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A STUDY ON FAST FOOD PREFERENCE AND NUTRITIONAL STATUS ASSESSMENT IN THE YOUTH OF HYDERABAD

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Fast food refers to foods containing high amount of fat, sugar and salt but low in nutrients like protein, vitamins, and minerals. Adolescence is a time when rate of physical growth rapidly increases. Poor nutrition during this stage has adverse effect on cognitive development, resulting in decreased learning capacity. The harmful effect of fast food includes increased cholesterol level, cardiac problem, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and dental carries. The aim of this study was to know the preference of fast foods among adolescents in relation to their ill effects. The study was conducted among students of schools and colleges (n = 100) in Hyderabad city, between the age of 13-18 yrs. The information was collected using a questionnaire. The data collected shows that about 96% of adolescents consume fast food. The appeal for consuming was its taste. Most adolescents consume fast food during evening time, usually replacing a meal and consume it in company of their peers. Influence of advertisement and frequency of consuming fast foods was found to be more among females (n = 40%, 22%) rather than males (n = 19%, 3%) respectively. There is need for every individual in the society to be educated about such foods and their impact on a child's health.

Keywords: Fast food, Adolescent, Health problems, Poor nutrition, Dietary behavior

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the only time following infancy when the rate of physical growth is rapid. This sharp growth spurt is linked with hormonal, cognitive and emotional changes making adolescence an especially vulnerable period of life. During this stage, inadequate nutrition tends to have lasting result on an adolescent's cognitive development, resulting in decreased learning ability, poor concentration and impaired academic performance (Geeta Arya and Sunita Mishra, 2013).

Fast food denotes to food which is prepared and served quickly at outlets called fast food restaurant (Naheed Vaida, 2013). Teenagers are frequent visitors to fast food restaurants, different store and the visits occur immediately

after school. Fast Food is usually referred to burgers, pizza, French fries or any kind of food that can be prepared and served quickly at low price (Ranjit Kaur *et al.*, 2017). Fast food is often highly prepared in a commercial fashion, i.e., with standard ingredients and methodical and standardized cooking and production methods. To minimize cost, it is usually served in cartons or bags or in a plastic wrapping. This mainly affects the nutritive adequacy of the diet for those who eat a meal or snack in a fast food restaurant on a daily basis. But for workers and teenagers who might eat a meal once or twice in week at these places, the nutritive contributions must be carefully considered.

Eating Burger and Pizza increases cholesterol in human body. This leads to excess accumulation of unwarranted fat

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in human body which is highly dangerous for heart. Drinking soft drinks persistently aids in depositing toxins in human body. It affects the essential parts such as bone, skin and kidney. Excess fats and oils along with added spices in such foods can act as an irritant to gastric mucosa causing excess secretion of hydrochloric acid, leading in gastritis (Ashakiran and Deepthi, 2012).

Several aspects have contributed to this astounding increase in the use of fast food, including a greater number of working women, double-career families and an aging population. Fast foods meet the needs of many people because they are quick, reasonably priced and readily available. Currently these restaurants are acknowledging the health concerns of their customers by reforming some of their practices, such as continued trend towards the use of vegetable oils in replacing animal fats for frying, a boost in the number of low-fat menu items, and more fruits and vegetables available at salad bars. Food industry analysts even predict a future of increasing home delivery services, high-quality vending machine foods and ready to eat packages for microwave equipped homes. Adolescence is the time of rapid growth and development in life where nutrient needs are at the peak. Imprudence of taking such diet in this age has repercussions on the future health. High intake of fat, cholesterol and salt is associated with heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis and diabetes.

