

The effect of fast food on adolescent

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Abstract

This study analyzes the impact of fast food consumption on adolescents' health, particularly those who aim to reduce intake but are influenced by peer behaviors. Adolescents face unique challenges in dietary choices due to social and environmental factors, such as the prevalence of fast food in peer groups. Research highlights that increased fast food consumption is linked to higher risks of obesity, chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular problems), and mental health issues such as depression and anxiety. The study emphasizes that adolescents can improve their health by shifting focus toward nutritious alternatives, such as vegetables, water, and reducing foods containing colorings and preservatives. Findings confirm the significance of self-awareness and nutritious diets in preventing chronic diseases and enhancing mental well-being. Avoiding fast food, combined with increased dietary literacy, is crucial for fostering a healthier, more productive lifestyle in adolescence.

1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, fast food has become an integral part of the daily diet for many adolescents. With its convenient preparation, affordable prices, and appealing flavors, fast food often serves as a go-to option for busy teenagers. However, despite its convenience, excessive consumption of fast food can lead to serious health issues (Dighikar et.al. 2021). Research indicates that adolescents who frequently consume fast food are at a significantly higher risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. For instance, studies have shown that teenagers who regularly eat fast food have a 2.27 times greater risk of becoming obese compared to those who maintain a healthier diet (Kusgandari, 2018).

One of the most alarming effects of fast food consumption is the increased risk of obesity. Fast food is typically high in calories, saturated fats, and sugars while being low in essential nutrients. This unhealthy eating pattern can lead to substantial weight gain among adolescents. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health, teenagers consuming high-calorie fast food are at greater risk of obesity than those who opt for healthier food choices. Obesity during adolescence not only affects physical appearance but also raises the likelihood of chronic diseases in adulthood (Kirana et. al. 2023).

In addition to obesity, consuming fast food can also elevate the risk of hypertension. Fast food often contains very high levels of sodium, which can lead to high blood pressure (Alfora et.al. 2023). Research indicates that excessive salt intake from these foods can disrupt the balance of sodium and potassium in the body, thereby triggering hypertension. Hypertension at a young age can persist into adulthood and increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Moreover, a diet rich in fast food contributes to the rising incidence of type 2 diabetes among adolescents. A study conducted in Singapore found that individuals who frequently consume fast food are at a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes mellitus. The increasing prevalence of type 2 diabetes in teenagers is largely attributed to unhealthy eating habits and a lack of physical activity.

The consumption of fast food can heighten cancer risk. Research has shown that frequent consumption of these foods correlates with an increased risk of colorectal cancer and prostate cancer. The low fiber content and high levels of sugar and fat in fast food contribute to these health issues (Saranya, 2016). Therefore, it is crucial for adolescents to be aware of the long-term consequences of their eating habits.

Unhealthy eating patterns characterized by frequent fast food consumption can raise the risk of stroke at a young age. High cholesterol levels from these foods can lead to blockages in blood vessels, including those in the brain. As obesity rates and fast food consumption continue to rise in modern society, cases of stroke among adolescents are also increasing.

Given all these negative impacts, it is essential to raise awareness among adolescents about the dangers associated with excessive fast food consumption. Education on balanced nutrition and healthy food choices should be prioritized to encourage behavioral changes regarding eating habits among young people.

2. Method

In this research method we use quantitative research method. According to KBBI, Quantitative means based on quantity or number. According to Kasiram (2008: 149) in his book *Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology*, quantitative research is a process of finding knowledge that uses data in the form of numbers as a tool to analyze information about what is to be known. While the meaning of Quantitative Research Method, according to Sugiyono (2017:8) is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism, used to research certain populations or samples, data collection using research instruments, quantitative or statistical data analysis, with the aim of testing established hypotheses. Whereas According to Creswell, quantitative research is research that works with numbers, whose data is in the form of numbers (score or value, ranking or frequency).

The research we do has the purpose of finding out the habits of teenagers in consuming fast food, as well as knowing whether teenagers know that consuming fast food excessively will cause a bad impact on health. Meanwhile, the research instrument used by our group is a questionnaire or survey, this technique is a data dump that is done by giving several questions or written statements to respondents to be answered as well as they know.

The survey was conducted with a sample of respondents aged 16 to 25 years, with the majority aged 16-18 years (56,7%). The collected data focused on respondents' knowledge about fast food through questionnaires. We have summarized the findings as follows:

Tables 1

Respondents' knowledge about fast food through questionnaires

Indicator	Yes	No	Maybe
1. Do you know what fast food is?	100%	-	-
2. Should Packaged Fast Food Have Health Warnings and Guidelines?	83,9%	-	12,9%
3. Do you know the Negative impact of consuming fast food?	30 %	-	3,2%

Tables 2

First Indicator

Indikator	Everyday	3-5 days in a week	1-2 Days in a week	Never
1. How often do you eat fast food in a week?	6.5%	32.%	58,1%	3,2%

Tables 3

Second Indicator

Indicator	Fried chicken	Instan noodle	Burgers	French fries	Spaghetti	Fizza
1. What is your favorite fast food?	61,3%	54,8%	22,6%	22,6%	22,6%	22,6%

