



# Fast Food Consumption Habits in Students: A Correlational Study

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DOI: [10.35898/ghmj-911144](https://doi.org/10.35898/ghmj-911144)

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Fast food consumption among high school adolescents is higher due to limited knowledge about nutritious food, so they have a positive attitude towards fast food. This makes it important to research how to reduce the craze for fast food through education for teenagers.

**Aims:** To identify whether there is a relationship between knowledge and attitudes with fast food consumption habits in SMPN 8 Palangka Raya students.

**Methods:** The research design used was correlation analysis with a cross-sectional approach, and the study population was all students of SMPN 8 Palangka Raya. The number of respondents was 100 students with a simple random sampling technique. The research instrument used a knowledge and attitude questionnaire, and the data that had been collected were analyzed using the chi-square test.

**Results:** The majority of students' knowledge in consuming fast food has good knowledge (71%) and the attitude of students in consuming fast food is mostly positive (97%). Based on Chi Square analysis, there is a no significant relationship between knowledge and attitudes about the habit of consuming fast food ( $p$  value > 0.05).

**Conclusions:** The results of this study show that there is no relationship between knowledge and eating habits because knowledge is an internal factor and there are still many external factors that influence the selection of food and food consumption habits of each individual in determining and choosing food and consuming it which will shape behavior patterns and eating habits. Future research could use a qualitative approach to further explore external factors influencing fast food consumption habits, such as peer influence, advertising, and family habits. Furthermore, intervention studies involving school-based nutrition education, media campaigns, and parental and community involvement could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a multidimensional approach in changing fast food consumption habits in adolescents.

**Keywords:** *Knowledge; Attitude; Fast Food Consumption Habits.*

**Received:** 17 July 2025

**Reviewed:** 18 November 2025

**Revised:** 29 December 2025

**Accepted:** 09 February 2026.

## 1. Introduction

There is an increase in the number of fast-food restaurants in today's era, which impacts people (Moore et al., 2024). The content of fast food is high in calories, fat, sugar, and sodium but poor in nutrients (vitamins, minerals, and fibre). Burgers, fries, pizza, fried chicken, and sugary drinks are included in the fast-food category (WHO, 2022). The main factor in fast food's high consumption is its ease of consumption. According to a study of students in Portugal, as many as 59.9% of respondents said that easy access was their main reason. Coupled with the close distance between the campus and fast food restaurants, it further increases their interest in getting it because of its practical, fast, and attractive nature (Ali-Alsaadi et al., 2023).

Based on the eating habits of young people, fast food is chosen because it has a short time, so there are many study schedules or activities, late waking up (excessive sleep), and laziness in eating breakfast. They choose fast food because it is served quickly to save time and can be served anytime, anywhere; the place is hygienic, affordable, easy to taste, considered valuable, and includes the daily diet of modern food among teenagers (Ali-Alsaadi et al., 2023). The role of social media in marketing junk food and the influence of online marketing make it easier for teenagers to buy and consume fast food (Tsochantaridou et al., 2023). High fast food intake is associated with poorer diet quality, higher BMI, and increased risk of metabolic syndrome (Tambalis et al., 2018).

A study by (Li et al., 2020) found that approximately 55.2% (51.3–59.1%) of adolescents consume fast food at least 1 day per week, and 10.3% (8.3–12.4%) do so 4–7 days per week. The prevalence of fast-food consumption 4–7 days per week is lowest in the Americas (8.3%; 6.7–9.9%) and highest in Southeast Asia (17.7%; 2.3–33.2%). People in Indonesia consume fatty foods containing cholesterol and fried foods 40.7% by consuming 1 time a day (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2013). In Riskesdas 2018, the Indonesian Ministry of Health categorizes risky foods into 9 types (Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2019). These include sweet, salty, and fatty foods/drinks, burned foods, processed meat with preservatives, seasonings, soft drinks/carbonated drinks, energy drinks, and instant food/fast food (Andriyani et al., 2024; see also Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2020). The average calorie consumption per resident by type of consumption showed that fast food and beverages ranked second most, namely 553.7 cal./day, meaning that most of the calories in fast food dominated the consumption of food eaten by the people of Central Kalimantan (BPS Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah, 2020).

