

TREND AND PATTERN OF FAST FOOD CONSUMPTION AMONG STUDENTS OF ENUGU STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL), ENUGU

By

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Abstract

This study investigates the increasing trend and pattern of fast food consumption among college students with special references of students of Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu. Eat healthy and live healthy is one of the essential requirements for long life. The consumption of fast and junk foods may pre-disposed individuals to a lot of nutritional and metabolic disorders. This work designed to examine the various reasons why students indulge in the consumption of fast food and determine the perception of students on the health implications of consuming fast foods regularly. Fifty (50) students (male and female) participated in the study. Six research questions and two bulk hypotheses guided the conduct of the study. It was found out that fast food consumption pattern of the students was very high and that convenience and influence of friends are the major reasons. The students were either overweight or obese as a result of their consumption pattern. It was concluded that there is need to incorporate nutrition education into students' curriculum with a view to equipping them with necessary nutritional knowledge on how to make rational and healthy fast food choices. Among the recommendation given are that the government should re-introduce the school cafeteria system so that college students can have access to good and nutritious foods at affordable process. This will enable them to avoid eating without planning and indulging in fast food consumption and that parent should be more pro-active to monitor their children/wards especially on what they consume. They should encourage their children to learn how to prepare their meal by themselves.

Introduction

Healthy eating and living are part of the essential requirements of life. There are lots of foods available in varieties to individuals which can make or mar life. Unfortunately, today's world has been adapted to a system of consumption of foods which has several adverse effects on health. Lifestyle changes has compelled people so much that one has so little time to really think of how well or right is what one is consuming. Globalization and urbanization have greatly affected one's eating habits and forced many people to consume fancy and high calorie fast foods, popularly known as junk foods (Adeniyi, 2005). Fast food eating is a dietary pattern that used to be foreign but has gradually

become a part of the lifestyle of people in Nigeria especially those in urban areas. Judging from the uncontrollable rate and manner at which fast food restaurants are opening almost every day in every nook and cranny of the country, the consumption of these foods may continue to increase. Rapid urbanization coupled with busy lifestyle and advancement in technology has greatly changed the lifestyle of many people including people in the developing countries. Eating habits have also undergone changes in parallel with this rapid developing technology. People are now more reliant on ready-to-eat meals offered by businesses for their daily sustenance (Black, 2004).

Most fast food meals are high in protein (especially the meat and dairy products) but the major concern now is that they are also usually high in fat, sugar and sodium; thus contributing additional calories, excess body fat and increase body weight. Being overweight or obese increases the likelihood of suffering from cancer, coronary heart diseases, diabetes, hypertension, osteoarthritis, strokes and obesity reduces life expectancy by an average of nine years (World Health Organization (WHO), 2009). E Medical Research Council (MRC) observed that diet high in fast foods will increase a person's risk of weight gain and obesity-even though they may feel that they are eating no more than they would if they ate natural meal.

Factors Responsible for Increased Consumption of Fast Food Diet

The nutritional make up of fast foods seem to encourage people to gorge on it unintentionally with a possibility of increasing their risk of weight gain or obesity as a result of consuming more calories than the body needs. In Nigeria, has been noted that nutritional deficiencies as well as chronic diet related diseases affect the populace and that diet related non-communicable diseases such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and others hypokinetic diseases exist or are merging as public health problems (2003). Eating out has become a routine for many people mostly students, partly because the time for preparing meals at home has reduced due to changing lifestyle. Also some Nigerians seem to associate the eating fast foods with high prestige or a high class value and as lifestyle of the affluent or a way of displaying affluence. According to Wikipedia, the concept of ready-cooked food for sale is closely connected to urban development. Fast food outlet are take-away or take-out providers, often with a "driving through" service which allows customers to order and pick up food from cars; but most also have a eaten area in which customers can eat the food on the premises. Many petrol stations have convinces stores which sell pre-packaged sandwiches, doughnuts and hurt foods, schools have cafeteria where these fast food product are sold. Also traditional street food and snacks are available from small operators and independent vendors operating from cart, table, containers, roadside nallam ("me sai:), portable grill or motor vehicles.

Today's fast-paced, technological society has contributed to drastic changes in the way of people eat. The dual-career and single parent families are becoming more common.