Tables 4

Third Indicator

Indikator	Agree	Dissagree	Note sure
1. Do you agree with educating everyone that eating a lot of fast food is not good?	87 %	6,5%	6,5%

Tables 5

Fourth Indicator

Indicator	I Hate Fast Food	I Dont like it	Neutral	I like it	Always eat Fast food
1. How much do you like to eat fast food?	-	3,2%	54,8%	35,5%	6,5 %

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Based on the survey results of 30 respondents aged 16 to 25 years, the following conclusions can be drawn about fast food consumption habits among teenagers. Understanding of Fast Food All respondents (100%) know what fast food is and consider it very popular among teenagers, indicating that fast food has become a part of their daily culture, Frequency of Consumption The majority (60%) consume fast food once or twice a week, while 30% consume it every 1-3 days, and 6.7% consume it daily. This shows that although many consume it moderately, some consume it quite frequently, Opinion on Packaging Information: The majority (83.3%) agree that fast food packaging should include health warnings or consumption guidelines.

However, 13.3% believe this is unnecessary because not all fast foods contain harmful ingredients, Awareness of Negative Impacts: Almost all respondents (96.7%) are aware of the negative impacts of fast food consumption on health, such as the risk of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. However, despite being aware of these impacts, their consumption habits are still maintained, Favorite Fast Food: The favorite fast food among respondents is fried chicken (63.2%), followed by pizza (23.3%), hamburgers (20%), French fries (20%), and spaghetti (20%). This reflects the preferences of teenagers, who tend to choose fast food that is popular among many, Attitude Toward Education: A total of 76.6% support education about the risks of excessive fast food consumption, indicating a desire for more information about the health impacts of these habits, Balance Between Fast Food and Healthy Food Intake: The majority (56.7%) believe they maintain a balanced diet between fast food and healthy food, although 33.3% prefer fast food and 6.7% consume it daily.

3.2 Discussion

Fast food consumption among adolescents has significant implications for their health. Regular intake is linked to obesity, diabetes, and other metabolic disorders. It can also negatively impact mental health, contributing to issues like anxiety and depression. The high caloric content and low nutritional value of fast food can lead to poor dietary habits and long-term health consequences (Kurniawan et.al. 2024).

Figure 1

Variety of fast food



Physical Health Impacts

Fast food is often high in calories, fats, and sugars, contributing to weight gain and obesity in adolescents. A single meal can contain enough calories to meet daily requirements, leading to excess caloric intake when consumed frequently. Fast food typically lacks essential nutrients such as vitamins and minerals, which are crucial for growth and development during adolescence (Pamelia, 2018). This can lead to deficiencies and associated health issues. Regular consumption of fast food is associated with increased risks of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes, conditions that can develop even in young individuals. I have a relation with the habit of eating fast food (Dighikar et.al. 2021).

Mental Health Effects

Adolescents often face scrutiny regarding their appearance, which can be exacerbated by weight gain from fast food consumption. This pressure can lead to negative body image and self-esteem issues. The relationship between fast food and disordered eating patterns, such as binge eating or restrictive dieting, can develop, particularly in response to societal pressures and body image concerns (Hafizurrachman et al 2021). High sugar and fat content in fast food can lead to mood swings and emotional instability, affecting overall mental well-being.

Cognitive and Academic Performance

Diets high in fast food can lead to fluctuations in blood sugar levels, resulting in poor concentration and cognitive performance, which can affect academic success. Studies indicate that frequent consumption of fast food is linked to lower math and reading skills among adolescents, potentially due to the impact on cognitive function (Li et.al. 2020).

Social and Behavioral Consequences

Reduced Physical Activity: Fast food diets often lack the necessary nutrients to support an active lifestyle, which can lead to decreased participation in physical activities and sports. Poor dietary habits can affect social interactions, as adolescents may feel self-conscious about their weight or health, leading to withdrawal from peer groups (Lestari et.al. 2021).

Figure 2
Habit of eating fast food



Recommendations for Healthier Choices

Teaching adolescents about healthy eating habits and the nutritional value of foods can empower them to make better choices. Encouraging occasional fast food consumption as part of a balanced diet can help mitigate negative health effects while still allowing for social experiences. Making nutritious foods more accessible and appealing can help shift preferences away from fast food.

4. Conclusion

Research shows that excessive consumption of fast food in adolescents has a significant negative impact on their health. A diet that contains a lot of calories, saturated fat, sugar, and salt, which are often found in fast food, can increase the risk of long-term health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and metabolic disorders. In addition, fast food consumption is also associated with a lack of intake of important nutrients such as fibre, vitamins, and minerals, which are very needed during the growth period. Fast food can also affect the eating behaviour of teenagers, with their tendency to ignore healthy food for the convenience and practicality of fast food. However, some interventions, such as nutrition education and increased access to healthy food, can help reduce this negative impact. Therefore, it is important to educate teenagers and parents about the importance of healthy eating and encouraging better eating habits as an effort to improve the long-term health of teenagers.

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