

Consumer Behavior of School-Going Children Towards Fast Food Items in New Delhi**Mr. Rakshit Lakra***

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Published: 07/04/2024

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36676/jrps.v15.i2.03>**Abstract**

Amongst all modifiable risk factors for nutrition-related health problems in school-aged children are dietary choices. Fast food culture is becoming popular among school-aged children. It is highly convenient and tasty, and youngsters enjoy it due to peer pressure. However, understanding how students are drawn to fast foods has become increasingly important in recent years. The purpose of this study is to learn about the fast-food consumption patterns and preferences of school-aged children in New Delhi. In this study, a self-designed and pretested questionnaire was used to conduct the research. The acquired raw data was subjected to appropriate statistical analysis in order to produce relevant results. The results showed that 15% of participants do not have a preference for fast food, compared to the majority of children (85.25%) who are more likely to prefer eating fast food. According to the percentage of school-age children who eat fast food, 22% of them eat pizza/week, 16% of them eat pasta twice weekly, and 27% of them eat Maggi once or twice a week. In contrast, only 12% of them eat wraps weekly, 12% of them eat wafers, 17% of them eat cookies twice weekly, and 32% of them eat doughnuts infrequently. Fast food contains high levels of unhealthy sugars and fats that are also addictive, which makes it difficult for kids to make good eating choices.

Keywords: *Dietary habits, kids, fast food***1. INTRODUCTION**

Modernization and society's quickening pace have gradually altered the gastronomic scene. Everyone, from young children to the elderly, enjoys eating and talking about fast food. Children's consumption habits started to shift as a result of urbanization, the rise of nuclear households, the number of women in the workforce, and altering food and lifestyle habits. Particularly for adolescents between the ages of 8 and 16, their tastes fluctuate more quickly than those of any other consumer group. They develop more quickly and are better informed, more connected, and more direct. Compared to previous generations, they are more powerful personally and have access to greater resources, influence, and attention.

There are significant and increasing number of single-parent families today and the parent-child relationship has become more liberalized, leading to a relationship that is more open to discussions among the parent and the child rather than one that is governed by authority and command. Children today have a significant influence over their parents' purchasing decisions, and parents have higher incomes and educational levels.



Healthy nutrition plays a significant role in the larger human environment, which is why good health is a crucial measure of life quality. Food is a fundamental human necessity and a requirement for a healthy life. For growth, development, and an active life, a good diet is necessary from an early age. Children who are in school are frequently associated with an increase in the number of meals eaten away from home and an increase in their intake of fast food in the shape of snacks, both of which may cause health issues related to nutrition. Fast food is defined as food that is cooked and served rapidly, and it includes things like french fries, pizza, burgers, sandwiches, and chips. Since they are quick, affordable, and widely accessible, fast foods satisfy the demands of many individuals (Vaida, 2023).

Poor food habits and physical inactivity, however, are detrimental. Children lay the foundation for health issues as adults. There are numerous factors in children's environments that make it simple to overeat and challenging to be active. Large portion sizes are common for foods with high fat and sugar content (Singh and Mishra, 2022).

According to the WHO, adolescence is the time between the ages of 10 and 19 when the development and growth of humans take place after childhood but before adulthood. A crucial requirement for physical development, psychological development, cognitive function, and the prevention of diet-related long-term health conditions in adulthood is a healthy eating habit during adolescence (Sarkar, 2020). The fast food sector is currently adapting to Indian cuisine requirements and expanding throughout India.

It is becoming more accepted and commonplace, especially among young people in India. Indian customs and shifting consumer tastes about fast food, fast food comprises one of the food types that contribute to the growth of forests around the world. It is a convenient, affordable, and rapid substitute for home-cooked meals. Fast food is frequently calorie, saturated fat, sugar, and salt-rich. According to Goyal and Singh (2017), the fast food sector is expanding incredibly quickly both globally and in India, particularly in urban regions (small and large cities).

2. FAST FOOD

India's diverse culture, which is made up of several states and regions, is implicitly reflected in its diverse cuisine. Home-cooked meals are a tradition among Indians, and both religion and the individual enjoy them. Urban Indian families used to eat outside and have since accepted a wide range of cuisines from around the world, although there has been a little change in these patterns throughout time due to increased awareness of and influence from western society.

Definition 1. Bender & Bender (1995) defined "fast food" as a catch-all word for a constrained selection of meals that lend themselves to production-line methods; suppliers typically specialise in items like burgers, pizzas, chicken, or sandwich.