As people juggle careers, childcare, social and professional meetings, education, religion and recreation, the traditional meals at home are often skipped, eating on the run or thrown together quickly. As a result, food makers in fast food centers have taken over the responsibility of operating foods for families and those who do not have time to prepare foods. One of the most remarkable social changes in Nigeria since the turn of this century has been the rapid rate of urbanization. The most consequence of these has been the creation of a numbers of social, environmental and economic problems. The critical among the social has been the inability of the country to provide adequate housing. The constant attempt by both the public and private developers to solve the housing problems lead to sub-urban residential developers in major cities. The resultant effect of this is reflected in the very wide separation between the places of residence and those of work and schools. This coupled with long hours at school work (assignment, project, term paper preparation) and the insufficient or inadequate transportation system, electricity supply at the hotels, most people had to rely on the consumption of foods prepared outside the home which is contrary to the traditional African societies setting whereby food was always prepared at home. However, urbanization, schooling and office work in which women are now involved has led to longer hours of staying off home. Thus affect preparation of food at home: some people are more enveloped or engrossed with their chores or work, which tend to affect the normal routine of purchase, and preparation of food at home. Fast foods serve as a fast means of getting something to eat to suppress hunger before the main course. Consequently, people become regular patronage of fast food restaurants. There are those who eat fast food because of the sweet and delicious taste.

Appealing nature of junk/fast food

Junk food comprises of anything that is quick, tasty, convenient and fashionable. Clever junk food advertising and lure of convenience in addition to taste drag people to junk food addition. The following factors according to Bowman and Vanguard (2010), generally make it appealing:

1. Time factor: Junk food addition is so high because of its simplicity. They are easy to prepare and ready to consume within no time.
2. Taste factor: Create taste also, is another important reason to an extent that influences to opt for junk food. This taste is active owing to lavish usage of oils, salt and/or sugar.
3. Attractiveness: packaging of such foods has very attractive appearance by adding additives and colours in addition to enhancement in flavour.
4. Advertising has a major role in attracting the public, particularly children and adolescents to the junk food selling joints.

Health implication of fast foods

Fat and sugar in combination are capable of producing a dopamine-driving surge of intense pressure in people with a propensity for addictive behavior. On the other side, it must be noted that they are hazardous to health too. High fat content, particularly cholesterol, sugar and salt have their adverse effect on health. Soaring calorie content with sugar can lead to obesity (Anderson and Patterson, 2005). Dense sugar content can cause dental cavities and type 2 diabetes mellitus. A short-term adverse effect as a result of eating junk foods. Lack of energy which occurs because junk foods does not provide essential nutrient, even though they can be very much sufficing, due to which one's feelings are weakened. Unfortunately, meals consisting of junk foods do not feel up for long. Because they are lacking in fiber, and are made of processed foods, they are rated high on the glycemic index, which means they provide a quick rise in blood sugar, but this also falls quickly, and gives rise to hunger. Cholesterol and salt are known to set-off blood pressure. Stroke and heart diseases in a chain (Nakayama and Terawaks, 2009).

Excessive salt can affect functioning of kidneys too. Excess fats and oils along with species added in these foods act as an irritant to gastric mucosa leading to excess secretion of hydrochloric acid, leading to gastritis. Poor concentration is another result of junk food habit known to affect in immediate and medium term periods. When a sumptuous junk meal rich in oil is taken, there is a feeling of drowsiness and failure to concentrate. The junk food taken over a sustained period of time can drop blood secretion due to fat accumulation. Lack of vital oxygen nutrient and proteins particularly can stale the grey (brain) matter temporarily. Most of the times these junk foods contain colours, which are often inedible, carcinogenic and harmful to the body. Flavourings and colourings can be allergic causing asthma, rashes, hyperactivity. Animal studies on rats have demonstrated the ill effects of consuming junk foods during pregnancy which affects the health of foetus (Shaikh and Rehman, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Food being one of the basic human needs for existence plays a major role to survive. It is shared with families and friends and often makes it a central part of celebrations. It is shopped for, cooked, read about, talked about, and sometimes worried about. In the world, social demographic changes are driving the growth of food intake due to the rise in dual income. Eating meals away from home requires mobility, and fast food is also more expensive than home meals. Food eaten away from home may be related to increased weight gain because energy density is higher in these meals (Bowman, 2010). Studies have reviewed that many Americans believe women have purchasing power but less time to prepare, cook, eat, clean up and lack the knowledge in having primary responsibility for food purchasing and preparation within the home (Bowers, 2009).

