

Transformation of Fast Food Culture in Rural Adolescents: Evidence from a study in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Socio cultural context is changing in rural India. This may lead to establishment of fast food culture in rural areas as well. **Objectives:** To find out extent, pattern and associates of knowledge, opinion and consumption of fast food by rural adolescents. **Materials and Methods:** This community based cross sectional study was conducted on 213 adolescents selected by multistage sampling procedure from rural Prayagraj. Each subject was interviewed about socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge, opinion, and consumption of fast foods with the help of predesigned and pretested proforma. Analysis of data was done through SPSS and for finding out associates chi square test was applied. **Results:** Majority of subjects were aware about fast food and 84.0% consumed it in the previous month. There existed significant association of opinion of subjects regarding fast food fulfills hunger with type of family, social class of subjects ($P<0.01$) whereas, opinion of subjects "Feel energetic after eating fast food" was significantly associated with their gender, type of family and social class ($P<0.05$). Consumption of fast food was significantly more in subjects from nuclear family and higher SES ($P<0.01$). **Conclusion:** Socio Economic gradient prevailed in the expression of the opinions "the fast food fulfill hunger" and "Feel energetic after eating fast food" as well as consumption of fast food by subjects.

KEYWORDS

Adolescents; Fast Food Culture; Junk Foods; Mental Health; Rural Areas

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition transition and changing lifestyles have altered the structure of diet and food habits of the individuals. Fast food typically refers to food that is quickly prepared, purchased in self-service from restaurants with precooked ingredients, and served in a packaged form to the customer to take-away

(viz; burgers, French fries, pizza etc.)(1). Consumption of fast food has become a global phenomenon due to increasing demand of convenience food. According to Fortune Business Insights report (2020) the global fast food market is projected to expand from USD 972.74 billion in 2021 to USD 1,467.04 billion by 2028 (2). The fast food culture has gripped

almost every corner of the country. India's fast food industry is escalating at the rate of 40% every year. India ranks 10th fast food per capita spending figures with 2.1% of expenditure in annual total spending(3).

Despite the established evidence about adverse consequences of consumption of fast foods on physical and mental wellbeing and addictive behaviour(4), it is popular among all age group in general and in adolescents in particular (5). There is paucity of information in rural areas about in depth perception, attitude and behaviors promoting fast food consumption and external and internal factors influencing them. Due to the growth of fast food industry coupled with socio economic transformation in rural areas, it is a likely that transformation of increasing menace of fast food will shift to rural areas as well. This aspect has not been explored in rural areas of Prayagraj district of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Objectives: (1) To assess subject's knowledge, opinion and consumption pattern of fast food. (2) To find out Associates of knowledge, opinion and consumption of subjects about fast food

MATERIAL & METHODS

Study area: This study was conducted in the rural areas of Prayagraj district. The rural population of district is 44, 81,518 of which males and females are 2,340,959 and 2,140,559, respectively. There are 8 Subdivisions, 20 Community Development (CD) Blocks and 3178 villages in this district. Jaitwardih Gram Panchayat and its village were the main study area of this study.

Study Design: Community based cross sectional study design was adopted for this study.

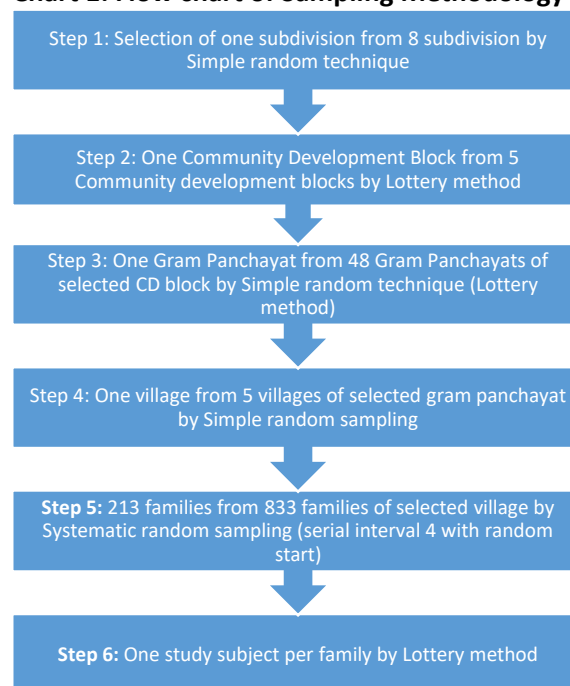
Study participants: The study population for this study was adolescents in rural areas (10-19 years) residing in Prayagraj.