Children rapidly seem to have stepped into a world of fast foods and vending machines, completely unaware of the depredation they are causing for themselves and the impact on their health. Corresponding eating habits in such age has a great impact on the growth and furthermore affects the concentration, emotions and behaviour of the child. With vast majority of women bearing school children are working class which has led to leaving behind the traditional foods at home and offering of fast foods by parents to their children. The recurrent scenario noticed in most homes is that of a child who returns from school seats himself in front of the television, staunchly accompanied by a bowl of cereal (or) a packet of chips and a can of soda. Such nutritionally inadequate foods tend to become quickly addictive and can sow the seeds of infirmity and incapacitating disease, which ultimately leads to many irrepressible diseases.

Psycho-social changes, such as the adolescent's quest for individuality and identity, concern for appearance and active social lifestyle can have a strong impact on nutrients intake and food choices. There are manifold psychological,

physical and economic consequences of childhood obesity. As today's children are the citizens of tomorrow, there is a desperate need to acknowledge such issues affecting their health (Lt Col Mercy Antony and Lt Col R K Bhatti, 2015). Hence there is a severe need to educate every individual parent in the society about such foods and their associated impacts on their children's health and can help take care to avoid them judiciously.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A study was done on preference of Fast food and Nutritional Status Assessment of youth in Hyderabad. All the students in eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh grade were selected from each school.

Selection of Sample

The sample consists of total of 100 subjects. The target population identified was teenagers between the age group of 13 to 18 yrs studying in VII to XI class.

Tools and Techniques:

A questionnaire is used to collect information about preference of fast food by adolescents. Each question was read out and explained to participants. Two types of information is collected through questionnaire, General information like Name, Age, Height, Weight and Educational status and specific information like reason for consumption, frequency of consumption, time of consumption, influence of advertisement, health problems and knowledge about fast food. After collection of data, the descriptive statistics used are frequency and percentage. Any significance was determined by using chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was conducted on the student body of 100 pupils ($n = 100$). Out of which 45 were males and 55 were females. Majority of students (73%) belong to middle class socio-economic group and 27% belonged to higher socio-economic group. The following Figures (Figures 1-9) portray the results found during the study.

The above graph gives the reason for consumption of fast food. Because of the taste 36% percent of males and 43% of females consume fast food. About 2% of males and 3% of females consume fast food because it is inexpensive whereas 7% of males and 9% of females consume fast food as it attractive.

