

## **Bangladeshi Student's Standpoint on Junk Food Consumption and Social Behaviour**

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**Abstract:** Consumption of takeaway and fast food by young adolescents is no longer confined to the developed countries; it has spread to the developing countries as well. The culture of fast food consumption has replaced the traditional meal among university students and is a great public health concern. Excessive consumption of fast food is responsible for obesity epidemics and the cause of a dramatic increase of obesity-related diseases. A cross-sectional study was carried out from March to December, 2015 among students attending in five established Universities of Bangladesh, Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, American International University of Bangladesh, Gono University and Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University. The aim of the present study was to examine the preference, prevalence and pattern of fast food consumption among the students. The prevalence of fast food consumption among those students was 98.5%, and 43.3% of their pocket money was spent on its purchase. The important factors for the preference of fast food include good taste, easy accessibility, increased convenience, and pocket friendly in nature. Approximately 22% of the respondents mentioned that they consumed fast food 4 days per week and more than one-fifth had the meal every day. Fifty four percent of the respondents skipped their breakfast due to a variety of reasons including class pressure and had fast food after finishing their classes, either from varsity canteens or other fast-food outlets. Though 98% of the students were well informed about the negative effects associated with excessive fast food consumption, they were still profoundly addicted to it. Specific health education programs, dietary guidelines and effective public awareness campaigns could be initiated to address the unhealthy lifestyle of university students and improve their health.

**Keywords:** Diseases, Health, Fast food/Junk food, Lifestyle

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### **I. Introduction**

Fast food restaurants or quick-service establishments are often the overall choice for food away from home [1-3]. Socioeconomic trends, such as longer work hours, more women employed outside the home, and a high number of single-parent households have changed the way families obtain their meals [4-7]. As parents experience busier lifestyles, they demand convenience for their family meals. The consumption of fast food is fostered because of the quick service, convenience, good taste, and inexpensive prices relative to more traditional home-style restaurants [8-9]. The National Restaurant Association estimates that the average American eats out an average of four times a week [10]. About 33 percent of children and adolescents in the United States consume fast food on a typical day, providing on average about 12 percent of daily calories, and intake increases with age [11-12]. In non-metropolitan areas, adolescents and parents who live in towns with five or more fast food outlets were 30 percent more likely to eat fast food compared with those in towns with no fast food outlets. The influence of in-town fast food outlets on fast food intake was strongest among families with low motor vehicle access [13].

Fast food is the worst enemy of human health these days! It is of great importance to note that most health problems of this century worldwide are being caused by the bad nutrition and the high cost of good quality food, a contributor of this is fast food. It is a fact that fast food is killing people slowly and most people are not even aware of the effects it is having on their health. It can create health problems like obesity, cholesterol problems, diabetes and heart problems, these are just few of catastrophe effects that this type of food is causing. Snack, convenience, fast foods, and sweets continue to dominate food advertisements viewed by children [14-15]. The marketing of these items contributes to the fast food consumption of children in the United States [16-19]. On a typical day, preschool-aged children (2 to 5 years) view three television fast food advertisements,

elementary-school children (6 to 11 years) view four television fast food advertisements, and adolescents (12 to 18 years) view five fast food television advertisements [20]. Hispanic preschoolers, children, and adolescents viewed, on average, 11.6 to 12.4 television food ads per day, an observation of particular concern given the higher rates of obesity among Hispanic youth [21]. One study indicates that 98 percent of television food-product advertisements viewed by adolescents promote foods that are high in fat, sugar, or sodium [22]. In the United States, \$8 billion is spent on food and beverages by children between the ages of 4 and 12 years, and these children also exert a strong influence on their parents' choices of quick-service establishments [23].

Frequent consumption of fast food has adverse effects on nutrition because of excessive content of energy and fat and low nutritional value [24-28]. Moreover, consumption of fast food is associated with other poor nutritional habits: surveys show that parents who reported purchasing fast food for family meals at least three times per week were significantly more likely than parents who reported purchasing fewer than three fast food family meals to report the availability of soft drinks and chips in the home [29]. Of note, the "empty calorie" content (low nutritional value) of children's dietary intake from retail food stores and schools is similar to that of fast food restaurants. The source of added sugar and fat from retail food stores and schools, including sugar-sweetened beverages, grain desserts, pizza, and high-fat milk was similar to that from fast food restaurants including high-fat milk beverages, dairy desserts, french fries, and pizza [30]. More importantly, children from middle and low social class backgrounds were more likely to report infrequent fruit and vegetable intake, given low exposure to supermarket food sources and high exposure to fast food outlets [31].

