Impacts of fast–food habit on human and environmental health and economic sustainability

Mousumi Kundu¹, Bubai Bhakta², Uttam Bhakta², Manoj K. Pradhan¹

¹Heritage Foundation, Kolkata 700104, West Bengal, India
²R. Institute of Rural Human Resource Development, Purba Medinipur 721453, West Bengal, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received– February 20, 2016
Revised– April 02, 2016
Accepted– April 15, 2016
Available– 09 May, 2016
(online)

Keywords:
Fast-food
Human health impact
Environmental pollution
Economic sustainability

Corresponding Author:
Jatindra N. Bhakta
E–mail: lsnjbhakta@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The objectives of present study was to conduct a preliminary survey on various aspects of fast–food habit in order to draw a picture on its impacts in human and environmental health as well as to find how fast–food habit effects the economic sustainability. The survey was conducted in Purba Medinipur West Bengal. (Latitude 21.8°N and Longitude 87.8°E), India considering the youth populations habituated with fast and normal food habits using a questionnaires prepared considering the human and environmental health as well as economic aspects of fast–food. The results of survey work revealed that fast–food has significant adverse impacts on human and environmental health and also negatively effects on economic status of peoples in the area surveyed.

1. Introduction

Food habit and its nutritional impacts are essentially a great concern in any organism for their growth, development, population, community structure etc. Food and food habit are one of the prime factors for regulating the human health condition. Besides, adverse health impact of various food habits [conventional food habit, fast–food (Fig. 1) habits, etc.] is commonly well known facts and important concern, since it is responsible for causing various health problems, such as obesity, sugar, blood pressure, cardiac and liver diseases, etc (Bowman and Vinyard 2004, Bowman 2004, Rosenheck 2008; Anand 2011). It has documented that fast–food is recognized as one of the contributors to increased population rates of obesity in last few decades. The growth of the fast–food industry has led to an increased consumption of food prepared away from home that is high in total and saturated fat, sodium, as well as low and poor in other nutritional qualities, for example, protein, fibre, calcium, iron, etc. Prospective data from Western countries have revealed that there is a positive association between frequency of fast–food restaurant use and weight gain. Hence, as Western fast–food companies are expanding in developing countries such as India, there is a considerable concern that such countries are in danger of succumbing to the same obesity trends as in the Western countries.

However, the present study categorized food habits in two groups, normal or conventional food habit (herein commonly called as food habit of home made foods prepared from fresh and natural products having high nutritional/food value) and fast–food habit (it is referred to food habit of costly ready made food prepared by mixing chemical based ingredients, preservatives, high sugars, various spices, etc. along with basic foods to create flavour, spicy, tasty & delicious properties without considering nutritional properties and human health impacts, for example, noodles, châu-mêng, ramen, pizza, burger, etc.) in order to convenience of study. In this respect, thus, fast–food is supposed to be costly with lower nutritional value compared
Impacts of fast-food

Kundu et al.

Int J Env Tech Sci - www.journalijets.org

to that of normal food. Stemming from the above problems of fast–food habits, the present study has attempted to conduct a
preliminary survey on various aspects of fast–food habit in
order to draw a picture on its human and environmental
health impacts as well as to find how food habit associated
with economic sustainability.

Fig. 1 A set of decorative fast–food served by mixing the
different other food ingredients

2. Methods

To achieve the above objectives, the study was conducted in
Purba Medinipur West Bengal. (Latitude 21.8°N and
Longitude 87.8°E), India considering the youth populations
habituated with fast and normal food habits following flow
chart (Fig. 2). A questionnaire was prepared based on normal
and fast–food habit and its impact on human and
environmental health in order to conduct survey and collect
relevant data of different variables. The survey of fifty pre-
identified samples in population of selected study area was
conducted with a set of these questionnaires. The collected
data was analyzed by percentage quantification of variables
and a simple production cost analysis of normal and fast–food
habits was done using the EXEL programme.

3. Results and discussion

The results of survey revealed that about fifty percentage
(50%) of investigated peoples fond of/prefer fast–food and a
gradual increasing trend was found in fast–food habit. The
highest percentage (54%) of investigated fast–food liking
peoples prefers noodles, chāu-mèing, ramen, pizza and burger
like fast–foods, whereas remaining percentage of peoples
prefer the other fast–foods in the present survey. The survey
demonstrated that most of the fast food habituated peoples are
suffering by various health problems, such as – obesity, blood
sugar level, blood pressure, cardiac and liver diseases. The
fast–food is too costly compared to that of the normal food.
Survey documented that the wastes generated from different
steps of production process of both foods are generally
discharged into the environment.

Fig. 2 Flow chart of survey work followed in present study

Since, fast–food habit is showing a gradual increasing
trend, therefore, it is obvious that the culture of fast–food
habit gradually and partially replacing the traditional/normal
food habit among busy community of peoples, students and
youths due to modernization of our society. Consequently, it
has supposed that the fast–food habit is one of the other
factors responsible for causing various above mentioned
health impact in the recent years (Bowman and Vinyard
be predicted that the fast–food habit would be appeared as an
immense human health problem in near future. It is also
obvious that the fast–food produces qualitatively and
quantitatively higher amount of wastes and utilizes high
amount of energy compared to normal food, because fast–
food contains various health hazardous chemicals (Sharma
2015) and excessive amount of required components (such as
preservatives, vinegars, high amount of fats and sugar, etc.)
as ingredients and includes additional steps in production
process before human consumption (Fig. 2). Fast–food
exhibits many effects like food allergies, food intolerance,
cancer, multiple sclerosis (MS), attention deficit
hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), brain damage, nausea,
cardiac disease among others have been reported (Inetianbor,
2015). In this respect, fast–food is less eco-friendly or may
be not eco-friendly because it is responsible for damaging
the environment (http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsan
dnature/10-ways-fast-food-is-destroying-the-world/), althou-
gh it is conducive in respect to save time in busy world. Due
Impacts of fast-food

Kundu et al.

Int J Env Tech Sci

www.journalijets.org

Fig. 3 Adverse impacts of fast-food in three dimensions: human and environmental health and economic condition

to high cost (http://www.businessinsider.in/Spending-only-125-on-food-last-month-showed-me-that-fast-food-is-deceptively-expensive/articleshow/49251089.cms), the fast-food habit may create an extra financial burden on the consumers, which poses an adverse impact in economic sustainability at different levels in the investigated area, since the costly ingredients, which is not native resource of the investigated area, responsible for increasing the cost of fast-food.

4. Conclusion

Summarily, it can be concluded that although fast-food is favourable for saving time in fast world, it has significant adverse health, economic and environmental impacts. Therefore, these factors should be considered in fast-food utilization for protecting human and environmental health as well as developing economic sustainability especially in India like developing country.

References


http://www.businessinsider.in/Spending-only-125-on-food-last-month-showed-me-that-fast-food-is-deceptively-expensive/articleshow/49251089.cms

http://www.onegreenplanet.org/animalsandnature/10-ways-fast-food-is-destroying-the-world/