Figure 1: Reasons for Consumption of Fast Food

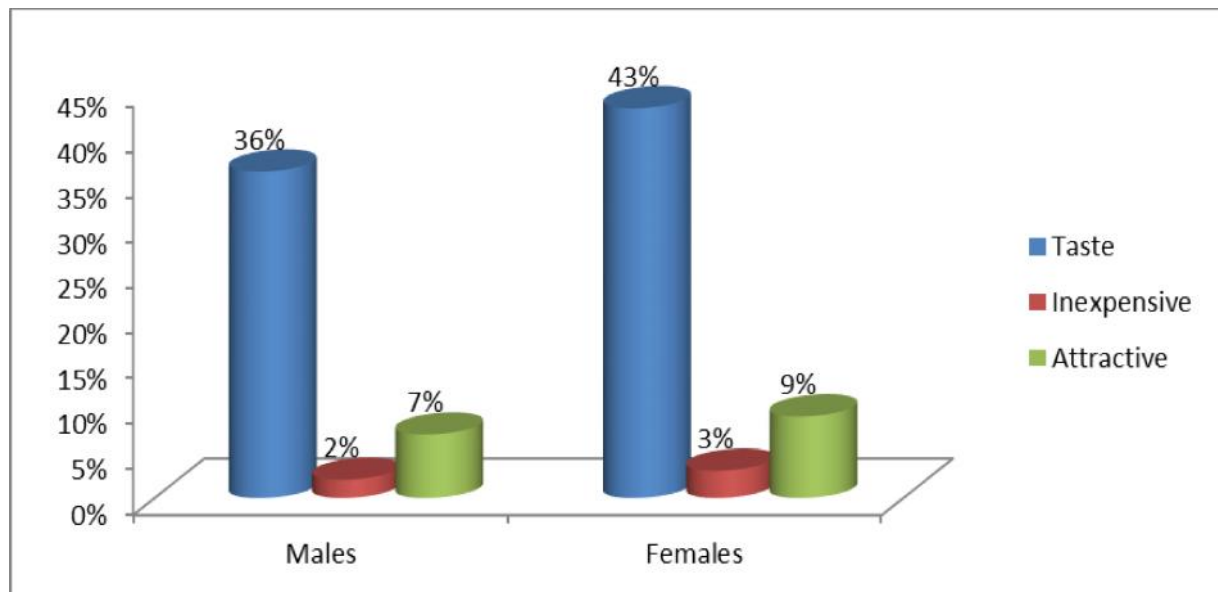
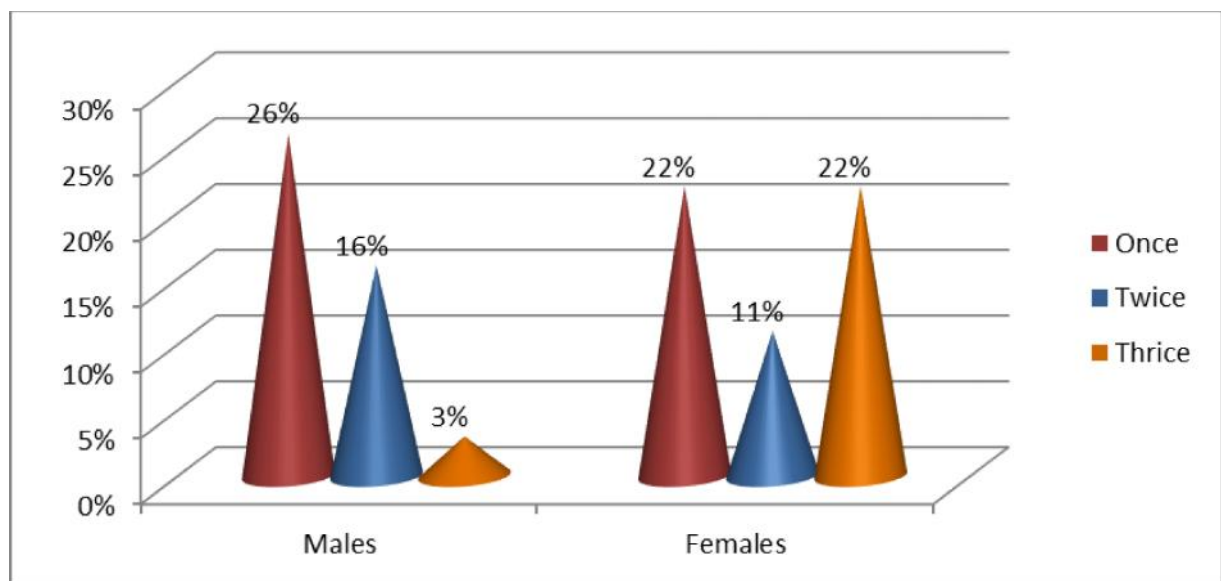


Figure 2: Frequency of Consumption Within a Week



The above graph shows the frequency of consumption of fast food. 26% of males and 22% of females consume fast food once in a week. About 16% of males and 11% of females consume fast food twice weekly, whereas 3% of males and 22% of females consume fast food thrice weekly.

The above graph shows the preference of drinks by adolescents when they are thirsty. About 33% of males and 47% of females drink water when they are thirsty, while 12% of males and 8% of females prefer to drink cold drink when they are thirsty.