Fast foods are a way of life for many American families, and eliminating fast foods may not be realistic. The challenge is to teach children and adolescents to make wise food choices when visiting fast food establishments. This is an important issue since the establishment of healthy eating patterns in childhood is linked to a reduction in chronic diseases, such as obesity, coronary heart disease, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, and diet-related cancers later in life [32-37]. Healthful eating patterns for children over the age of two can be achieved by consumption of a prudent diet that is moderate in total fat, saturated fatty acids, and cholesterol, and high in complex carbohydrates, fiber, calcium, and antioxidant nutrients such as vitamins C and E and the carotenoids [38-40]. Rapid urbanization coupled with busy lifestyle and advancement in technology has greatly changed the way of life of many people including people in the developing countries. The effects of these changes have altered the tradition of cooking and eating at home. People are now more reliant on ready-to-eat meals offered by businesses for their daily sustenance and popular among them are fast foods. Fast food is the "general term used for limited menu of foods that lend themselves to production-line techniques; suppliers tend to specialize in products such as hamburgers, pizzas, chicken or sandwiches" [41]. First popularized in the 1950s in United States, it typically refers to food sold in restaurant or store with preheated or precooked ingredients, and served to the customer in a package form for take-out or take-away [42]. The Western diet is characterized by a high intake of saturated and omega-6 fatty acids, reduced omega-3 fat intake, an overuse of salt, and too much refined sugar [43]. Most are aware that this type of eating, if not in moderation, can damage the heart, kidneys, and waistlines; however, it is becoming increasingly clear that the modern diet also damages the immune system. The modern lifestyle is also typified by reduced exposure to microorganisms, increased exposure to pollutions, heightened levels of stress, and a host of other exceptionally well reviewed variables that likely contribute to immune dysfunction [44]. Therefore, while dietary effects on immunity should not be thought of in isolation, herein we focus on the body of evidence detailing the mechanisms for the Western diet's impact on immune function. Such research findings has led to critics of fast food calling for consumers to abandon its patronage[45] resulting in a number of fast food chains changing or introducing healthy meals to their menu. Also because fast food concept relies on speed, uniformity and low cost, they are often made with ingredients formulated to achieve certain flavor or consistency and to preserve freshness. This requires a high degree of food engineering, the use of additives and processing techniques that substantially alter the food from its original form and reduces its nutritional value [46]. Research also indicated that those who ate fast food at home and also those students who attended school close to fast food restaurants were more probable to be overweight [47]. Some other researchers also tried to find such links and the rates of heavy students in California [48]. In Turkey, about one-third of the research participants chose fast food as snack for once or more times daily while only 15% consumed the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables [49]. Goyal and Singh (2007) revealed in their research that Indian young consumers had ardor to visit fast food places for enjoyment but home food was their first preference [50]. People feel contentment in having fast food daily, although it is detrimental to their health. Cancer is also a cause of fast food consumption and it can be 25% due to high fat and fried food [51].





Do you feel fast food eating habit changes ones attitude towards normal balanced diet?	0.25	0.05	0.19	0.11	0.21	0.09	0.20	0.10	0.21	0.09
Do you think advertisements attract and influence your fast food eating behavior?	0.20	0.10	0.19	0.11	0.22	0.08	0.18	0.12	0.20	0.10
Do you think fast food can increase your Nutritional level?	0.09	0.21	0.08	0.22	0.12	0.18	0.07	0.23	0.08	0.22
Do you know the Nutritional value of the things you eat as Fast food?	0.18	0.12	0.03	0.27	0.16	0.14	0.07	0.23	0.06	0.24
Have you ever thought that fast food is your only friend?	0.11	0.19	0.15	0.15	0.18	0.12	0.11	0.19	0.18	0.12
Do you think fast food can create toxicity in human body?	0.22	0.08	0.18	0.12	0.19	0.11	0.20	0.10	0.22	0.08

**Table.2:**

S/N	Question with option	DU	JU	AIUB	GONO	SAUB
		Each are in Percent				
1	Do you prefer Fast food or Home made food?					
	a) Fast food	0.05	0.20	0.07	0.17	0.16
	b) Home made food.	0.25	0.10	0.23	0.13	0.14
2	Why do you prefer fast food?					
	a) Status symbol	0.10	0.09	0.05	0.12	0.16
	b) Just for taste	0.20	0.17	0.14	0.10	0.11
	c) As a normal meal.	0.00	0.04	0.11	0.08	0.13
3	What type of food do you eat at campus?					
	a) Fast food	0.24	0.23	0.19	0.22	0.20
	b) Home made food	0.06	0.07	0.11	0.08	0.10
4	In a day how many meals you replace with fast food?					
	a) One	0.16	0.15	0.18	0.13	0.14
	b) Two	0.10	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.08
	c) More then two	0.04	0.08	0.03	0.09	0.08
5	You eat fast food more frequently when you are?					
	a) In a group	0.16	0.14	0.16	0.15	0.12
	b) Alone.	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.09
	c)With opposite gender	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.09
6	At which time you prefer to eat fast food?					
	a) Morning	0.01	0.16	0.09	0.05	0.05
	b) Noon	0.10	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.10
	c) Evening	0.19	0.06	0.12	0.15	0.15
7	Which meal you usually have to skip from hostel?					
	a) Breakfast	0.12	0.18	0.13	0.10	0.15
	b) Lunch	0.10	0.06	0.08	0.16	0.11
	c) Dinner	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.04	0.04
8	Why do you skip normal meal?					
	a) Waking up late	0.16	0.22	0.20	0.13	0.12
	b) Intentionally	0.14	0.08	0.10	0.17	0.18
9	What does you eat usually for Lunch?					
	a) Fast food	0.12	0.05	0.13	0.15	0.14
	b) Home made food	0.18	0.25	0.17	0.15	0.16
10	Why are fast foods popular?					
	a) If is available	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.14	0.16
	b) It is so tasty	0.20	0.19	0.18	0.15	0.13
	c) It is healthy	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.01
11	When do you like to eat fast food most?					
	a) Special day	0.16	0.21	0.11	0.02	0.13
	b) Holly day	0.07	0.03	0.09	0.10	0.07
	c) Shopping time	0.07	0.06	0.10	0.18	0.10
12	What have you eaten so far today?					
	a) Rice	0.24	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.15
	b) Burger	0.03	0.04	0.11	0.10	0.07
	c) Nothing	0.03	0.16	0.12	0.05	0.08