Sample size: There was paucity of information on prevalence of consumption of fast food in the previous month in the rural area of this region. This necessitated for pilot study which was conducted in the similar but non study area of the rural Prayagraj. According to pilot study prevalence of fast food consumption was 75%. Taking prevalence of consumption of fast

food as 75 %, design effect of 1.5, permissible level of error 10% (relative) and non-response rate of 10%. The sample size worked out to be 213.

Sampling Procedure: Study subjects were selected by adopting standard sampling procedure and selected subjects are the representative sample of the reference population. Multistage sampling procedure was adopted for selection of subjects; Subdivision, Block, Village, Family and Subjects were the different stages of sampling procedure. [A] Out of 8 Subdivisions in Prayagraj district, Soraon was selected by simple random sampling procedure. [B] From 5 CD blocks in selected subdivision, one CD block was selected by lottery method. [C] From 48 Gram Panchayats in the Block, one (Jaitwardih Gram panchayat) Gram Panchayat was selected by simple random sampling and from 5 villages in the selected gram panchayat one village was selected with population of 5114 and 833 houses. [D] 213 Families in the selected village were identified through systematic sampling procedure (serial interval 4 with a random start) and one adolescent was selected from each family through lottery method. The selection of subjects is summarized in flow chart below.

Chart 1: Flow chart of Sampling Methodology



Inclusion and exclusion criteria: Adolescents who were willing to participate and gave their consent to provide necessary information were included in study. Subject's family residing <6 month in the study area and/ or having serious physical and mental illness/abnormalities was excluded.

Ethical Approval: Ethical approval (IERBID: 2021-01DOFCS) was obtained by the ethical committee of University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India.

Tools of the study: Predesigned pretested proforma was used as primary tool for this study. Following information was recorded with this tool: [A] Knowledge of subjects of fast foods [B] Opinion of subjects regarding fast food consumption [C] Subject's consumption pattern of fast food.

Techniques of the study: Information pertaining to demographic and socio economic characteristics, knowledge of fast food, its adverse effect on physical as well as mental health and their fast food consumption pattern in terms of frequency of fast food consumption and visit to fast food restaurants etc. was recorded by interviewing them. Modified BG Prasad classification was used for socio economic classification of subjects⁵. Cross tables were generated to find out associates of knowledge, opinion and consumption pattern of fast food.

Analysis of data: Data was entered in personal computer and analyzed with the help of excel and software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. For inferential purpose chi square test was applied and $p < 0.05$ was taken for statistical significance.

RESULTS

General Characteristics: Out of 213 subjects, 43.7% and 56.3% were male and female subjects, respectively; 41.3% subjects were from the age group of 18-19 years. As much as 54.8% male and 30.8% female were from the age group of 18-19 years; corresponding values for subjects from the age group 16-17 years were 16.1% and 20.8%. Majority (98.6%) subjects were from Hindu religion; rest 1.4% was Muslims. As much as 15.7%; 64.8% and 19.5% Hindu subjects belonged to Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST), Other

Backward Caste (OBC) and other caste category, respectively. Nearly half (52.6%) of the subjects were from nuclear family. The main occupation of 16.4% and 17.8% subject's father was farming and service, respectively. Mother of 84.0% subjects was home maker. Father of 60.6% and mother of 34.7% subjects had literacy status as graduation and above. As per modified BG Prasad classification as much as 46.5% subjects were from social class I and II. Fifty five (27.8%) subjects were in disadvantage position as they were from social class IV and V (Table 1).