Figure 3: Preference of Drink When Thirsty

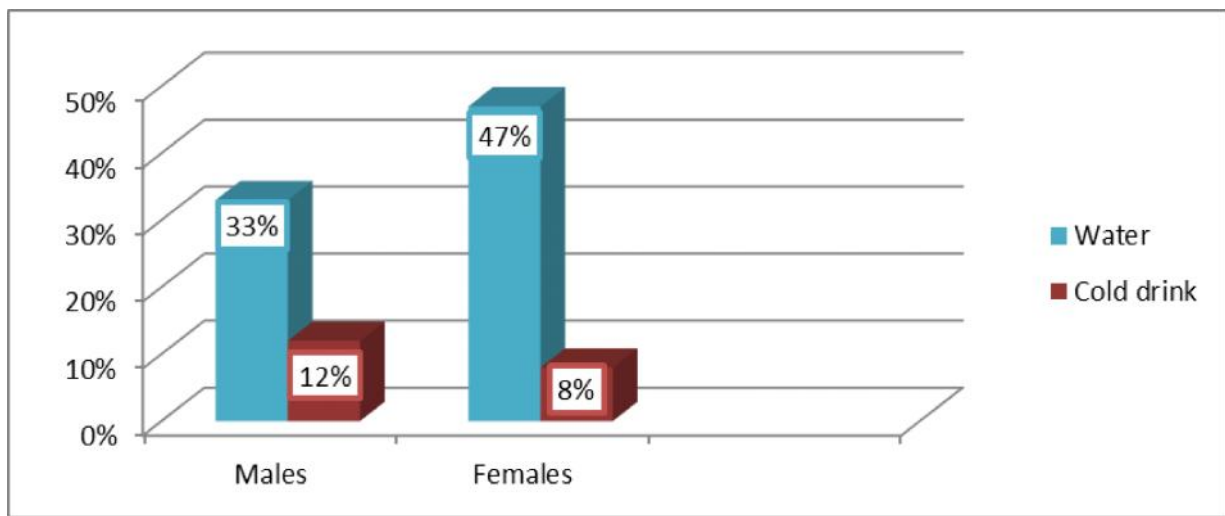
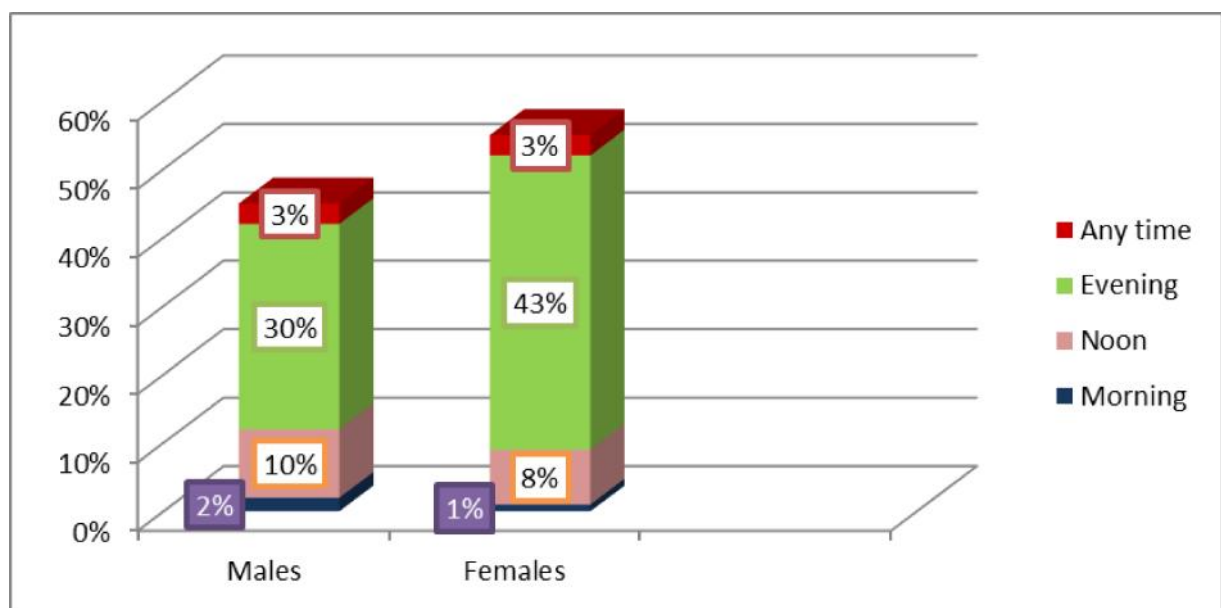


