

Consumption of junk food among school-going children

Dear Editor,

We read an intriguing article by Nancy *et al.*^[1] that discusses the reasons and solutions for unhealthy food consumption and physical inactivity among school-aged adolescents: A sequential mixed-methods study conducted in Puducherry, South India, states that 70.1% of students consumed unhealthy foods. I am writing to express my deep concern about the influence of junk food on school-going children. The prevalence of these consumables in proximity to educational institutions raises serious concern regarding the health and well-being of our younger generation. It is evident that the accessibility and marketing strategies employed by junk-food chains companies significantly impact the dietary habits of children. The convenience and attractive packaging often overshadow the adverse health effects associated with excessive consumption of these products. High levels of sugar, unhealthy fats, and lack of nutritional value in such food and beverages pose a significant risk to the physical health and development of our youth. Moreover, the regular consumption of these items contributes to the growing concerns surrounding childhood obesity, diabetes, and other health-related issues. The influence of these dietary choices on academic performance and overall well-being cannot be overlooked.

Based on research done in 2017, on second-year high school students in Rasht, Iran, snacks with sugar content (27.3%) were

Table 1: Food consumption pattern among males and females from various studies

Name of the Study	Male Proportion	Female Proportion	Food Consumed (Maximum)
Research conducted in Rasht, Iran by Leila Mirhadyan <i>et al.</i> ^[2]	163	178	Snacks with sugar content
Research is conducted on in Pokhara Valley, Nepal by Suraj Sujjan Bohara <i>et al.</i> ^[3]	258	280	Salty snacks, sweets, sweetened beverages
Research is conducted in Birgunj, Nepal by Pramila Poudel. ^[4]	208	102	Momo, Chawmin
Research conducted in rural Himachal Pradesh by Aakriti Gupta <i>et al.</i> ^[5]	68	85	Chips (71%), chocolate (14%), bakery products (13%), soft drinks (7%), and sugar-sweetened beverages (5%)

most popularly consumed more than four times per week or every day.^[2] In the Kaski district of Nepal, teenage adolescents participated in a study and it was discovered that over half of the participants (60.30%) had eaten junk food within the previous 30 days. Salty snacks were taken by more than half of the participants (58.7%), followed by sweets (57.5%).^[3] While in other study conducted in Birgunj, Nepal, a maximum of 65.5% of teenagers responded that junk food is unclean and unhealthy. Similarly, when compared to other meal items, 70.1% of respondents said that handmade cuisine is their favorite. In response, 48.9% said that their favorite junk food is fast food.^[4] According to another study among school-aged children who were living in rural Himachal Pradesh for the previous 24 hours had eaten junk food. Of the total number of children ($n = 153$) who ate junk food items, 44% ($n = 68$) were boys and 56% ($n = 85$) were girls. Between the two sexes, there was no statistically significant difference in junk food intake ($P = 0.052$).

Junk food consumption was lowest in low socioeconomic status (6%), lowest in medium socioeconomic status (45%), and highest in high socioeconomic status (48%).^[5] The gender comparison from various other studies is shown in Table 1

Thus, junk food is influencing the children. Early detection can prevent the occurrence of obesity, diabetes, and many other chronic diseases. It becomes important to understand their nutritional status and factors affecting them so that required interventions like lifestyle modifications can be started early to prevent the development of chronic diseases.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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