Definition 2. The selling of food and beverages for immediate consumption, whether on the premises, in designated dining areas used with other restaurant operators, or for consumption elsewhere, is referred to as the fast food market in Data Monitor's 2005 survey.

3. FAST FOOD INDUSTRY IN INDIA

According to a 2015 research report titled "Indian Fast Food Market Analysis," the Indian fast food market is predicted to expand by 18% by 2020 as a result of evolving consumer behavior and demographics. CAGR is a business and investing terms for the geometric progression proportion which offers an annualized rate of return across the time period. By 2020, the Indian fast food sector is anticipated to be worth US\$27.57 billion. In addition, a busy schedule, standardized cuisine, and less time-consuming procedures are boosting domestic customers' desire for the industry.



Pizza, hamburgers, and French fries have grown to be the greatest favorites among young Indians as their appetite for every kind of fast food items continues to rise. This is especially true given that some of the biggest and best-known burger and pizza restaurants, such as McDonald's, Domino's, KFC, Pizza Hut, Nirula's, and so on, operate in India. Fast food sales are increasing at a rapid rate of over 20% per year, and the majority of the leading chains have aggressive development plans that include not only semi-urban India but also cities in the tiers 2 and 3. As hundreds of thousands of Indians go out for a piece of their favourite burgers or pizza, the fast food industry, including multinationals, is expanding quickly.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To investigate how often school-age children eat fast food.
2. To determine how youngsters who attend school feel about fast food.

5. Materials and Methods

The current investigation was carried out in New Delhi's public and private schools. A total of 100 school-age youngsters were chosen at random. From the eight schools in New Delhi, 100 pupils between the ages of 10 and 15 were chosen. The schedule was implemented to gather data on fast food preferences and frequency questionnaires among school-age children. The pre-structured survey was created. Pizza, hamburgers, ice cream, cookies/cakes, pasta, Maggi, and other fast food items were consumed on a regular basis. In terms of favorite, the data on fast food consumption frequency was gathered as follows: 4-5 times per week, 3-4 times per week, once per week, not very often.

6. Results and Discussion

The bulk of the study's participants (63.5%) were between the ages of 13 and 15. 36 percent of girls and 64 percent of boys were male. A little over 27.5 percent of respondents identified as upper middle class, while 14.75 percent identified as low income. Students received pocket money in 67 percent of cases, compared to 33 percent who did not. The information was examined and presented using frequency and percentage.

Table 1: Preference for Fast Food

S no.	Preference for fast food	School children	
		N	%
1.	Yes	85	85.00
2.	No	15	15.00
	Total	100	100.00



Figure 1: Preference for Fast Food

The desire for fast food among school-going youngsters between the ages of 10-15 is seen in Table 1. It shows that the majority of youngsters (85.25%) are fond of eating fast food; however 14.75 percent of respondents do not desire to do so out of concern for their health. Kids are occupied by a variety of items that make it simple for them to select the various fast food options they enjoy. Foods with a lot of fat and sugar are preferred by kids and frequently come in excessive portions. Unhealthy food choices can also result from watching TV advertising, banner ads, and other screen assistance.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents of frequency of eating fast foods

S no.	Frequency of eating fat food		
		N	%
1.	Every day	9	9.00
2.	2-3 times in a week	29	29.00
3.	Once a week	37	37.00
4.	Not very often	25	25.00
Total		100	100.00