Figure 4: Time of Consumption



The above graph shows the time of consumption of fast food. 2% of males and 1% of female consume fast food during morning whereas 10% of males and 8% of females prefer to consume fast food in noon. About 30% of males and 43% of females tend to consume fast food during evening, while 3% of males and 3% of females prefer to consume fast food at any time of the day.

The above graph shows the preference of fast food. 5% of males and 4% of females like to consume burgers, whereas 8% of males and 11% of females prefer to eat pizza. About 12% of males and 18% of females prefer to eat shawarma, while 16% of males and 18% of females prefer to consume noodle. But only 4% of males and 4% of females like to eat French fries.

Figure 5: Preference of Type of Fast Food

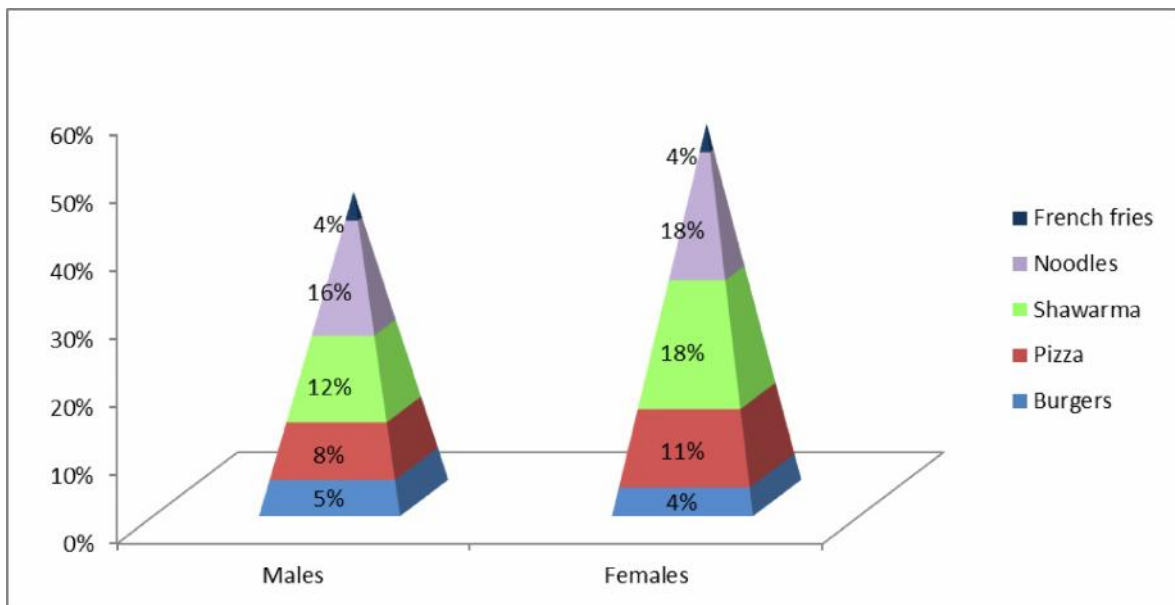
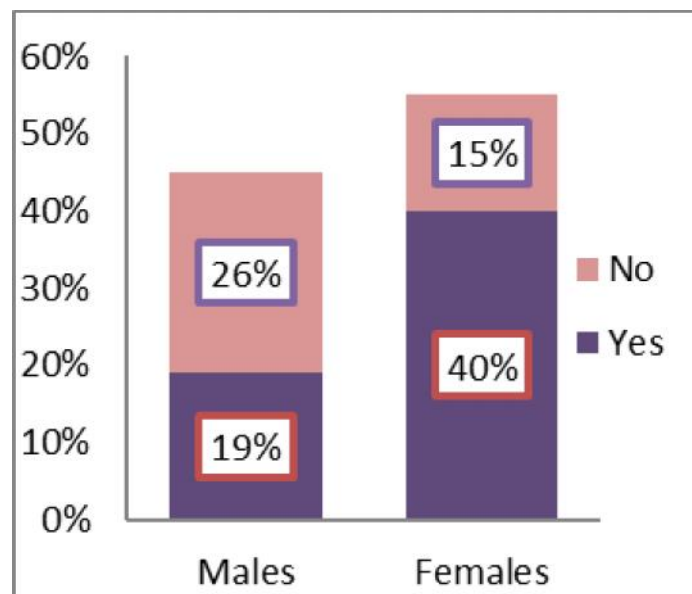