Eating habits reflect how a person meets his nutritional needs, manifested in consuming various types of food, meal times, and meal frequency. Young people's lifestyle problems usually occur and have a significant impact on young people's eating habits when young people begin to interact with more influential environments. Young people also begin to experience the formation of more active behaviors and eating out, so it has a significant impact on adolescent eating habits (Sami et al., 2021). Teens are also often encouraged to try new foods, including fast food. This consumptive behavior is also driven by the purchasing power of adolescents, which is influenced by family economic factors and the amount of pocket money adolescents get per day (Malushte et al., 2022). The family plays an essential role in shaping eating habits. Adolescents are likely to adopt similar behaviors if a family eats fast food frequently (Stager et al., 2023). Consumption often correlates with a decline in overall diet quality and an increased risk of obesity because nutrient-dense and energy-dense foods often replace healthier food options (Vernarelli & DiSarro, 2021).

Obesity in adolescents puts them at risk for weight gain in adulthood and can lead to cardiovascular and metabolic diseases (Banik et al., 2020; Marlatt et al., 2016). Adolescents or young people belong to the developmental phase between 10 to 20 years. At this stage, there is a problem of being prone to eating, so there is a risk of health problems. This is because physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth or behavior occurs in adolescence (Gutiérrez et al., 2015). These changes cause adolescents to experience many changes, such as changes in lifestyle and experience in determining the food to be consumed. There is a lack of knowledge about fast food's effects on young people's health and behavior (Chavan et al., 2020). Socializing with peers can affect poor eating behavior. For example, young people spend more time away from home with friends who may be eating fast food (Cheah et al., 2020) and during adolescence, peer acceptance is essential. If a friend loves fast food, individuals may be more likely to adopt the same eating habits to fit in (Siu et al., 2019). This can cause one aspect, namely behavioral problems in adolescents. In addition, long-term consumption of fast food affects dental health. Fast food has a high sugar content, which can lead to tooth decay. Based on preliminary survey data

conducted by researchers at the school, 9 out of 10 students like fast food because it is convenient, saves many short breaks, and is easy to get. This study aims to determine the relationship between knowledge and attitudes towards fast food consumption habits among junior high school students.

Adolescence is when eating habits and attitudes towards food develop, so interventions to introduce healthy eating behaviors are more effective in this age group (Stager *et al.*, 2023). Assessing adolescents' knowledge of fast food can reveal misconceptions and gaps that need to be addressed through education, and this is by research by (Chavan *et al.*, 2020). The study results showed that 10% of respondents had less knowledge about fast food in adolescents, 28% had sufficient knowledge, and 62% had good knowledge. As many as 85% of respondents stated that they regularly consumed fast food, and as many as 51% often consumed fast food. This is because fast food tempts the aroma; as many as 64% of respondents answered like that. Fast food consumption among high school adolescents is higher due to limited knowledge about nutritious food, so they have a positive attitude towards fast food. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between knowledge and attitudes can provide information about appropriate interventions for respondents. If the respondent's attitude towards fast food is negative but the consumption is still high, this shows that education is needed to help adolescents choose healthier foods. Fast food consumption among high school adolescents is higher due to limited knowledge about nutritious food, so they have a positive attitude towards fast food. This makes it important to research how to reduce the craze for fast food through education for teenagers (Rakhshanderou *et al.*, 2024).

## 2. Methods

This type of research is a correlation study with a cross-sectional approach. The sampling technique in this study is Simple Random Sampling. The population is all students of SMPN 8 Palangka Raya. Samples were taken randomly from classes 7, 8 and 9 who met the inclusion criteria, namely those who were present when the research was conducted and the exclusion criteria were students who were not present in class. The instruments used to collect this research data are demographic data, knowledge questionnaires, and attitudes about fast food consumption habits obtained from the study of Surbakti's (2021). The number of knowledge questionnaires was 10 pieces, while the attitude questionnaire consisted of 5 statements using the Likert measuring scale. Positive answer choices are 4 = Strongly Agree, 3 = Agree, 2 = Disagree Less, 1 = Disagree, and negative questions with choices 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = disagree, with a mean value of 10 so that positive ( $\geq$  mean) and negative ( $<$  mean) assessment categories are obtained. For the fast food consumption habit questionnaire consists of 5 statements, negative statement assessment (yes) = 2 and (no) = 1, positive statement assessment (yes) 1 score and (no) = 2 with a mean value of 5 so that it is obtained with positive ( $\geq$ mean) and negative ( $<$  mean) assessment categories. Data was analyzed using computer applications. This research has carried out an ethical clearance test at the Palangka Raya Health Polytechnic Ethics Commission number 72/III/KF.PF/2023 in March 13th 2023.

