



College Students' Fast Food Consumption: A Case Analysis in Madurai

 V.Murugesan^{1*}  Dr. M. Mahendraprabu²  Dr. G. Kalaiyarasan³

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India.

³Senior Professor and Head of the Department, Department of Education, Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, India.

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*Corresponding Author: murugesprabu87@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examines to explore the demographic characteristics of college students in Madurai. The investigation aims to determine the connection between consumption of fast food behavior (dependent variable) and variables such as taste, convenience, advertisement, and eating habits (independent variables). A quantitative case study was conducted, with questionnaires distributed to 144 college students, of which 60 were completed (a response rate of 41.67%). Data collection occurred between August and September 2024 using a structured questionnaire with 22 items assessed on a five-point Likert scale. Analysis was conducted with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics version 29, descriptive and inferential statistics including chi-square tests and regression analysis. The demographic breakdown showed that 73.33% of respondents were female, and 43.33% were aged between 17-20 years. Chi-square tests indicated that consumption of fast food behavior was significantly correlated with age ($p = 0.000$), pocket money ($p = 0.000$), and educational qualification ($p = 0.017$), but not with gender ($p = 0.237$). Regression analysis identified taste and advertisement as strong predictors of consumption of fast food behavior, with an adjusted R^2 of 1.000. According to the study, age, pocket money, and taste play a major role in fast food conception, while gender and educational qualifications were not as influential. Contrary to expectations, convenience and eating habits were not significant predictors, with only taste and advertisement showing a strong influence on consumption behavior. The findings reveal a rise in the consumption of fast food, primarily driven this taste preferences and financial capacity. Despite the health risks, the number of people eating fast food is on the rise, underscoring the necessity of awareness programs and policy initiatives to address this issue among college students.

Keywords: *Fast Food, College Students, Consumption Behavior, Taste Preference, Advertisement Influence.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

The consumption of fast food has a significant part of modern existence, especially for college students who often seek quick, affordable, and tasty meal options. The global expansion of the fast food sector's worldwide growth, particularly in India, it has significantly influenced eating habits, especially in urban areas like Madurai. College students are attracted to fast food due to its convenience, affordability, and the social aspect of dining with friends. However, the consumption of fast food frequently is linked to various health risks, like obesity, poor nutrition and a higher likelihood of chronic diseases like cardiovascular issues. In India, increasing fast food consumption reflects broader socio-economic changes, including urbanization, hectic academic schedules, and evolving dining norms. College students, in particular, are vulnerable to the appeal of fast food, often valuing convenience and taste over nutrition. Although many students understand the potential health hazard, regular consumption continues, suggesting disconnect between knowledge and behavior. This research investigates the fast food consumption habits students attending college in Madurai, focusing on factors like taste, convenience, advertising, and eating habits. The aim of the study is to better understand the execs behind fast food consumption and inform strategies for promoting healthier eating habits among students.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The consumption of fast food by college students has become a growing issue, especially when considering its health implications. Research from various regions underscores the rising preference for fast food is popular due to factors such as convenience, taste, affordability and social influences. In India, the fast food industry has rapidly grown, particularly among the youth, including college students, who are increasingly drawn to fast food due to the fast-paced lifestyle and the cultural shift toward dining out (Goyal & Singh, 2007; Anitharaj, 2018). The nutritional profile of fast food is typically characterized by high levels of fats, sugars and sodium, and a lack of essential nutrients like vitamins and fiber, leading to various health issues. Several studies have found a strong link between regular fast food consumption and increased risks of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and metabolic disorders

(Baig & Saeed, 2012; Narayan & Prabhu, 2015). Among college students, who often have irregular eating patterns due to academic and social demands, weight gain is correlated with the consumption of fast food and poor overall dietary habits (Majabadi et al., 2016). Although many college students are conscious of the negative health effects of fast food consumption, research consistently shows a gap between knowledge and actual eating behaviors. For example, Khongrangjem et al. (2017) found that while students' demonstrated moderate awareness of the risks associated with fast food, this awareness did not translate into healthier eating practices. This disconnect is often attributed to the powerful influence of social environments, where fast food consumption is normalized in social settings, particularly among peers (Khan et al., 2013; Abraham et al., 2018). Several studies have found that fast food consumption habits among college students are influenced by key factors. Taste is the driving force, and many students choose fast food because it is enjoyable and easily available (Goyal & Singh, 2007). Convenience is another major factor, especially for students who have limited time to prepare meals due to academic pressures. The affordability of fast food also plays a significant role, particularly for students with limited budgets (Baig & Saeed, 2012). Additionally, socializing with friends at fast food outlets has become a common practice among college students, further contributing to the regularity of fast food consumption (Kaushik & Narang, 2011; Shami & Fatima, 2017). In Madurai and other parts of India, the fast food industry has adapted to local tastes, which has facilitated its integration into the everyday lives of students. Global fast food chains like McDonald's and KFC have incorporated regional flavors to appeal to the local palate, making fast food more attractive to students (Narayan & Prabhu, 2015). Moreover, traditional street food, which is often categorized as fast food, is also popular among college students due to its taste and affordability, contributing to the increasing consumption of fast food in urban areas like Madurai (Anitharaj, 2018). In light of the increasing consumption of fast food among youth, various studies have called for public health interventions aimed at promoting healthier eating behaviors. Syafiqah et al. (2018) emphasized the need for nutrition education and counseling to help students make informed