Table 1: General characteristics of study subjects

Particulars	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	93	43.7
Female	120	56.3
Age		
10-11	28	13.1
12-13	29	13.6
14-15	28	13.1
16-17	40	18.7
18-19	88	41.3
Religion		
Hindu	210	98.6
Muslim	3	1.4
Caste		
SC/ST	33	15.5
OBC	137	64.3
Others	43	20.2
Type of Family		
Joint	101	47.4
Nuclear	112	52.6
Main occupation of Father		
Farmer	35	16.4
Teacher	20	9.4
Policeman	18	8.5
Shopkeeper	50	23.5
Gardener	8	3.8
Businessman	28	13.1
Others	54	25.4
Main occupation of Mother		
Housewife	179	84.0
Teacher	6	2.8
Gardener	5	2.3
Shopkeeper	5	2.3
Aaganwadi worker	9	4.2
Others	4	1.9
Education of Father		
Primary	7	3.3
High school	36	16.9
Intermediate	41	19.2

Particulars	Number	Percent
Graduation	105	49.3
Post-Graduation	24	11.3
Education of Mother		
Primary	11	5.2
High school	78	36.6
Intermediate	50	24.3
Graduation	61	28.6
Post-Graduation	13	6.1
Socio economic status		
I	13	6.1
II	86	40.4
III	59	27.7
IV	44	20.6
V	11	5.2

Subject’s knowledge and opinion about fast food: Two hundred and twelve (99.5%) subjects were aware about fast foods; nearly 6 out of 10 (58.7%) subjects were knowledgeable about all essential nutrients of fast foods. As much as 40.4% subjects agreed to the statement “Fast foods fulfil hunger” whereas, 62.4% subjects felt energetic after eating fast food. As much as 87.8% and 5.2% subjects were aware regarding ingredients and

nutritional information of each of fast food being consumed by them. One hundred and sixty seven (78.4%) subjects were not aware about ingredients present in fast foods can affect body. According to 14.1% subjects trans-fat present in fast foods can affect body. As much as 92.5% and 5.2% subjects were aware of diseases due to consumption of fast food certainly and absolutely, respectively. Obesity, feeling fatigue, dental caries, obesity and feeling of fatigue, feeling of fatigue and dental caries and obesity + growth retardation were considered as effect of consumption of fast food on physical health by 9.5%, 19.7%, 7.0%, 8.0%, 7.5% and 9.5% subjects, respectively. Weak memory, depression, low Intelligence Quotient (IQ) in children and depression plus low IQ in children were stated as the effect of fast food consumption on mental health by 9.9%, 13.1%, 30.5% and 15.5% subjects, respectively (Figure 1). Eighty four (39.4%) subjects were neutral on the statement “Taking fast food depends on the emotions” whereas 59.7% subjects agreed with this statement (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Effect of fast food consumption on mental health (N=180)

