

Rising Trends of Fast-Food and Food Fads: Implication to Diet Culture Among LSPU Students

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Abstract

Food is everywhere because it is an integral part of everyone's life. This study will determine the effect of the rising trends of fast food and food fads on the toxic diet culture among LSPU Main Campus students, particularly the demographic profile of students in terms of college name, gender, and age, the foods that students consume much based-on food preference, the frequency of students' fast-food consumption, and the health awareness program development. This study employed a descriptive survey research approach and random sampling. The researcher did a survey questionnaire survey, and it was validated by the experts and used as a data collection tool. Likewise, the researcher employed the study with corresponding data analysis and data procedure. The data gathered data was tallied, analyzed, and interpreted. The data shows the profile data of the respondents: students consume food fads more carbonated drinks at 49%, followed by street foods at 20%, burgers at 14%, non-carbonated drinks at 11%, and instant noodles at 6%. Additionally, students rarely consume fast food and opt for healthier or home-cooked meals with 51%. This concludes that Students are averse to fast food and food trends due to their accessibility and ease of use. While a smaller percentage eat fast food during social activities or school time constraints, a small percentage abstain for dietary, health, or personal reasons. The popularity of fast meals is mainly due to convenience. The researcher used this information to create a health awareness program, the goal of which is for students to lead healthy lifestyles and have a sufficient understanding of the effects of eating fast food and food fads.

Keywords: diet culture, college students, consumption, fast-food, food fads

1. Introduction

Food is an integral part of everyone's life. It is something everyone needs every day. Life can be sustained only with adequate nourishment. Man needs food for their holistic well-being and leading an active and healthy life is a time of rapid growth and development (Aquino & Reyes, 2024). Nutrient needs are at their peak. 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. Improper intake of nutrients and inactivity may even lead to lifelong obesity. Adolescents are least bothered about what they eat, so adults around them have to keep a watch on what, where, and with whom they eat because it determines their eating patterns. According to the study of Li et al. (2020), Fast food consumption is becoming more commonplace worldwide, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and young adolescents are suffering from different forms of malnutrition. Urban adolescents tend to enjoy soft drinks, bread, potato chips, popcorn, and ready-to-eat meals. Likewise, Alqueza et al. (2020) state that managers should prioritize customer satisfaction in their operations to promote food consumption but not override importance because it does not indicate a direct correlation with repurchase intention. Instead, if the goal is to raise repurchase intentions and retain customers, social influence needs to be prioritized in this model. As Prasetyo et al. (2021) state, in developing nations like the Philippines, the drive-through fast-food sector has had some of the fastest growth in recent decades. It

was discovered that, when it came to selecting food, menu selections had the most indirect impact on repurchase intention, suggesting that they should be considered. The current study's findings can be used and expanded upon to assess drive-through fast food consumers' intentions to repurchase in other nations. These foods are rich sources of carbohydrates but have low nutrient density. Socioeconomic conditions and cultural norms of our community have been changing. The food habits of our students are also changing, facing such changes. It has been an observable day-to-day eating habit among LSPU students that they are apt to devour more fad foods and fast foods instead of healthy consumables, which will suffice the nutrients that their bodies need. They prefer to take in sweets like milk teas, coffee-based drinks, salty chips, junk, and fatty burgers and fries filled with spices and high degrees of saturated fats and trans fatty acid, ignoring the danger that these foods will result further. Likewise, students must be physically, mentally, and socially active that contribute to their learning outcomes and school performance (Aquino, 2023). This study aims to identify students' level of consumption of fast foods and food fads. It will gauge the University's prioritization of implementing healthy diet promotion programs to improve adolescent health, specifically for school-aged groups. The output will serve as a sustainable project for the Office of Student Affairs in designing a promotion program to boost students' diet awareness and culture in collaboration with the university-registered nutritionist. This study will determine the effect of the rising trends of fast food and food fads on the toxic diet culture among LSPU Main Campus students. This will specifically seek answers to the following questions: (1) What is the demographic profile of students in terms of college name, gender, and age? (2) What foods do students consume much based-on food preference? (3) What is the frequency of students' fast-food consumption, and (4) What health awareness program can be developed for the study?

