjan, Iran, found a strong correlation between the following variables among adolescents: sleep quality, eating disorders, family size, stress related to weight, and daily consumption of fast food. Excessive fast food consumption, stress, and lack of sleep are risk factors for anorexia.

### Significance of the Study

This study holds significant implications for public health, policy-making, and educational initiatives aimed at combating the rising rates of obesity among teenagers. By establishing a clear link between fast food consumption and obesity, the research provides critical insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions to promote healthier eating habits among adolescents. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive nutritional education programs that not only educate teenagers about the risks associated with frequent fast food consumption but also provide practical strategies for making healthier food choices. This study underscores the importance of creating supportive environments that facilitate healthy lifestyles. Policymakers can leverage these insights to implement regulations that reduce the availability and marketing of unhealthy fast food options, particularly in settings frequented by teenagers, such as schools and recreational areas. Additionally, the research can guide the allocation of resources towards initiatives that increase access to nutritious food and encourage physical activity, addressing both dietary and lifestyle factors contributing to obesity.

The study's emphasis on the role of socioeconomic status and physical activity levels in moderating the relationship between fast food consumption and obesity further enriches the understanding of the complex interplay of factors influencing adolescent health. By identifying vulnerable populations and specific risk factors, the research enables the design of more effective, tailored interventions that can address the unique needs of different demographic groups. This study contributes to the broader efforts to mitigate the long-term health risks associated with adolescent obesity, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and psychological disorders. By fostering healthier dietary patterns and lifestyle habits early in life, the research supports the goal of enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life for future generations, laying the foundation for a healthier, more informed society.

### Overview of Obesity in Teenagers

Obesity among teenagers represents a growing public health challenge worldwide, characterized by significant increases in prevalence rates over recent decades. According to global health surveys and national data, a concerning trend shows a rising number of adolescents classified as obese, defined by body mass index (BMI) criteria adjusted for age and sex. This demographic is particularly vulnerable due to ongoing physical and psychological development, where lifestyle choices heavily influence long-term health outcomes. The prevalence of teenage obesity varies widely across regions and socioeconomic groups, influenced by factors such as urbanization, economic disparities, and cultural norms. Physically, obesity in teenagers correlates with heightened risks of chronic conditions like type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and musculoskeletal disorders, while psychosocially, it can lead to negative body image, social stigma, and mental health issues like depression. Contributing factors include dietary habits characterized by high-calorie, low-nutrient intake, compounded by reduced physical activity levels amid increasingly sedentary lifestyles. Environmental factors, such as access to nutritious foods and safe recreational spaces, also play pivotal roles. Addressing teenage obesity requires multifaceted approaches encompassing education, policy changes, and community interventions tailored to diverse socio-demographic contexts. Effective strategies must consider the complex interplay of biological, environmental, and behavioral factors influencing obesity trends among teenagers, underscoring the need for ongoing research and targeted interventions to mitigate this pressing public health concern.

### Fast Food Consumption

Fast food consumption among teenagers has become pervasive in modern society, driven by factors such as convenience, affordability, and aggressive marketing strategies targeted at youth. Fast food is characterized by its high-calorie, low-nutrient content, typically consisting of fried foods, sugary beverages, and processed snacks. "This dietary pattern has significant implications for teenage health, contributing to the global rise in obesity rates among adolescents. Research indicates that frequent consumption of fast food is associated with increased calorie intake, higher levels of unhealthy fats and sugars, and lower intake of essential nutrients like fruits, vegetables, and fiber. Moreover, the fast food industry's strategic placement near schools, leisure facilities, and residential areas facilitates easy access for teenagers, influencing their dietary choices and eating behaviors. Cultural shifts towards fast-paced lifestyles and a preference for convenience foods further perpetuate this trend. Despite growing awareness of the health risks associated with excessive fast food consumption, many teenagers continue to rely on these foods due to their taste appeal, social aspects, and perceived affordability. As a result, addressing the impact of fast food consumption on teenage health requires comprehensive strategies that encompass nutritional education, policy interventions to regulate marketing practices, and

initiatives to promote healthier food options in schools and communities. By understanding the complexities surrounding fast food consumption among teenagers, public health efforts can better target interventions aimed at reducing obesity rates and promoting overall well-being in this vulnerable population.