However, because eating meals prepared away from home is related to increase BMI among adults, identifying the factors that predict who is likely to eat away from home is important. These fast food requirement are not healthful practices, but they do represent the reality. Furthermore, when people eat frequently from outside the home, obesity rate increases. Obesity being mother to other diseases is one of the most important public health problems facing adolescents in many developed countries. Health authorities are concern because obese adolescents may suffer a number of healthy problems, are likely to remain overweight into adulthood and are at risk of serious, chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, type 2, diabetes and fatty lever disease. Furthermore, because obesity is now a characteristic of operations and not only of individuals, researchers, government health organizations, and advocacy groups characterized obesity as an epidemic (World Health Organization, 2003). Hence, can the trend and pattern of fast food consumption among students of FCE (T) Akoke be reduced?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the trend and pattern of fast food consumption among student of Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu, Nigeria.

However, the specific objectives are:

1. To determine the students who consume fast food and home food.
2. To find out the frequency of fast food consumption among the students.

Research Question

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the percentage of students who consume fast food and home food (cooked food in the hostel)?
2. What is the frequency of fast food consumption among the college students?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this paper may of significant to the following group of people who may benefit tremendously.

The student may become exposed to the reality of health implication of consuming fast food and the need to cultivate the habit of preparing food by themselves in the hostels. The government through the college authority may see the need to re-introduce the school cafeteria system where foods are prepared for students under hygienic conditions and at affordable prices in order to prevent the side effect or consequence in the life of the students in the future.

Methodology

Design of the Study

This paper adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all male and female NCE students of Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu. The sample for the study comprised twenty-five (25) male and twenty-five (25) female students that was selected through simple random sampling in each of the six (6) schools in the college. A well structured questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The questionnaire items were made up of four likert scale options which represented the likely opinion of the respondents on the issues arise on fast/junk food. Data obtained were statistically analyzed with the use of sample percentage and frequent distribution.

Presentation and discussion of findings

The demographic data of the respondents are presented on table 1

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	23	46
Female	27	54
Total	50	100
Age Group		
16-20yrs	18	36
21-25yrs	22	44
26 & above yrs	10	20
Total	50	100

Adult presented table 1 showed the distribution of the (respondents) based on their gender and age contribution. The data showed that the male students were represented by 46 percent while female students were represented by 54 percent. On the basis of their age contribution, 36 percent are between the age group 16-20, 44 percentage are between 21-25 years. While only 20 percent within 26 years and above. This information implies that respondents are youthful and youth population has been described as active in inviting fast food joint.

Table 2: Pattern of Consumption of Fast and Home Food among the Students

Pattern	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I consume fast food regularly	32	64
I prefer to cook my food in the hotels	18	36

Data analysis in table 2 showed that higher percentage 2 (64percent) of the students indulge in fast food consumption and they do it on a regular basis while only 18(32percent) of the students were prefer to cook and eat their food in the hostel. The implication of these is that the fast food consumption pattern of the students is very high.

Table 3: Frequency of fast food consumption of respondents

Frequency of	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Consumption every day	8	16
2-3 times a week	12	24
Once a week	16	32
2-3 times a month	9	18
Once a month	5	10
Total	50	100

Data in table 3 showed how frequent the students visit fast food joint 8(16percent) of the students visit and eat fast food everyday, 12(24percent) visit at least 2-3 times in one week and 16(32percent) visit at least once in a week. The result showed that 72 percent of the students cannot do without visiting the fast food joint on the weekly basis, 28percent of the students visit at least once in every month.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was concluded that the trend and pattern of fast food consumption among the students of Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu is very high.

Recommendation

The paper recommended that

- Students need to cut down on the increasing consumption on fast food and imbibe the habit of preparing food on their own.
- Students should be enlighten on the side effect and health problems associated with the frequent and regular consumption of fast foods as indicated by Ojo (2003), in order to live healthily

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