

Fast Food Consumption Behavior among University Students

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Abstract—This paper reports on the study that addressed the issue of ultimate fast food consumption behavior among students of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA). Fast food intake is a common tendency nowadays as its popularity has become a thing among Malaysians. Many fast food restaurant chains have grown rapidly following the high demand from the society in fulfilling the need for today's community lifestyle. A total of three hundred and twenty respondents are involved in this study. This study uses descriptive analysis to determine fast food consumption behavior of the respondents and the findings showed that the majority of respondents who consumed fast food are 77.5% female students compared to 22.5% male students. The behavior of fast food ingestion is also influenced by a moderate price factor for about 72%. This suggests that 93% of the respondents are very fond of eating fast food. Additionally, there are only 5% of the respondents who bothered to check the nutrition labels before purchasing fast food. The results also illustrate that the majority of respondents, rated as high as 99%, often consume fast food as frequent as 1-5 times a week.

Keywords—Behavior, consumption, fast food, students, UniSZA

I. INTRODUCTION

Following the modernization of the society, fast food consumption has become more than just a food to consume but rather a lifestyle trend, particularly among students, that needed to be followed [1]. Although society is conscious that fast food consumption can be harmful, the fast-tracked fast-food tactic of the media has managed to overtake consumers through dazzling advertisements and offers that are enthralling to watch, diverting them from realizing the negative effects of overconsuming fast food [2].

According to [3], fast food can be described as quick-prepared food, it has reasonable prices and readily available; also known as an alternative to home cooked food. Fast food is a food sold in a restaurant or store that provides fast customer service and is presented in packaged form, making it convenient to carry home [4]. In addition, the increase trend of eating away from home becomes more apparent for the fast food industries to establish branches in strategic locations to attract consumers, such as inside the terminals, schools, petrol stations, hospitals, universities, in addition to shopping centers [5]. The success of the growing fast food diners is an evidence of profound interest in fast food consumption among society. They infiltrate easily into foreign markets in various ways using a globalization strategy [6]. According to [7], students' attentiveness of their dietary intake is crucial as it affects not only physical but also the students' mental

development, which are considered as the essential assets in developing human capital for developed countries in the future. However, life as a student is hardly easy as for instance, because of tight schedule of classes and assignments' due to catch up, the students preferred to eat on-the-go rather than to eat-clean, by choosing fast food because it is convenient and can save more time [8].

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The findings from a study conducted in a private University of Bangladesh showed that 98% of male respondents consumed fast food heavily rather than female respondents [9]. Moreover, studies conducted in Sweden reported that girls are practicing a healthier lifestyle than men. This also explains that female students prefer a healthier food option than male students. The pattern of students' fast food intake is something remarkable to study [10].

[11], supported by his findings, argued that besides children and adolescents, there is a crystal clear evident that showed the high consumption of fast foods among adults are mostly university students. In addition, this habit seems to be as a common practice in all countries. For instance, in Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia; Dammam, the intake of fast food consumption is high among the university students' community [12]. [13], elucidated that fast food is the focal source of food that changed the live of university students who live far away from their family. Furthermore, it is clarified that lack of experience in planning a well-balance nutrition intake, as well as taking the initiative to buy instant food are the major factors that promoted unhealthy and excessive eating behavior among university students [13].

III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is adopting a quantitative approach in a form of descriptive analysis in order to identify fast food consumption behavior among students of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin. The data are collected for a month from July 24th 2018 until August 22th 2018. The number of respondents who answered the questionnaire is 320 students, where all respondents take between five to seven minutes to complete the entire questionnaire. Average respondents who give daily feedback are 11 people. Later, the results of the research findings are reported in statistical format and the collected data are then exported to an Excel spreadsheet for data cleaning and analysis. The background of respondents, who

are the students of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, is based on demographics such as age, gender and ethnic.