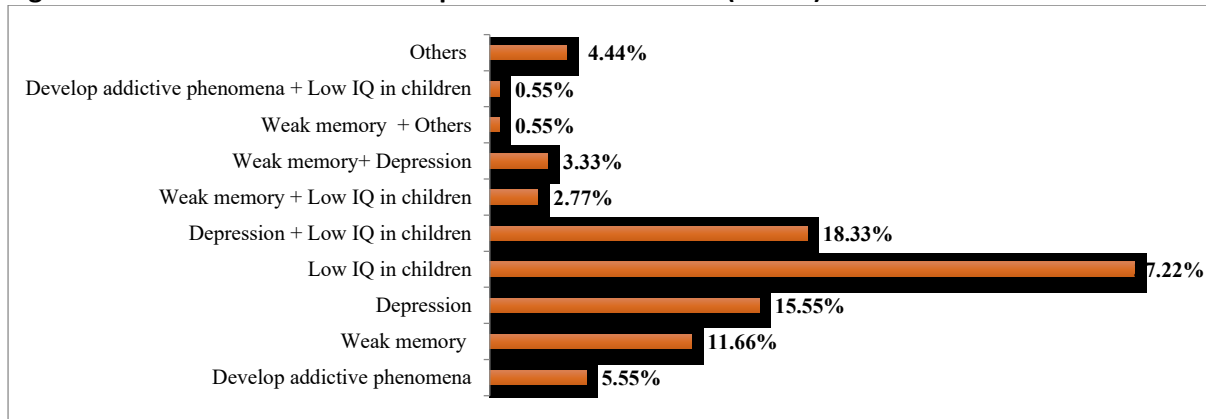


Figure 2: Opinion: "Consumption of fast food depends on emotion"



Consumption pattern of fast food by subjects:

In all 84.0% subjects consumed fast food in the previous month. In case of 69.0% and 23.9% subjects frequency of visit to fast food restaurant was 1-2 and 3-4 times within a week, respectively. Frequency of consumption of fast food in a week was 1-2, 3-4 and ≥ 5 in 37.1%, 54.9% and 7.5% subjects, respectively. One hundred thirty three (62.4%) subjects' visited fast food restaurant for snack. Choice of fast foods based on nutrition information was done most of the time by 5.6% subjects. In case of 16.0%, 39.9% and 30.5% subject's time of eating of fast food were between 11 a.m. and 2.0 pm, between 2 pm and 6 pm and between 6 pm and 10 pm, respectively. Advertisement (4.7%), enjoyment due to taste (27.2%), lack of cooking skill (2.8%), eating with friends (3.3%), peer pressure (5.6%) and temptation (3.3%) were recorded as most prominent reasons for choosing to eat fast

foods by the subjects, whereas, 50.2% subjects had more than one reasons for choosing to eat fast foods.

Associates of knowledge, opinion and consumption of subjects about fast food:

There existed no significant ($p > 0.05$) association of knowledge of fast food with age, gender, religion, caste, type of family and social class of study subjects. As much as 47.5% and 70.5% subjects from joint and nuclear families, respectively, stated that fast foods fulfill hunger ($P < 0.01$). As much as 92.3%, 58.1% and 69.5% subjects from upper, upper middle and middle class were of the opinion that fast foods fulfill hunger; corresponding value for subjects from lower middle and lower class were 50.0% and 18.2%. There existed significant association ($P < 0.01$) of this opinion with social class of subjects (Table 2).

Table 2 Associates of opinion of subjects regarding fast foods fulfill hunger

Particulars	Yes		No		Total		Test of significance
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Age (years)							
10-11	17	60.7	11	39.3	28	100.0	$\chi^2=8.72$; df = 4; P = 0.07
12-13	14	48.3	15	51.7	29	100.0	
14-15	13	46.4	15	53.6	28	100.0	
16-17	21	52.5	19	47.5	40	100.0	
18-19	62	70.5	26	29.5	88	100.0	
Gender							
Male	57	61.3	36	38.7	93	100.0	$\chi^2= 0.19$; df = 1; P = 0.66
Female	70	58.3	50	41.7	120	100.0	
Education							
Primary	15	60.0	10	40.0	25	100.0	$\chi^2=12.20$; df = 4; P = 0.02
Junior	25	49.0	26	51.0	51	100.0	
High school	8	57.1	6	42.9	14	100.0	
Intermediate	23	47.9	25	52.1	48	100.0	
Pursuing Graduation	56	74.7	19	25.3	75	100.0	
Type of family							
Joint	48	47.5	53	42.5	101	100.0	$\chi^2 =11.68$; df = 1; P = 0.00
Nuclear	79	70.5	33	29.5	112	100.0	
Social Class							
I	12	92.3	1	7.7	13	100.0	$\chi^2= 17.77$; df = 4; P = 0.00
II	50	58.1	36	41.9	86	100.0	
III	41	69.5	18	30.5	59	100.0	
IV	22	50.0	22	50.0	44	100.0	
V	2	18.2	9	81.8	11	100.0	