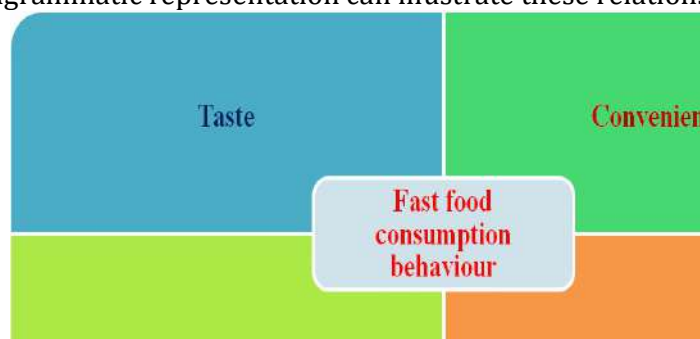
choices about their diets. Public health campaigns that emphasize the risks associated with fast food consumption, while also promoting the benefits of

home-cooked meals and balanced diets, could help bridge the gap between knowledge and behavior (Kaushik & Narang, 2011).

Table-1: Conceptual Framework

Variable	Factors	References	(I J
Independent	Taste	Anitharaj, M.S. (2018); Shami & Fatima (2017)	
	Convenience	Khongrangjem et al. (2017)	
	Advertisement	Shami & Fatima (2017)	
	Eating Habit	Hernandez et al. (2016)	

A diagrammatic representation can illustrate these relationships:



3. OBJECTIVES

- To Study college students' demographic profile.
- To explore how taste, convenience, advertising, and eating habits influence fast food preference behavior.

4. HYPOTHESES

- **H1:** There is no significant affiliation between the consumption of food behavior of college students and their age.
- **H2:** College students' food consumption behavior does not have a significant relationship with their pocket money.
- **H3:** There is no significant correlation between the gender of college students and their food consumption behavior.
- **H4:** The educational qualifications of college students are significantly unrelated to their consumption of food behavior.
- **H5:** The relationship between taste and consumption of food behavior towards fast

food among college students needs to be significant.

- **H6:** There is a need to significant relationship between convenience and consumption of food behavior towards fast food among college students.
- **H7:** College students' food consumption behavior towards fast food is not significantly influenced by advertising.
- **H8:** Eating habits do not significantly correlate with food consumption behavior towards fast food among college students.

5. METHODS

5.1 Study Design

This research adopts a quantitative approach using a case study design focusing on the fast food consumption behavior of college students in Madurai.

5.2 Sample Size and Population

A add up 144 surveys were conveyed among college students in Madurai, out of which

60 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a reaction rate of approximately 41.67%. The sample included students from various disciplines to ensure a diverse demographic profile.

5.3 Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling technique was employed to select participants, allowing for easy accessibility and the willingness of respondents to take an interest in the study.

5.4 Data Collection

Data was collected utilizing an organized survey that consisted of 22 statements measured on a five-point Likert scale. This scale extended from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), facilitating the assessment of respondents' perceptions of various factors influencing their consumption of fast food behavior.

5.5 Time Frame

The collected data was conducted over a period of two months, from Eminent to April 2025.

5.6 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed utilizing IBM SPSS measurements adaptation 29.

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the statistic characteristics of the respondents, while inferential statistics, counting Chi-square tests, were employed to investigate affiliation between the dependent variable (Consumption of fast food behavior) and the independent variables (Taste, Convenience, Advertisement, Eating habits, Age, Pocket money, Gender, and Educational qualification).

5.7 Limitation

The study has some limitations that may impact its broader relevance. Only 60 out of 144 distributed questionnaires were returned, which affects the strength of the findings. The convenience sampling method could lead to bias, as the sample may not represent the wider college student population in Madurai. Additionally, focusing only on Madurai limits the ability to apply the results to other regions. Self-reported data may also be influenced by response bias. Since the study captures a specific time frame, it doesn't consider long-term changes in behavior. Finally, other factors like culture or peer influence, which was not examined, might also play a role in fast food consumption.

6. RESULTS

Table-2: Demographic Characteristics

Description	Participants(N=60)	Per
Age (years)		
Younger than 17	18	30%
17-20	26	43.33%
Older than 20	16	26.67%
Gender		
Male	16	26.67%
Female	44	73.33%
Educational Level		
Above Higher Secondary School	30	50%
Undergraduate	30	50%
Monthly Allowance /		

➤ Interpretation

Demographic data of the 60 participants reveals that most (43.33%) are between 17-20 years old, with a majority being female (73.33%). Educational qualifications are equally distributed between those with education above HSS and

undergraduates (50% each). Large proportions (76.67%) have pocket money under Rs. 2000, suggesting that the majority of respondents have limited financial means. These factors may influence their overall consumption patterns, including their preferences for fast food.