IV. RESULTS

A total of 320 respondents in this study consisted of Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin students. The majority of respondents were female (77.5%) compared to (22.5%) male students. In terms of age group, 89.7% of students are between 20-24 years old, whereas for ethnicity, 93.8% are Malay students. (Refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Demographics student at Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

Demographics	Frequency (n = 320)	
	F	%
Gender		
Male	72	22.5
Female	248	77.5
Age (years)		
18-19	10	3.1
20-24	287	89.7
25-26	23	7.2
Ethnic		
Malay	300	93.8
Chinese	7	2.2
Indian	4	1.3
Others	9	2.8

i. Opinion on fast food prices

Figure 1 shows the behavior of respondents on fast food intake in terms of price. 72% of respondents believed that the prices offered for fast food are affordable at a moderate level. Only 4% from the respondents stated that fast food is significantly inexpensive. While 24% of the respondents argued that fast food is costly.

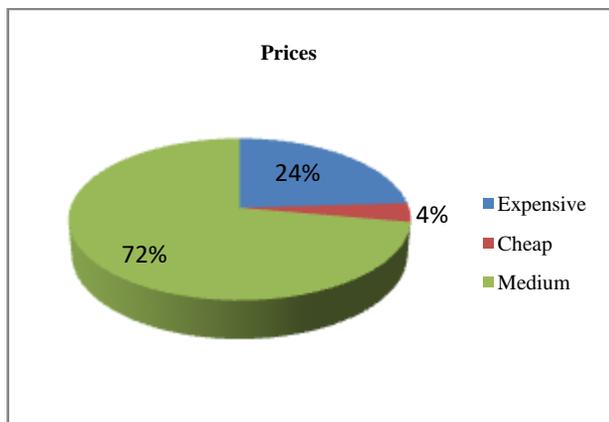


Fig 1: Opinion on fast food prices

ii. Preference over fast food

Figure 2 shows the preference of respondents in favoring fast food. As many as 93% from the respondents are indulged with fast food; hence it is becoming their primary preference of food to consume. On the other hand, only 7% of the respondents indicated that they did not favor fast food. This verifies that the majority of respondents prefer fast food rather than other foods.

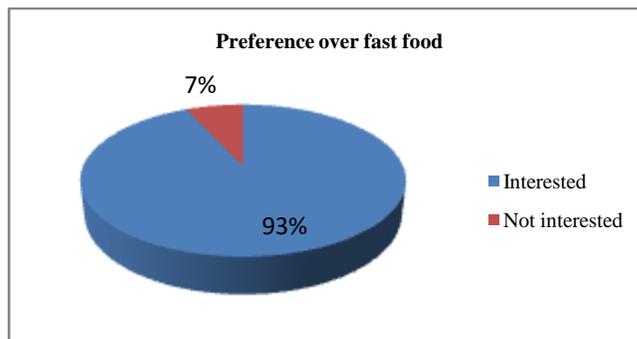


Fig 2: Preference over fast food

iii. Frequency of viewing fast food nutrition facts

In addition, respondents are also questioned whether they checked the nutritional facts of the fast food before buying them. To study this behavior, the frequency of how often they check the nutrition label of the fast food is observed. Figure 3 shows that the respondents' tendency to neglect the nutrition label is around 35%. Other than that, large sums of 60% of the respondents do check the nutrition facts every once in a while whereby 5% from the respondents adamantly check it regularly.

