



Original Research Article

Knowledge Regarding the Harmful Impact of Junk Food Among Adolescents: A Descriptive Study from Dehradun, India

Article History:

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Abstract: Background: Increased consumption of junk food among adolescents is a growing public health concern, contributing to obesity and lifestyle-related diseases. **Objective:** To assess the level of knowledge regarding the harmful impact of junk food among adolescents in selected senior secondary schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand. **Methods:** A quantitative descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 60 adolescents selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using a validated self-structured knowledge questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** The majority of participants (95%) demonstrated an average level of knowledge, while only 5% showed good knowledge. No statistically significant association was found between knowledge level and selected socio-demographic variables ($p > 0.05$). **Conclusion:** Although basic awareness regarding junk food hazards exists among adolescents, in-depth understanding remains insufficient. Structured school-based nutrition education programs are essential to bridge knowledge gaps and promote healthy dietary practices.

Keywords: Junk food, Adolescents, Knowledge, Dietary habits, Health education.

INTRODUCTION

Junk food consumption has increased substantially among adolescents due to easy availability, aggressive marketing, and changing lifestyle patterns. These foods are typically high in fats, sugar, and salt while being low in essential nutrients, leading to obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and impaired cognitive performance. Adolescence is a critical period for establishing lifelong dietary habits; therefore, understanding their level of knowledge regarding junk food hazards is essential for designing effective preventive interventions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A descriptive study to assess the level of knowledge regarding harmful impact of junk food among adolescents in selected senior secondary school of Dehradun, Uttarakhand in a view to create an awareness program.

OBJECTIVES

- To assess the level of knowledge among adolescents regarding the harmful impact of junk food in selected Senior Secondary Schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- To determine the association between the level of knowledge with their selected socio-demographic variables.
- To create an awareness regarding the harmful impact of junk food among adolescents in selected senior secondary schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: There is a significant association between the level of knowledge regarding the harmful impact of junk food and selected socio-demographic variables among adolescents in selected Senior secondary

school of Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
Ho (Null Hypothesis) –

There is no significant association between the level of knowledge regarding the harmful impact of junk food and selected socio-demographic variables among adolescents in selected senior secondary school of Dehradun Uttarakhand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- Study Design: Descriptive cross-sectional study.
- Setting: Selected senior secondary schools of Dehradun, Uttarakhand,

India.

- Participants: Adolescents aged 16–18 years.
- Sample Size: 60 participants.
- Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling.
- Tool: Self-structured validated knowledge questionnaire (score range 0–30).
- Statistical Analysis: Descriptive statistics and chi-square test using significance level $p < 0.05$.
- Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval obtained; informed consent assured.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

SECTION-I

Table 2: Socio-demographic Profile of Adolescents in Selected Senior Secondary Schools of Dehradun.
N=20

S. No.	Variables	f	%
1.	Age (in years)		
	16	10	16.7
	17	15	25.0
	18	15	25.0
	19	20	33.3
2.	Gender		
	Female	28	46.7
	Male	32	53.3
3.	Area of Residence		
	Rural	34	56.7
	Urban	26	43.3
4.	Living status		
	Parents	51	85.0
	Relatives	9	15.0
5.	Family income		
	< 5000 Rs	15	25.0
	5000-10000 Rs	14	23.3
	10000-15000 Rs	17	28.3
	>15000 Rs	14	23.3
6.	Father's Occupation		
	Labor	25	41.7
	Private service	18	30.0
	Government service	4	6.7
	Business	13	21.7
7.	Mother's Occupation		
	House-Wife	44	73.3
	Government service	5	8.3
	Teacher	1	1.7
	Other	10	16.7
	Monthly Pocket Money		

8.	100-200 Rs	35	58.3
	200- 300 Rs	16	26.7
	300-400 Rs	7	11.7
	>400 Rs	2	3.3
9.	Previous knowledge		
	Yes	42	70.0
	No	18	30.0
10.	if yes than source of information		
	Mass media	29	48.3
	Friends	7	11.7
	Health professional	10	16.7
	Others	14	23.3

SECTION-II

Level of Knowledge Regarding the Harmful Impact of Junk Food Among Adolescents N=60

S. No.	Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Good	3	5%
2.	Average	57	95%
3.	Poor	0	0%

SECTION-III

Association Between the Level of Knowledge and Their Selected Socio-Demographic Variables. N=60

S. No.	Variables	Level of knowledge		χ^2 value	df	P value
		Good	Average			
1.	Age (in years)					
	16	2	8	6.667	3	0.070 ^{NS}
	17	1	14			
	18	0	15			
	19	0	20			
2.	Gender					
	Female	3	25	3.609	1	0.096 ^{NS}
	Male	0	32			
3.	Area of Residence					
	Rural	3	31	2.415	1	0.251 ^{NS}
	Urban	0	26			
4.	Living status					
	Parents	3	48	0.557	1	1.00 ^{NS}
	Relatives	0	9			
5.	Family income					
	< 5000 Rs	2	13	3.960	3	0.295 ^{NS}
	5000-10000 Rs	1	13			
	10000-15000 Rs	0	17			
	>15000 Rs	0	14			
	Father's Occupation					
	Labor	3	22	4.421	3	0.445 ^{NS}

6.	Private service	0	18			
	Government service	0	4			
	Business	0	13			
7.	Mother's Occupation					
	House-Wife	3	41	1.148	3	1.00 ^{NS}
	Government service	0	5			
	Teacher	0	1			
	Other	0	10			
8.	Monthly Pocket Money					
	100-200 Rs	3	32	2.256	3	0.722 ^{NS}
	200- 300 Rs	0	16			
	300-400 Rs	0	7			
	>400 Rs	0	2			
9.	Previous knowledge					
	Yes	3	39	1.353	1	0.547 ^{NS}
	No	0	18			
10.	if yes than source of information					
	Mass media	3	26	3.376	3	0.597 ^{NS}
	Friends	0	7			
	Health professional	0	10			
	Others	0	14			
NB: df= degree of freedom, χ^2 = Chi-square test, NS= Non-significant, Significant level $p < 0.05$.						

FINDINGS AND DISUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that none of the students (0%) had poor knowledge regarding junk food, indicating that all students possessed at least basic awareness. The majority of the students (95%) had average, while only a small proportion (5%) demonstrated good knowledge. The mean knowledge score was 16.65 with a standard deviation of 2.015 out of a maximum score of 60. These results indicate that although most students had some knowledge about junk food, only few had a comprehensive understanding of its harmful effects.

The findings reveal that although adolescents possess basic awareness regarding junk food hazards, comprehensive understanding of long-term health consequences remains limited. Similar trends have been reported in previous Indian and international studies, emphasizing the gap between awareness and behavioral change. The absence of significant associations between knowledge and socio-demographic variables suggests the need for universal

rather than targeted educational interventions.

CONCLUSION

Adolescents in the present study demonstrated moderate knowledge regarding the harmful impact of junk food. Implementation of structured nutrition education programs within school curricula is strongly recommended to enhance awareness and encourage healthy dietary behaviors.

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