Opinion of subjects regarding "Feel energetic after eating fast food" was significantly associated with their gender, type of family

and social class ($P < 0.05$). Maximum male (74.2%), subjects from nuclear family (71.4%) and upper and upper middle class (69.7%) had

this opinion (Table 3). Consumption of fast food (Table 4) was significantly ($P < 0.01$) more in subjects from nuclear (92.0%) than joint family (75.2%). As much as 92.3%, 96.5% and 84.7% subjects from upper, upper middle, and

middle class subjects consumed fast food; corresponding value for subjects from lower middle and lower class was 70.5% and 27.3% ($P < 0.01$).

Table 3 Associates of opinion of subjects on felt energetic after eating fast foods

Particulars	Yes		No		Total		Test of significance
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Age (years)							
10-11	20	71.4	8	28.6	28	100.0	$\chi^2 = 3.77$; df = 4; p = 0.44
12-13	15	51.7	14	48.3	29	100.0	
14-15	15	53.6	13	46.4	28	100.0	
16-17	25	62.5	15	37.5	28	100.0	
18-19	58	65.9	30	34.1	88	100.0	
Gender							
Male	69	74.2	24	25.8	93	100.0	$\chi^2 = 9.72$; df = 1; p = 0.00
Female	64	53.3	56	46.7	46.7	100.0	
Education							
Primary	19	76.0	6	24.0	25	100.0	$\chi^2 = 6.56$; df = 4; p = 0.16
Junior	28	54.9	23	45.1	51	100.0	
High school	6	42.9	8	57.1	14	100.0	
Intermediate	29	60.4	19	39.6	48	100.0	
Pursing Graduation	51	68.0	24	32.0	75	100.0	
Type of family							
Joint	53	52.5	48	47.5	101	100.0	$\chi^2 = 8.13$; df = 1; p = 0.00
Nuclear	80	71.4	32	28.6	112	100.0	
Social Class							
I	9	69.2	4	30.8	13	100.0	$\chi^2 = 11.68$; df = 4; P = 0.02
II	60	69.8	26	30.2	86	100.0	
III	35	59.3	24	40.7	59	100.0	
IV	27	61.4	17	38.6	44	100.0	
V	2	18.2	9	81.8	11	100.0	

Table 4 Associates of consumption of fast food by study subjects:

Particulars	Yes		No		Total		Test of significance
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Age (years)							
10-11	24	85.7	4	14.3	28	100.0	$\chi^2 = 33.0$; df = 4; P = 0.99
12-13	24	82.8	5	17.2	29	100.0	
14-15	23	82.1	5	17.9	28	100.0	
16-17	33	82.5	7	17.5	40	100.0	
18-19	75	85.2	13	14.8	88	100.0	
Gender							
Male	80	86.0	13	14.0	93	100.0	$\chi^2 = 0.48$; df = 1; P = 0.49
Female	99	82.5	21	17.5	120	100.0	
Education							
Primary	22	88.0	3	12.0	25	100.0	$\chi^2 = 6.28$; df = 4; P = 0.18
Junior	44	86.3	7	13.7	51	100.0	
High school	9	64.3	5	35.7	14	100.0	
Intermediate	38	79.2	10	20.8	48	100.0	
Pursuing Graduation	66	88.0	9	12.0	75	100.0	
Type of family							
Joint	76	75.2	25	24.8	101	100.0	$\chi^2 = 11.06$; df = 1; P = 0.00
Nuclear	103	92.0	9	8.0	112	100.0	
Social Class							

Particulars	Yes		No		Total		Test of significance
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Upper Class	12	92.3	1	7.7	13	100.0	$\chi^2 = 43.13$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.00$
Upper middle class	83	96.5	3	3.5	86	100.0	
Middle class	50	84.7	9	15.3	59	100.0	
Lower middle class	31	70.5	13	29.5	44	100.0	
Lower class	3	27.3	8	72.7	11	100.0	

DISCUSSION

In this study almost all subjects had knowledge about fast foods. Seven out of 8 subjects received information about fast foods from single sources. Advertisement, peers and restaurant visits served as source of information about fast foods in 1 out of 5, 1 out of 23 and 3 out of 10 subjects, respectively. A study from rural Karnataka also reported that nearly 9 out of 10 subjects were influenced by the television and commercials for consumption of fast foods(6).