2. Methodology

The study used a descriptive survey research approach, which gathers information and describes the characteristics of a specific population that was participated by LSPU College students from different departments. Random sampling was used in the study. Random sampling was used in the study to ensure that the respondents' sample was selected in such a way that every individual in the target demographic had an equal probability of being chosen (West, 2016). The researcher made the survey questionnaire, and the experts validated it. A *questionnaire* is a popular data collection strategy that is an essential component of the research. However, constructing a questionnaire should be validated by the experts (Atkins et al., 2017). Data collection was done through a face-to-face survey. The study was conducted at Laguna State Polytechnic University (LSPU) Sta. Cruz Laguna Main Campus. The duration of data collection will be months, from April 2024 to June 2024. The researcher employed the study with corresponding data analysis and data procedure, for which the researcher sought permission from the Dean. The gathered data was tallied, analyzed, and interpreted.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Profile data of respondents

<i>Course</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
CAS	102	12%
CBAA	98	11%
CCJE	56	7%
CCS	88	11%
CHMT	111	13%
CIT	123	14%
COE	99	12%

CONAH	47	6%
CTE	120	14%
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	348	41%
Female	488	58%
Others	8	1%
Age	Frequency	Percentage
18	89	12%
19	240	28%
20	230	27%
21	195	23%
22	35	4%
23	29	3%
Others:	24	3%

Table 1 shows about the profile data of the respondents. This elicits information that most of the respondents are from CIT with 14% of the population size, followed by CHMT with 13% and CAS and COE with 12%, CCs and CBAA with 11%, CCJE with 7% and CONAH with 6%. Since the study used random sampling, the survey was answered to those students who were available and willing to participate the study. This was also covering the population representation of the university (Aquino et al., 2024).

Table 2. Food fads consumed by the respondents

Food Fads	Frequency	Percentage
Non-carbonated drinks	264	11%
Carbonated drinks	580	49%
Street foods	422	20%
Burger	201	14%
Instant noodles	136	6%

Table 2 shows that respondents consume food fads more than carbonated drinks at 49%, followed by street foods at 20%, burgers at 14%, non-carbonated drinks at 11%, and instant noodles at 6%. This implies that students were engaged in consuming food fads and fast foods because they thought that it was convenient and accessible. According to the study of Fryar et al. (2018), individuals consume fast food, which has been linked to increased (2) and inadequate nutrition quality (1), respectively. Budgetary constraints, timing, cost, and accessibility affect how much fast food is consumed. This implies that carbonated drinks are well-known; they are not equally common as street food or non-alcoholic beverages. According to the study by Dunn et al. (2022), Fast food was consumed by 36.5% of adults on a typical day, accounting for 13.8% of daily calories, or an average of 309 kcal. As a result, carbonated drinks are selected for food or drink in over half of all cases that have been documented. According to the study by Juul et al. (2018), of the total calories and added sugars in the American diet, 89% come from ultra-processed foods. That being said, no US sample has been used to examine the relationship between ultra-processed meals and obesity. In addition, although not as popular as carbonated beverages, street food is also an increasing fad. In a comparable way, burgers are famous, although not as much as street food and fizzy beverages. Lastly, even though they are the least popular choice among the possibilities, instant noodles are nevertheless a part of individual dietary preferences.

As to the study of Ra (2022) adolescents' poor mental health is strongly linked to their consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) and fast food. Furthermore, consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages

and fast food may result in aggregated diet patterns with strong favorable relationships among adolescent high school students. Thus, combined consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, as well as fast foods, may have an even more harmful impact on mental health due to synergistic effects than their consumption. This was strengthened in the study of Alsabeih et al. (2019). Fast food consumption affects blood pressure but has no direct impact on cognition or quality of life. Furthermore, Banik et al. (2019) stated that approximately 64% of people consumed fast food on a regular basis, with taste or pleasure and convenience as the primary considerations. Thus, Alkazemi and Shaban (2019) state that fast food is an integral part of college students' diets. Thus, students should be educated about the negative consequences of regular fast-food consumption. Nutrition education on better fast-food options, as well as how to prepare simple meals at home, should be part of university health promotion initiatives.

Table 3. Level of food consumption of the respondents

Statement	Frequency	Percentage
Students frequently eat fast food, especially during busy school weeks when they do not have much time to prepare meals.	57	7%
students may choose to eat fast food particularly on weekends or during social events	161	19%
Some students rarely consume food fast food; and opt for healthier or home-cooked meals.	436	51%
students very seldom eat fast food due to dietary limitations of health concerns	150	18%
Some students avoid fast food for personal reasons or because they are on tight diets and never consume it.	40	5%
Total	844	100%

Table 3 shows the level of food consumption of the respondents. Based on the responses, students rarely consume fast food and opt for healthier or home-cooked meals with 51%. With the study of Barthes (2018) reiterates that health is really a straightforward conduit connecting the mind and the body; it is the materialized alibi that food provides for itself to represent an intangible pattern of realities. This was strengthened by Choe and Kim (2017) Destination perception is positively impacted by attitudes on local cuisine. Most of the sample, 51% (436 students), prefers home-cooked or healthier meals over fast food. This shows an increasing trend among students toward more conscious eating practices, perhaps due to lifestyle or health considerations. In social settings or on the weekends, 19% (161 students) of them eat fast food. As Prasetyo et al. (2021) notions that in developing nations like the Philippines, the drive-through fast-food sector has had some of the fastest growth in recent decades. It was discovered that, when it came to selecting food, menu selections had the most indirect impact on repurchase intention, suggesting that they should be taken into account. The current study's findings can be used and expanded upon to assess drive-through fast food consumers' intentions to repurchase in other nations. This indicates that, while less popular during weekdays, fast food continues to be a popular option for social events and get-togethers.