#### **IV. Discussion**

The charts show the habit of taking fast foods in top 5 universities of Bangladesh. From the chart we can see that in Dhaka University 0.22% students are aware about balance diet that chose option A. The students of Jahangirnagar University mostly chose the option A, which is 0.19%. Then the students of American International University chose the option A, 0.19%. In GONO University most of the students chose option A, as 0.26%. The students of Sher-e-Bangla University chose option A, as 0.21%. Again they were asked to know whether they preferred fast food or home made food. The students of DU mostly chose the option B, which was home made food. A number of students chose option A, which was fast food. The students were asked if they thought that fast food eating makes a person overweight or not. In DU, JU, AIUB the numbers are respectively 0.26%, 0.25%, 0.21% respectively. It shows most of them think fast food is one of the major reason of obesity. And 0.4%, 0.05%, 0.09% students answered negative to this fact. The students were asked if their fast food habit had increased after they left home. In DU, 0.20% students answered positively and 0.10% students answered to the negative. And In AIUB 0.19% students chose the option A and 0.11% students chose the option B. The students were asked if they thought fast food could be a good alternative to healthy food. In AIUB 0.18% students chose option A, which means positive and 0.12% students chose option B. The students were asked if they thought fast food eating changes one's behavior to normal balanced diet. Most of them agreed to this statement. In DU 0.25% students said YES and 0.05% students said NO to this question. It shows that the students know that fast food changes one's behavior to normal balanced diet. The students mostly think that advertisements attract and influence towards fast food. It is a major reason of fast food addiction. In GONO University, 0.18% students said YES and 0.12% students said No to this statement. The students were asked if they thought that fast food can create toxicity in human body. In SBAU, 0.22% students said yes and 0.08% students said No to this statement. It shows they are well known about the fact. The students were also asked why they thought fast food is popular. In DU, JU, AIUB most of the students chose option B, which states that they think fast food is popular because of its taste. From the Table we can see that though the students know that fast food is not good for their health, they eat fast food anyway.

#### **V. Conclusion**

The present findings contribute to the understanding of consumer perception and preference of fast foods in the Bangladeshi market, an area that has received little attention within the academic literature. Expressly, this study provides insight into the factors contributing to the perceived growth of fast food in Bangladesh which is as a result of urbanization, people working for long hours, growing interest in exotic meals, advertising, availability of commercial buildings and rise in income. These consumers, who currently patronize fast food, do so for the reasons that they perceive them to be convenient, time saving, delicious, good for a change and fun as well as preference of the environment. Those who do not consume fast food however perceive fast food as unhealthy, quite expensive and too foreign as related to Bangladeshi dishes. The study has an inherent limitation due to its focus on tertiary students making it quite difficult to generalize the findings. It however provides the opportunity for further investigations. For example, in future, it will be important to further examine consumer perception and preference according to gender, economic and social status. Study on the opportunities and challenges in the fast food industry will also enrich literature on fast foods. In the nut shell, the study revealed significant opportunity to marketers as far as consumers' behavior regarding preference, usage pattern and understanding of food market is concerned. The findings can be used as a basis to pattern marketing strategy towards satisfaction of the fast food market.

Fast food is convenient and tasty though prepared with low nourishing or unhealthy ingredients. Fast food companies are targeting youngsters through great promotion strategies, delicious recipes and attractive advertisement. There are much greater side effects of fast food and people are unaware of its ill consequences which can tend to many detrimental diseases; extended use of fast food is also a cause of health problems and obesity. Working class prefers fast food at their workplace due to their busy schedules and they also compromise with the food quality due to shortage of time and ease of access. Moreover, fast food is also an addiction for most of the people. It is recommended that parents should keep an eye on the diet of their children as youngsters spend more money on junk food and must have balanced diet for proper growth. Moreover, policy makers should limit or ban the unhealthy fast food restaurants that are using cheap quality ingredients for food preparation; media should also spread awareness among people about the side effects of taking fast food frequently.

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