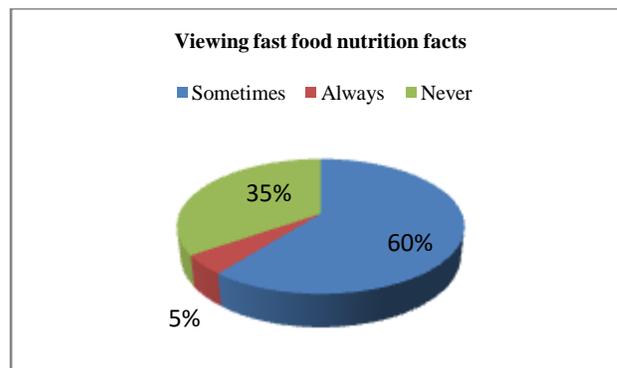


Fig 3: Frequency of viewing fast food nutrition facts

iv. Frequency of Fast Food Intake

The next aspect to observe is based on the frequency of respondents consuming food fast weekly. Figure 4 shows the frequency of fast food intake within a week. The majority of respondents who consume fast food for about 1-5 times a week are enormously numbered up to 99%. Other findings show that only 1% of the respondents commonly consume fast food as frequent as 6-10 times a week and there is no

significant result found for those who consume it more than 10 times a week.

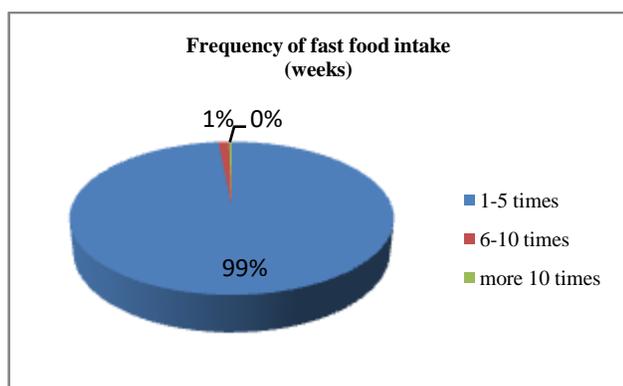


Fig 4: Frequency of fast food intake

V. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of this present study, the majority of 77.7% of the respondents are female students. It can be concluded that female students are more likely to consume instant food than male students. [14], in their research at University of Ankara, Turkey, which is conducted in aiming to determine the habits of fast food consumption among university students concluded that a total of 401 respondents from among the students are 74.0% consisted of female students and another 26.0% are the male students. It can be classified that the behavior of student in consuming fast food is correlated with prominent aspects such as the affordability of its price, great taste, convenience and food consumption habits. The results also showed that 72.0% of the respondents believed that the prices of fast food are at a moderate level, which essentially affordable. This is in line with the results obtained for pre-university students in Udipi Taluk, India, which depicts that reasonable prices is one of the main factors of the student's tendency to make a decision on purchasing fast food [15].

Other behavioral aspect stated is on the fundamental of the tendency to read the nutrition facts' label. The results indicated that only 60.0% of the respondents check the label every once in a while. In short, students are mainly idle with their nutritional intake without being thoughtful much about it. Nevertheless, there is a great urgency for an individual to start taking health matter related to food consumption crucially as simply by checking the nutrition labels when buying food. Lastly, the preference over fast food among students is more inclined towards high interest for consuming it which is very high 93%. Hence, this can be an indication that the majority of respondents are very fond of fast food. Furthermore, the frequency of respondents consuming fast food for about 1-5 times a week is recorded as great as 99%. In fact, in a study conducted by [16], reported that more than 80% of Nigerian university students eat fast food at least once a week. Thus, it can be suggested that fast food has a

special place in the heart of society due to its popularity that has been getting a high demand lately.

VI. CONCLUSION

The existence of fast food restaurant raises the positive and negative effects of its own. Generally, positive impact that it brings can assist in increasing job opportunities which will contribute in the growth of the country's economy and national development [17]. Meanwhile, one of the negative effects is related to health issue that can lead to obesity complications among youth and children [18]. Relatively, according to [19], a good nutrition will help in strengthening the immune system in the present and future as well as strengthening the body's natural immune system. In a nutshell, society as consumer and fast food enthusiasts should alert that it is their responsibility to reduce excessive intake of fast food by starting to undertake and initiating a healthier diet. Diligent consumers need to be more cognizant of their nutritional needs and plot a strategic nutrition plan according to their health [20]. In this context, the role of family and government is vital in educating on health, especially to the younger generation who can bring about a better change in the health of society in Malaysia.

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