Nearly 6 out of 10 subjects had knowledge about all essential nutrients of fast foods. According to 4 out of 10 subjects fast food fulfill hunger whereas, 5 out of 8 subjects felt energetic after eating fast food. Nearly 7 out of 8 subjects were aware about ingredients of fast food being consumed by them signifying thereby that awareness of subjects about ingredients of fast foods was quite high. Nearly 4 out of 5 subjects were ignorant about the fact that ingredients present in fast food can affect body. One out of 7 subjects stated that trans fat present in the fast food can affect body. A study from Kashmir also reported that nearly 7 out of 10 subjects know fast food have high saturated fat content, whereas 5 out of 10 stated that high cholesterol level present in the fast foods(7). High level of awareness prevailed in the study subjects about diseases due to consumption of fast foods. Only 1 out of 43 subjects was not aware of disease due to consumption of fast foods. Contrary to this finding less awareness (3 out of 10) of subjects about disease due to consumption of fast food has been reported by a study from rural Karnataka(6). Knowledge of subjects regarding adverse consequences of fast food consumption on physical health is quite perturbing. Inconsistent to this finding a study from Kashmir reported that more than half of the respondents disagreed with the view that fast food consumption predisposes one to

developing NCDs(7). In all 9 out of 20 subjects stated depression as the effect of fast food consumption. One out of 10 subjects expressed that fast food consumption may lead to weak memory (Figure 1). Six out of 10 subjects strongly agreed/ agreed with the statement that consumption of fast foods depends upon the emotion of the individuals. Influence of emotional status on fast food consumption has been also substantiated in rural Karnataka(6).

Fast food culture is vigorously uprising trend among the youngsters(8). Seventeen out of 20 subjects consumed fast foods. A study from rural Himanchal Pradesh reported high prevalence (4 out of 10) of consumption of junk foods among school aged children during the last 24 hours(9). Nearly 7 out 20 subjects consumed fast foods twice in week whereas frequency of consumption of fast food was thrice in week in 1 out of 6 subjects, whereas, it was once in 15 days in 1 out 5 subjects. Three out of 10 subjects consumed fast foods once in month. The frequency of consumption of junk foods twice in a week among rural children was less (nearly 1 out of 4) in comparison to this study, whereas frequency of consumption of junk food more than twice a week is same(6). Fast food is consumed by nearly 6 out of 10 subjects as twice in a week has been reported by study from Kashmir(7). A multi country study from 36 countries reported nearly 4 out of 10 children and 10 out of 100 adolescents consumed fast foods frequently (once/ twice a week) and very frequently (three or more per week)(10).

As far as pattern of consumption of fast food is concerned, the commonest pattern has been its consumption as snacks (3 out of 5) followed by as lunch (3 out of 17). In case of 4 out of 10 subject's time of consumption of fast foods was between 2 pm to 6 pm whereas 3 out of 10 subjects consumed between 6 pm to 10 pm.

Half of the subjects stated single reason for choosing to eat fast foods. Taste alone or in combination was the predominant reason for consumption of fast foods. This is consistent with the earlier research work which reported that nearly 9 out of 10 subjects liking junk foods because of delicious taste⁵. Majority (7 out of 10) of subjects had opinion that choice of fast foods is rarely influenced by nutrition information whereas 1 out of 20 subjects stated that it happens most of the time.