Figure 6: Influence of Advertisement



This above graph shows the influence of advertisement. About 19% of males and 40% of females think that advertisements influence their fast food eating behavior, whereas 26% of males and 15% of females claim they are not influenced by advertisements.

The above figure shows the health problem of adolescents. About 8% of males and 7% of females suffer from stress whereas 3% of males and 6% of females suffer from lack of concentration, while 5% of males and 8% of females complain of sleeplessness. About 2% of males and

Figure 7: Health Problems Faced by the Pupils

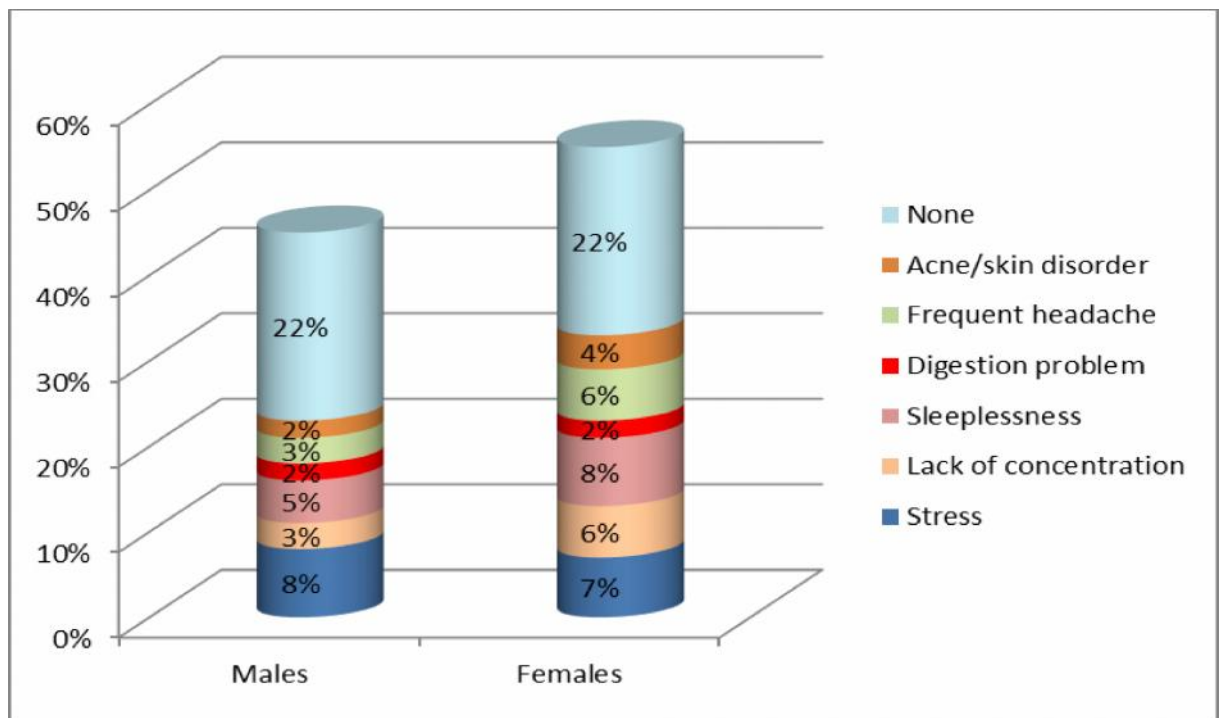


Figure 8: Knowledge of Adverse Effects of Fast Food

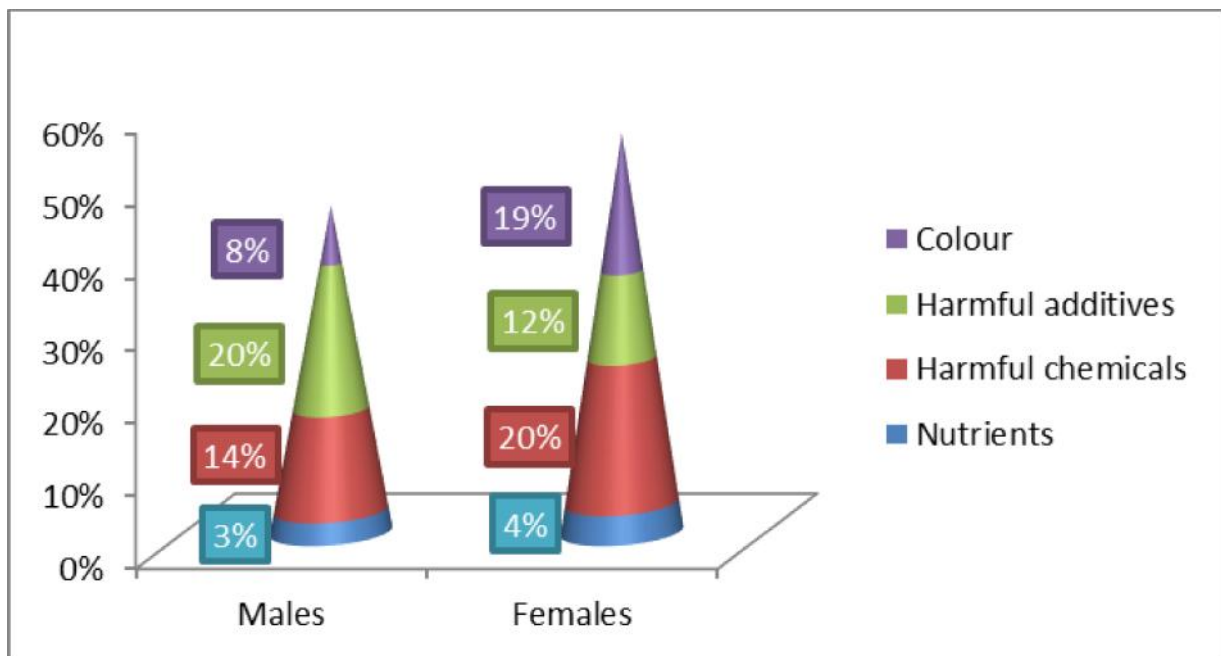
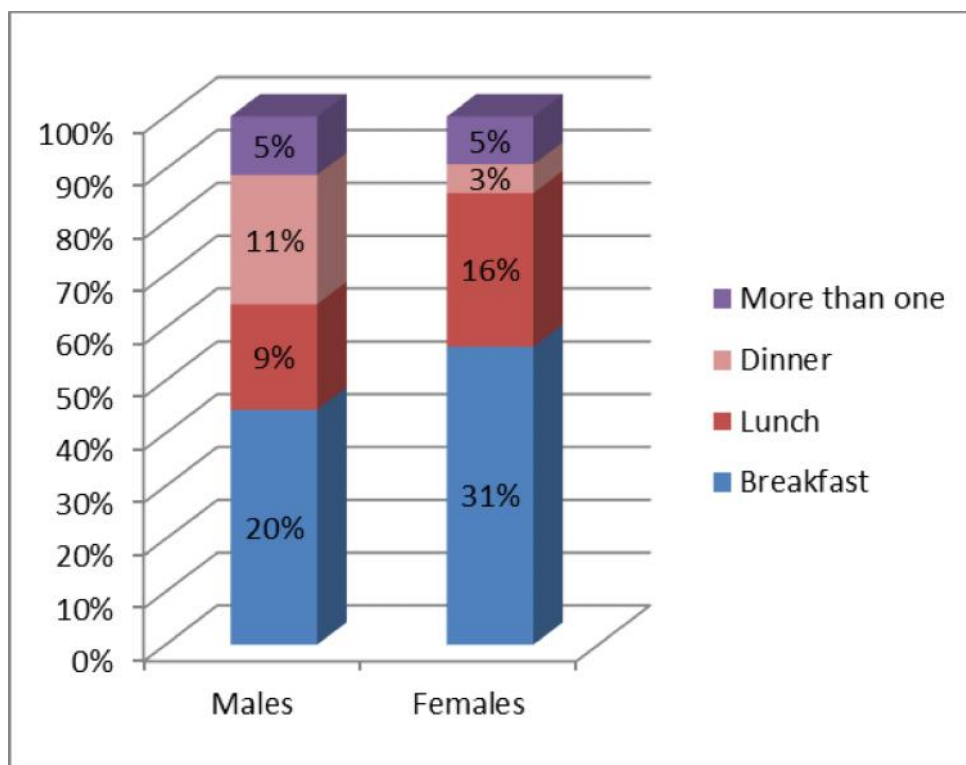