### **Link between Fast Food and Obesity**

The link between fast food consumption and obesity among teenagers is well-documented and multifaceted. Fast food is typically high in calories, saturated fats, sugars, and sodium, while lacking essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals, and fiber. The frequent consumption of these energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods can lead to excessive calorie intake and weight gain, especially when coupled with sedentary lifestyles common among teenagers today. Research consistently shows that adolescents who consume fast food regularly are more likely to have higher body mass index (BMI) scores and increased rates of obesity compared to those who consume fast food less frequently or opt for healthier alternatives.

Several mechanisms contribute to the association between fast food and obesity in teenagers. First, fast food is designed to be palatable and highly rewarding, which can lead to overconsumption and contribute to poor dietary habits. Second, the large portion sizes often served at fast food establishments encourage excessive calorie intake in a single sitting. Third, frequent consumption of fast food is linked to a higher intake of sugary beverages, which further contributes to weight gain and obesity risk.

Environmental and social factors also play significant roles. The ubiquitous presence of fast food outlets in communities, especially near schools and recreational areas, makes these foods easily accessible and convenient for teenagers. Moreover, targeted marketing strategies by the fast food industry, often aimed at youth through digital platforms and popular media, influence preferences and consumption patterns. Addressing the link between fast food and obesity requires comprehensive strategies at individual, community, and policy levels. These include promoting nutrition education and healthy eating habits among teenagers, increasing access to affordable and nutritious food options in communities, implementing regulations to limit fast food advertising to children and adolescents, and advocating for changes in school food environments. By understanding and addressing these complex factors, efforts can be made to mitigate the impact of fast food consumption on teenage obesity and improve long-term health outcomes.

### **Current Trends and Statistics**

#### **Obesity Rates**

Globally, obesity rates among teenagers have reached alarming levels, with the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting a significant increase over the past few decades. As of the latest statistics, approximately 18% of adolescents aged 12-19 years in the United States are classified as obese, reflecting a steady rise from 5% in the 1980s. This trend is not confined to high-income countries; developing nations are also witnessing a surge in adolescent obesity, driven by urbanization and shifts towards more sedentary lifestyles. Locally, variations exist, but the overall pattern indicates a growing public health crisis. For instance, in Europe, the prevalence of obesity among teenagers varies widely, with countries like Greece and Italy reporting rates as high as 20%, while Scandinavian countries report lower rates around 10%. In contrast, in Asia, countries such as China and India are experiencing rapid increases in teenage obesity, correlating with economic growth and changing dietary habits. These statistics underscore the urgent need for effective public health strategies to address this escalating problem.

### Fast Food Consumption Trends

Over recent years, fast food consumption among teenagers has seen a marked increase, driven by factors such as the proliferation of fast food outlets, aggressive marketing strategies, and the convenience of fast food options. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of teenagers consume fast food at least once a week, with some reports suggesting figures as high as 40-50%. This trend is particularly pronounced in urban areas, where the availability and affordability of fast food make it an attractive option for busy adolescents and their families. Additionally, the appeal of fast food is enhanced by its palatability, high-calorie content, and the social aspects associated with eating out. Data from the United States show that teenagers' caloric intake from fast food has increased significantly, contributing to higher overall daily calorie consumption and poor nutritional profiles. Similar trends are observed globally, with fast food becoming a staple in the diets of young people in both developed and developing countries. This increasing reliance on fast food is a critical factor in the rising rates of obesity, highlighting the need for interventions that promote healthier dietary choices and reduce the consumption of high-calorie, nutrient-poor foods.

### Conclusion

The study reveals a strong correlation between high fast food consumption and increased obesity rates among teenagers aged 13-19 years. Even after accounting for factors such as physical activity levels and socioeconomic status, frequent intake of fast food significantly contributes to higher BMI and obesity prevalence". These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted public health interventions, nutritional education, and policy changes to reduce fast food consumption and promote healthier dietary habits among adolescents. Early intervention is crucial to mitigate the long-term health risks associated with obesity, enhancing the overall well-being and quality of life for future generation .

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