None of the socio demographic variables (viz; age, gender, religion, caste, marital status, education, occupation, type of family and social class) were significantly ($p > 0.05$) associated with knowledge of the subjects about fast food. As far as caste is concerned, as much as 97 out of 100 subjects from SC/ST had knowledge about fast food. In contrast to this all OBC and subjects belonging to other caste category had knowledge about fast food ($p > 0.05$).

Six out of 10 subjects from the age group 10-11 years and 7 out of 10 from 18-19 years expressed that fast food fulfil hunger. Education, type of the family and social class were the significant ($p < 0.05$) associates of opinion of the subjects that fast food fulfil hunger. Six out of 10 primary educated and 3 out of 4 subjects with graduation were of the opinion that fast foods fulfil hunger. Nearly 9 out of 20 subjects from joint family and 7 out of 10 from nuclear family were of opinion that fast food fulfils hunger. "Fast foods fulfil hunger" was expressed by about 9 out of 10 subjects from social class I whereas 2 out of 11 subjects from social class V supported this view.

Significant associates of feeling energetic after eating fast food by study subjects were gender, type of family and social class. Three out of 4 male and 8 out of 15 female subjects felt energetic after eating fast food. Nearly half of the subjects from joint family and 7 out of 10 subjects from social class I & II and 2 out of 11 subjects from social class V also felt energetic after consuming fast foods. Age, religion, caste, marital status, education and occupation emerged as non-significant ($p > 0.05$) associates of feeling energetic after

eating fast food by the subjects. Among the various socio demographic variables, type of family and social class emerged as significant associates of consumption of fast foods ($p < 0.01$). There existed no significant ($p > 0.05$) association of age, gender religion, caste, marital status, education and occupation of study subjects. This study revealed that 3 out of 4 subjects from joint and 12 out of 13 subjects from nuclear families consumed fast foods. As much as 12 out of 13 upper class, 19 out of 20 upper middle and 3 out of 11 subjects from lower class consumed fast foods. In consonance with this finding a study from rural Himanchal Pradesh⁹ also reported that the Junk Food consumption was higher in the, upper (5 out of 10) and middle (4 out of 10) Socio Economic Status whereas, least in low Socio Economic Status (6%).

Novelty of the Study: The findings of the study reveals that fast food culture has taken root in the rural Prayagraj. Besides giving an overview of dietary habit and fast food related information in terms of knowledge, opinion and consumption of fast foods by subjects, this study provides information about factors influencing them thus this study gives significant inputs for designing an interventional strategy for reducing menace of fast food consumption and emphasizes on focus attention on risk groups.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the subjects had knowledge about fast foods and 17 out of 20 subjects consumed fast food in the previous month. Socio economic gradient prevailed in the expression of the opinions "the fast food fulfill hunger" and "feel energetic after eating fast food" as well as consumption of fast food by subjects. This calls for education of family members by health and related sectors about adverse effect of fast food consumption. This should be supplemented by community awareness campaigns. Further nutritional counselling should be done by health and ICDS workers. Prioritization of these activities for at risk group are likely to pay more dividend. Legislative approach should be strictly adhered

for regulation of marketing of fast food in rural areas.

RECOMMENDATION

In order to cut down transformation of fast food culture in rural areas regress implementation of legislative approaches is recommended. Behavioural change communication by different stake holders (viz., health, education, social sectors) is desired for reversal of fast food consumption by adolescents in rural areas. Instead of blanket approach, activities should be focused on at risk groups.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

For an effective strategy to combat menace of fast food many facets in terms of physical and mental health, quantification of fast food consumed etc. are not explored due to limitation of time for study. Multi-centric and prospective studies are warranted to have better insight.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study fulfils the prevailing gaps in rural areas regarding knowledge, opinion and consumption of fast food and their associates. It makes an evidence that fast food culture has moved from urban to rural areas as well. Prevailing socioeconomic gradient in opinion and consumption pattern of fast food obtained in this study provides strategic inputs and emphasizes on focused attention and targeting activities for curbing fast food menace.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

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Nil

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest

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DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process

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