## 3. Results

### ***Respondent characteristics***

The characteristics of respondents are based on the age range of 12-16 years (99%); the majority are female (61%). Most respondents' pocket money amounted to Rp.15,000,- (52%). If a lot of pocket money (above average), it will cause young people to consume fast food often because the pocket money given is not used to buy groceries but to choose popular foods, one of which is fast food.

### ***Respondent's Knowledge***

The results of the study obtained the highest level of knowledge of respondents at the level of good knowledge (71%), where most respondents understand the meaning of fast food, examples of fast food The impact caused by fast food consumption, diseases caused by fast food consumption and what content is in it. This is in line with the results of (Octaviani & Safitriani, 2022), most of which have high knowledge (75.7%).

**Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents**

Characteristics	n	Percentage
Age		
12-16 years old	99	99
17-25 years old	1	1
Gender		
Female	61	61
Male	39	39
Pocket Money		
Rp. 5,000	2	2
Rp. 10,000	9	9
Rp. 15,000	52	52
>Rp. 15,000	37	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Respondent's Attitude**

In this study, most respondents had a positive attitude (97%). In contrast to the results of research by (Putri & Setyowati, 2021), which obtained that most respondents had fewer attitudes (48.4%). Mar'at (2000), in (Dewi, N.F., Riswandi., 2018) states that attitude is a level of affection (feeling), both positive and negative concerning psychological objects. Thus feelings in response to an object can be positive, namely feelings of pleasure, acceptance, openness and others and can be negative, namely feelings of displeasure, not accepting, not open and others. In this study, all respondents had fast food consumption habits (100%). This is in line with the results of research by (Rahmi et al., 2022), it was obtained that the most consumption habits of western fast food respondents were in the frequent category (61%) and the least number of respondents was in the rare category (18.1%). In contrast to the results of (Annisa et al., 2022), some respondents have a habit of consuming junk food rarely (58%). (Mahmoud, A.H., Mohamed, N.M., El-wardhay, 2021) stated that almost all students consume western fast food for the reason of saving time.

**Table 2. Distribution of Respondents Based on Knowledge, Attitudes and Fast Food Consumption Habits**

Characteristics	N	%
<b>Knowledge</b>		
Good	71	71
Sufficient	24	24
Poor	5	5
<b>Attitude</b>		
Positive	97	97
Negative	3	3
<b>Junk Food Consumption Habits</b>		
Yes	100	100
No	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **Bivariate Analysis**

This study showed no significant relationship between knowledge and fast food consumption habits ( $p$ -value  $0.06 > 0.005$ ). This is because there are internal factors and external factors that influence each other, where the response generated from both factors is different in individuals. In this case, knowledge is one of the variables of internal factors in individuals that affect their food consumption, especially knowledge about food, hygiene and health of food and additives used in fast food (Kindi et al, 2013 in (Putri & Setyowati, 2021).

This study showed no significant relationship between attitudes and fastfood consumption habits ( $p$ -value  $0.06 > 0.005$ ). Actually, teenagers already have a positive attitude towards the impact of fast food on body health, but teenagers still want to consume fast food. Adolescent habits are very influential on attitudes in choosing food so that even teenagers with a good attitude are tempted to consume it.

**Table 3.** The relationship between knowledge and students' habits in consuming fast food

Category	Good		Sufficient		Poor		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Positif	71	71%	24	24%	5	5%	0.06
Negatif	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	

**Table 4.** The relationship between attitude and students' habits in consuming fast food

Attitude/ Habit	Positive		Negative		p-value
	n	%	n	%	
Positive	97	97%	3	3%	0.06
Negative	0	0%	0	0%	

#### 4. Discussion

The size of a schoolchild's pocket money determines purchasing power when children are away from home. A study by (Desi, Suaebah & Astuti, 2018) & (Scheelbeek *et al.*, 2019) obtained the results that the more pocket money obtained, the greater the purchasing power to buy snacks. Similarly, a study by (Ariyana & Astiningsih, 2020) found that most respondents (69.1%) had pocket money between Rp10,000 to Rp20,000,-. Similarly, the results of research by (Patarru *et al.*, 2022). Most respondents (77.4%) have pocket money between IDR 150,000 and IDR 300,000 per month. Pratama and Anggraini's (2021) & (Lee, Jaewon; Allen, 2020) research also found a significant relationship between parents' income and the habit of consuming fast food.