As to the study of Hansmann et al. (2020) the most significant predictors were found to be financial and environmental arguments for buying non-organic food, which were followed by recent changes in consumption, societal norms and attitudes linked to health, perceived behavioral control, environmental values, income, and education level. Due to dietary constraints or health-related issues, 18% of students (150) abstain from fast food. This group consumes fast food infrequently and is more health conscious. 7% of the population, or 57 students, regularly eat fast food, especially when their time is limited by their schoolwork. This suggests that during busy times, fast food consumption is mostly driven by time constraints. However, Due to strict diets or personal preferences, 40 students, or 5% of the student body, never eat fast food. This indicates that just a small number of students have given up fast food completely. As Fonseca et al., (2020) suggests meal patterns are vital in supporting healthy eating promotion programs on campus and changes to

the University Canteen menu may encourage students to eat healthier. Moreover, Khayyam et al. (2021) reiterates that changed worldwide food production, processing, and consumption at various levels. Tourists have faced a heightened level of food insecurity during the crisis. Thus, Jiang et al. (2019) take-out food consumption may be influenced by the primary and as to the study, recommendations on limiting high-take-out food intake, which correlates to high obesity rates and metabolic illness risk. As to the study of Arslan et al., (2022) emphasizes the importance of a balanced approach to student health by tackling the popularity of fast food and food trends, as well as encouraging educational programs and continuous health campaigns.

Health Awareness Program

Meal trends and fast meals are popular among students. Although fast food and food fads may appeal to these individuals, the simplicity of use and accessibility in the life of students may be the reason for their high consumption. The results of the study indicate that students enjoy eating fast food and following food fads because of their accessibility and ease. The researcher used this information to create a health awareness program, the goal of which is for students to lead healthy lifestyles and have a sufficient understanding of the effects of eating fast food and food fads. The University needs enough direction and commitment to teach students about more than just taking care of their health because health may be viewed as wealth. They are establishing a campaign to raise awareness of health issues by utilizing social media, events, and posters. This will serve as an avenue that may highlight the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle, including better long-term health outcomes, higher vitality, and improved cognitive function.

Based on the results of the findings, the researcher developed a Health Awareness Program, which aims for the University to have an annual health activity to provide awareness of the healthy lifestyle of the individuals. Based on these findings, the researcher created a health awareness program to educate students about the adverse effects of eating fast food and food fads. Health Awareness Program encourages healthier lifestyle choices among students, and university involvement indicates that the institution should take a more aggressive role in promoting health education. It emphasizes that health is just as important as wealth, and the school should provide information on how students can take better care of their health. Furthermore, annual health activities and campaigns for health awareness should be conducted at the university to sustain the results of the study and uplift students' healthy lifestyles by using a holistic approach.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Students are particularly fond of fast food and food fads. The high consumption may be attributed to the accessibility and ease of use that carbonated drinks provide in the lives of students. Thus, It may be concluded from this that while a lower percentage of students eat fast food, it is usually during social activities or when time constraints at school prevent them from preparing healthier meals at home. For dietary, health, or personal reasons, a small percentage abstain entirely from fast food. Meal trends and fast meals are popular among students. Although fast food and food fads may appeal to these individuals, the simplicity of use and accessibility in the life of students may be the reason for their high consumption. The study found that students' preference for fast food and food fads is largely due to their simplicity of acquisition and consumption, making them appealing to individuals with limited time or resources. The results of the study underscore the fact that students enjoy consuming fast food and following food fads because of their accessibility and ease. This understanding was used to develop a health awareness program, the primary goal of which is to empower students to lead healthy lifestyles and gain a comprehensive understanding of the effects of fast food and food fads. The university, with its commitment and direction, plays a crucial role in guiding students towards more than just health, but also towards a form of wealth-health.

Moreover, through organizing regular classes and seminars that inform students on the health effects and nutritional worth of different fast foods and food fads. Along with helpful guidance on selecting healthier

options, these should cover the long-term repercussions of consuming excessive amounts of processed, high-fat, and high-sugar foods. Hence, social media, events, and posters should be used to start a health awareness campaign. These advertisements emphasize the advantages of leading a healthy lifestyle, such as enhanced cognitive function, increased vitality, and improved long-term health results. Provide first-hand accounts or student testimonies of their successful adoption of healthy eating practices.

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