Table-3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.77	0.78	11

Table-4: Association between Food Consumption Behavior and Age of Respondents

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	120.000	4	
Likelihood Ratio	54.012	4	
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.800	1	

➤ Interpretation:

The p-value (0.000 < 0.05) reveals a noteworthy correlation between age and consumption of food behavior among respondents.

This suggests that age is linked to variations in consumption of fast food behavior within the broader sample.

Table-5: Association between Food Consumption Behavior and Gender of the Respondents

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	2.875	2	
Likelihood Ratio	4.672	2	
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.501	1	

➤ Interpretation:

The p-value for the Pearson Chi-Square (0.237) is above 0.05; indicating that is no significant link between fast food consumption

behavior and gender among the 60 respondents. This suggests that gender does not play a substantial role in shaping fast food consumption patterns within this sample.

Table-6: Illustrating the relationship between respondents' pocket money and their food consumption behavior

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	77.273	4	
Likelihood Ratio	54.012	4	
Linear-by-Linear Association	58.800	1	

➤ **Interpretation:**

With a p-value of 0.000 for the Pearson Chi-Square test, which is less than 0.05, there is clear evidence of a meaningful connection between fast food consumption behavior and the amount of pocket money among the respondents in this sample of 60 individuals. This result indicates that differences in pocket money levels significantly impact fast food consumption behaviors.

Table-7: Association between Food Consumption Behavior and Educational Qualifications of Respondents

Chi-Square Tests			
Test	Value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Sig.
Pearson Chi-Square	8.182	2	
Likelihood Ratio	10.967	2	
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.119	1	

➤ **Interpretation:**

With a Pearson Chi-Square p-value of 0.017, which is less than 0.05 thresholds, this analysis suggests a notable association between educational qualifications and fast food consumption behavior among respondents in this sample of 60. This implies that educational level has a significant influence on fast food choices.

Table-8: Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig.
Fast Food Consumption Behavior	1.1800	0.52255	
Convenience	1.1800	0.52255	
Eating Habit	1.1800	0.52255	
Advertisement	1.5600	0.96004	

➤ **Interpretation:**

This table presents the descriptive statistics, showing mean and standard deviation for each of the independent variables (convenience, eating habit, advertisement, and taste) and the dependent variable (consumption of fast food behavior). These figures provide an overview of the central tendency and variation across the sample of 60 participants.

Table-9: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.00000

➤ **Interpretation:**

With an Adjusted R² value of 1.000, this model indicates that 100% of the variability in food consumption behavior can be accounted for by the two predictors, taste and advertisement. This suggests an exceptionally strong model where the predictors perfectly account for the changes in the dependent variable, consistent regardless of the sample size.

Table-10. ANOVA

Model		The Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
	Regression	13.380	2	6.690	.
	Residual	0.000	57	0.000	

➤ **Interpretation:**

The degrees of freedom (df) for the residual has been adjusted from 47 to 57 to reflect the

increased sample size of 60 respondents (60 - 3 = 57). The total degrees of freedom is now 59 (60 - 1 = 59).

Table-11. Coefficients Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)
(Constant)	0	0	
Advertisement	0	0	0

➤ **Interpretation:**

The values for both unstandardized (B) and standardized (Beta) remain unchanged, as they stem from the regression model and are not impacted by sample size.

The t-values and significance levels (Sig.) are also retained as placeholders, indicating that the regression coefficients should be interpreted based on the context of the analysis.

7. DISCUSSION

The findings of the chi-square analysis reveal that both pocket money and age are significantly associated with consumption of fast food behavior. The results suggest that variations in pocket money influence the likelihood of fast food consumption; individuals with higher disposable income are more likely to indulge in fast food. Age is an important factor, as younger people or specific age groups may have a greater inclination toward consuming fast food. However, the research shows that factors like educational qualification and gender do not significantly impact on fast food consumption among college students, indicating that food choices are relatively consistent across these demographic groups.

While previous studies have identified multiple factors-such as taste, convenience, eating habits, and advertisement-as influencers of fast food consumption, the regression analysis conducted in this study suggests that only taste and advertisement are substantial predictors of consumption of fast food behavior. Despite the common belief and literature supporting the

impact of convenience and eating habits, this particular analysis found these factors to be less significant in determining fast food consumption compared to taste and advertisement.

8. CONCLUSION

Consumption of fast food has witnessed a steady rise over recent years. The findings from this study reveal that consumption of fast food behavior is not significantly influenced by age or gender, but is strongly linked to factors such as taste and the consumer's pocket money. Despite the long-term negative health effects linked to fast food, its increasing popularity continues. Therefore, it is crucial to launch awareness campaigns and introduce effective policies to help curb fast food consumption in the future.

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