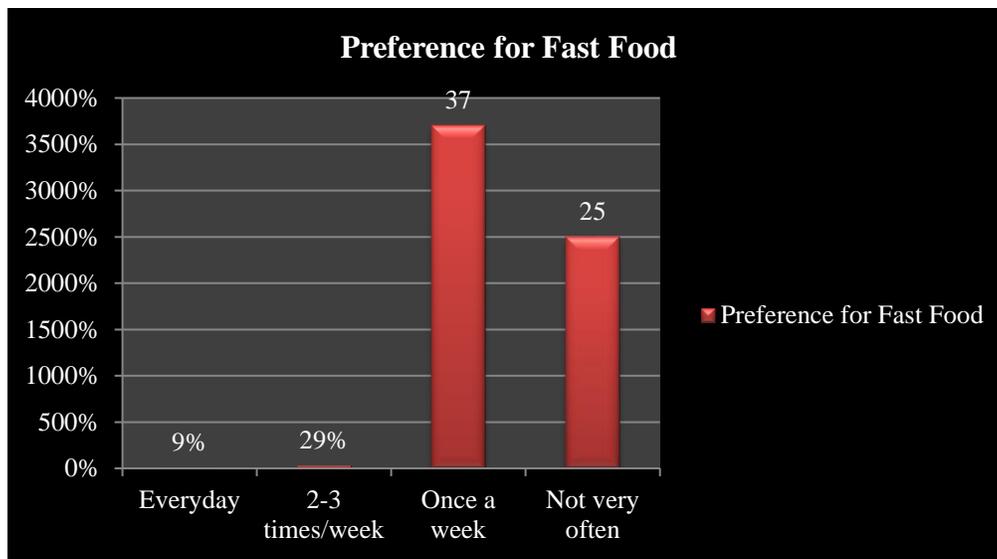


Figure 2: Distribution of the respondents of frequency of eating fast foods

The frequency distribution shown in Table 2 makes it clear that getting a snack is the most popular time to visit a fast food restaurant. From the table, it was seen that 37.00 percent of respondents ate fast food once a week. Out of all respondents, 29.5 percent did not regularly consume fast food, preferring instead to eat it two to three times per week, while 25.00 percent of children did so occasionally, on a monthly basis. The remaining 9% of the participants did regularly consume fast food, with children doing so after classes and in the late afternoon or evening with their friends, as well as before and after regular coaching sessions.

These results are comparable to those of the research conducted in South Africa by Steyn & Marais (2010), which revealed that 11% of participants consumed fast food everyday, 27.6% once to three times

per week, and 20% at least once per week. Only 3.8% of the individuals reported eating fast food fewer than once a month.

Table 3: Preference of school-age children for fast food

Fast food items	Favorite		4-5 times /week		3-4 times /week		2-3 times /week		Once a week		Not very often	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Pizza	29	29.00	4	4.00	2	2.00	10	10.00	22	22.00	44	44.00
Burger	23	23.00	3	3.00	4	4.00	14	14.00	24	24.00	33	33.00
Noodles	25	25.00	4	4.00	6	6.00	17	17.00	27	27.00	24	24.00
Sandwich	20	20.00	3	3.00	9	9.00	16	16.00	26	26.00	20	20.00
Hot dogs	6	6.00	1	1.00	2	2.00	5	5.00	16	16.00	38	38.00
French fries	12	12.00	2	2.00	5	5.00	6	6.00	20	20.00	29	29.00
Pasta	25	25.00	4	4.00	4	4.00	16	16.00	27	27.00	24	24.00
Maggi	43	43.00	7	7.00	7	7.00	27	27.00	29	29.00	18	18.00
Wraps	5	5.00	3	3.00	2	2.00	4	4.00	12	12.00	29	29.00
Wafers	8	8.00	2	2.00	3	3.00	7	7.00	12	12.00	29	29.00
Cookies	22	22.00	9	9.00	8	8.00	17	17.00	14	14.00	20	20.00
Doughnuts	5	5.00	1	1.00	2	2.00	3	3.00	9	9.00	32	32.00
Pastries	22	22.00	2	2.00	3	3.00	7	7.00	22	22.00	31	31.00
Ice cream	31	31.00	2	2.00	6	6.00	22	22.00	21	21.00	27	27.00

Table 3 displays the percentage of school-age children that regularly eat fast food. The majority of kids (26%) consume sandwiches once per week, while only 16% of students consume hot dogs once per week, 20% of the participants eat French fries once per week, 16.25 percent of kids eat pasta 2-3 times per week, and 27% of participants eat Maggi 2-3 times per week. In contrast, only 12% of children and 12% of respondents consume wraps or wafers once per week, Children enjoy pastries once a week, 22% children consume doughnuts occasionally, and 22% of respondents eat ice cream 2-3 times per week. It demonstrates that young customers in New Delhi have adopted fast food customs as an element of their lifestyles and that there is significant room for the business of fast food to expand in the years to come.

Fast food contains high levels of unhealthy sugars and fats that are also addictive, which makes it difficult for kids to make good eating choices. Fast food is pleasant and handy even though it is made with unhealthful or low-nutrient ingredients. Fast food is typically consumed by kids with busy schedules since it is readily accessible. Teenagers frequently spend their earnings on fast food. One of the main reasons people avoid eating nutritious foods is fast food.

Conclusion

Children who attend school have fast food habits that are influenced by a variety of variables, including the home environment, the learning environment, the accessibility and availability of fast food restaurants, and the social milieu. Compared to children who did not consume fast food, fast food fans consumed more fats, sugars, & carbs and fewer veggies and non-starchy vegetables. Due to their tastes, the current levels of fast food consumption among school-age children, as well as the rise in fast food outlets and fast food marketing over the past few years, are probably considerably higher. The majority of respondents in this study enjoyed eating fast food, therefore school-age children expressed a preference for it more frequently.



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