Figure 9: Skipping Meals



2% of females suffer from digestion problem. 3% of males and 6% of females suffer from frequent headache and 2% of males and 4% of females have acne and skin disorders. But 22% of males and 22% of females had no health problems.

The above graph shows the knowledge of fast food. About 3% of males and 4% of females say that fast food contain nutrients. Whereas 14% of males and 20% of females said that fast food contain harmful chemicals while 20% of males and 12% of females said that fast food contain harmful additives and 8% of males and 19% of females said that fast food contain color.

The above graph shows the skipping of meal by adolescents. About 20% of males and 31% of females skip breakfast whereas 9% of males and 16% of females skip lunch, while 11% of males and 3% of females skip dinner. But 5% of males and 5% of females skip more than one meal per day.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study indicates, the adolescents are aware that Fast Food is not healthy. The mostly consumed ready

to eat food items were: pizza, burger, shawarma, noodles and French fries along with soft drinks. These food items were consumed by most of the adolescence at least once in a week, some of them consume twice in a week but only few consume thrice in a week (Figure 9). Most of the males and females (n = 90) replace one meal with fast food per day. The adolescents mostly prefer to consume fast food in a group. The consumption of fast food was more when the adolescents are happy. Soft drinks were consumed by most of the males and females. Family members of most adolescents consume fast food and they prefer to eat in evening. Most of the adolescents were suffering from stress, lack of concentration, sleeplessness, digestion problem, frequent headache and acne or skin disorders. But 22% of males and females do not suffer from any health problem. Significant (P<0.05) association was found between the gender and frequency of consumption were females (n = 22) and males (n = 3) consume fast food thrice in a week. There was influence of advertisement more on females (n = 41) rather than males (n = 15). Most of the females (n = 31) rather than males (n = 20) were found to skip breakfast.

Consumption of fast food has increased rapidly among adolescents from all socioeconomic groups across the country. Fast food is universally available and greatly marketed to adolescents. Previous research has shown that fast food consumption among children affects diet quality in ways that would highly increase risk for obesity (Bowman *et al.*, 2004). Although the causes of obesity are manifold, public health measures to limit fast food consumption in children should be applied. Most of these measures include nutrition education campaigns, legislature to regulate marketing of fast food to children, and elimination of fast food from school premises.

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