Knowledge is gained from learning, experience, time, and circumstances, and is used as capital to solve problems, adapt to new situations, and learn other things. With the knowledge he has, a person can prevent or overcome existing problems (Notoadmodjo, 2010). Unlike the results of (Hartian & Harahap, 2023) research, most respondents have sufficient knowledge (41.4%). Similarly, the results of (Netty *et al.*, 2022) research showed that most respondents have sufficient knowledge (42.8%). Similarly, the results of (Putri & Setyowati, 2021), most respondents have sufficient knowledge (48.4%). A high level of nutritional knowledge has a positive impact on food consumption attitudes and behaviors. Knowledge about junk food and its impact if consuming excessively will make someone reduce or avoid consuming it (Ariyana & Astiningsih, 2020).

The majority of adolescents can obtain information about fast food consumption patterns through electronic media (Internet) which contains information that interests teenagers. The results of this study are in line with (Putri & Setyowati, 2021), that the relationship between nutritional knowledge and fast food consumption patterns is not significant because the results of the significant value of  $p$ -value  $\geq 0.05$  are 0.750. In contrast to the results of (Annisa *et al.*, 2022), which shows that there is a moderate or moderate relationship between the level of junk food knowledge and nutritional status. These results can be interpreted as the better knowledge a person has, the better his nutritional status. Someone with a good level of junk food knowledge has a negative attitude towards junk food because of its content which can result in nutritional problems. This attitude can lead to behavior to reduce or avoid junk food consumption, resulting in good nutritional status (Santosa & Fatma, 2022).

Although they know the negative effects of consuming fast food and what nutrients depend on fast food, eating habits can not only be influenced by positive or negative attitudes of adolescents but can also be influenced by various factors, one of which is the mind because they often think that fast food is delicious and practical food so they will consume fast food. In contrast to the results of research by (Putri & Setyowati, 2021), there is a relationship between adolescent attitudes and significant fast food consumption patterns because the results of a significant  $p$ -value of  $\leq 0.05$  are 0.000. Azwar (2013) in (Putri & Setyowati, 2021) states that a child's attitude is an important component that influences the choice of food or snacks. A child's positive attitude towards health may not have a direct impact on a child's behavior to be positive, but a negative attitude towards

health definitely has an impact on his behavior. The results of a study from (Hartian & Harahap, 2023) regarding respondents' attitudes towards fast food consumption found that respondents' attitudes were dominated by children with poor attitudes (51.4%). While the frequency of children with a good attitude level (48.6%). This is because the bad attitude arising from respondents is the result of thinking from the knowledge possessed by each respondent, most of whom have sufficient knowledge about fast food. Attitudes towards consumption are subjective assessments, depending on who respondents give assessments., The good and bad of respondents' assessments depend on the level of satisfaction and interests of respondents (Harahap & Lestari, 2020 in (Hartian & Harahap, 2023).

## 5. Conclusion

Someone who has good knowledge does not necessarily have good habits. The results of this study show that there is no relationship between knowledge and eating habits because knowledge is an internal factor and there are still many external factors that influence the selection of food and food consumption habits of each individual in determining and choosing food and consuming it which will shape behavior patterns and eating habits. The results of this study also showed no relationship between attitude and eating habits because attitude is a response to stimulus that is obtained but still not seen and has not been applied in a real action but accompanied by a tendency to take action according to the response obtained. The attitudes and behaviors of students in this region may not be representative of students in other regions with different cultural, socioeconomic, or demographic backgrounds. Therefore, generalizing the findings to a wider population should be done cautiously.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare.

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**Cite this article as:**

Sulistiyowati, R., Astuti, A. D., Rikiy, R., Christyanni, Y., Utama, N. R., Aden, C., Kulfriyadi, M. K., Nusantoro, D. C., & Melie, M. (2026). Fast Food Consumption Habits in Students: A Correlational Study. *GHMJ (Global Health Management Journal)*, 9(1), 23–30. <https://doi.org/10.35898/ghmj-911144>