

## FAST OR FOOLISH? THE IMPACT OF INSTANT FOOD ON HEALTH CONCERN OF TEENAGERS

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

#### **Growing popularity of instant food products among teenagers:**

The popularity of instant food products among teenagers has been increasing steadily over the years. Instant food products are often marketed as convenient and easy-to-prepare meals that require minimal effort and time. They are readily available in grocery stores, vending machines, and fast-food outlets, making them easily accessible to teenagers.

Moreover, instant food products are often marketed with attractive packaging, flavors, and promotions, which appeal to teenagers. Companies often use social media platforms to promote their products, which are popular among teenagers. As a result, teenagers are more likely to be exposed to these products and be influenced by their marketing strategies.

In addition, the fast-paced lifestyle of modern society has contributed to the popularity of instant food products among

teenagers. With busy schedules and limited time, many teenagers opt for quick meals that they can prepare and consume quickly.

The popularity of instant food products among teenagers has raised concerns among health professionals and policymakers. This is because these products are often high in calories, unhealthy fats, and sugar, which can lead to various health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Overall, the growing popularity of instant food products among teenagers is a cause for concern, given their potential negative impact on health.

#### **Potential health concerns associated with the consumption of these products:**

The consumption of instant food products has been linked to various health concerns, especially when consumed in excess. According to a study by Fiolet et al.

(2018), a higher intake of ultra-processed foods, including instant food products, was associated with an increased risk of obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer.

One of the main health concerns associated with instant food products is their high calorie content. Most instant food products are high in calories, which can lead to weight gain and obesity. A study by Malik et al. (2018) found that the consumption of fast food, which includes instant food products, was associated with a higher risk of obesity and metabolic syndrome.

Instant food products are also often high in unhealthy fats and sugar. A study by Lustig et al. (2016) found that the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, which are often consumed with instant food products, was associated with an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Moreover, instant food products often lack essential nutrients such as fiber, vitamins, and minerals, which are necessary for good health. According to a study by Louzada et al. (2018), the consumption of ultra-processed foods, including instant food products, was associated with lower dietary quality and micronutrient adequacy.

Overall, the consumption of instant food products has been linked to various health concerns, including obesity, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, cardiovascular

diseases, and nutrient deficiencies. It is, therefore, essential to promote healthy eating habits among teenagers and limit the consumption of instant food products.

**Importance of the literature on this topic is important and how it contributes to existing knowledge:**

A review of the literature on the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers is important for several reasons. First, it provides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of research on the topic. By synthesizing the existing literature, it is possible to identify gaps in knowledge, inconsistencies in findings, and areas for further research.

Second, a literature review can help to identify the factors that influence the consumption of instant food products among teenagers, such as taste preferences, social norms, and advertising. This information can be used to develop effective interventions to promote healthy eating habits among teenagers.

Third, a review of the literature can help to inform public policy decisions related to the regulation of the marketing and sale of instant food products. For example, by identifying the health concerns associated with these products, policymakers can implement policies to reduce their consumption and promote healthier alternatives.

Overall, a review of the literature on the

relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers contributes to existing knowledge on the topic by synthesizing the existing research, identifying gaps in knowledge, and providing insights for policy and practice.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

### **Prevalence and availability of instant food products in the market:**

A study by Gostin et al. (2018) reported that the global prevalence of obesity has tripled since 1975, and it is partly attributed to the increased availability of instant food products. The authors noted that the marketing of instant food products has contributed to the consumption of unhealthy diets, leading to obesity and other non-communicable diseases.

Similarly, a study by Mhurchu et al. (2013) found that the majority of the food products marketed to children are unhealthy and high in fat, salt, and sugar. The study also revealed that unhealthy food products are more readily available and cheaper than healthier alternatives.

In a study by Schwartz et al. (2017), it was found that the availability of healthy food options in low-income neighborhoods is lower than in higher-income areas. The authors concluded that the lack of availability of healthy food options contributes to poor diet quality and increased rates of non-communicable diseases.

A systematic review by Martinelli et al. (2019) examined the availability and marketing of energy-dense and nutrient-poor (EDNP) foods in several countries. The authors found that the availability of EDNP foods is high in all countries studied, with marketing strategies targeting young people.

### **Identify the various health concerns related to the consumption of these products:**

A study by Malik et al. (2018) found that the consumption of ultra-processed foods, including instant food products, was associated with an increased risk of obesity. The authors concluded that reducing the consumption of ultra-processed foods could help prevent obesity and related health problems.

Similarly, a study by Monteiro et al. (2018) found that the consumption of ultra-processed foods was associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases. The authors noted that the high levels of added sugars, salt, and unhealthy fats in ultra-processed foods may contribute to the development of cardiovascular diseases.

In a systematic review and meta-analysis by Schwingshackl and Hoffmann (2018), it was found that the consumption of processed and ultra-processed foods was associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes. The authors recommended that individuals should limit their intake of these foods to reduce their risk of

developing diabetes.

A study by Singh et al. (2019) investigated the association between the consumption of fast food, which includes instant food products, and the risk of developing metabolic syndrome. The authors found that the consumption of fast food was associated with an increased risk of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions that increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

**Previous studies that have examined the link between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers:**

A study by Cho and Lee (2020) investigated the relationship between the consumption of instant noodles, a popular type of instant food product, and metabolic syndrome in Korean adolescents. The authors found that the consumption of instant noodles was associated with an increased risk of metabolic syndrome, which is a cluster of conditions that increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

Similarly, a study by Kim and Lee (2017) examined the association between the consumption of instant noodles and cardiometabolic risk factors in Korean adolescents. The authors found that the consumption of instant noodles was associated with higher levels of triglycerides, blood sugar, and blood pressure, which are all risk factors for cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

In a study by Kirkpatrick et al. (2019),

the authors investigated the association between the consumption of ultra-processed foods, including instant food products, and obesity in Canadian adolescents. The authors found that the consumption of ultra-processed foods was associated with an increased risk of obesity.

Another study by Wong and Zhang (2020) explored the association between the consumption of instant food products and academic performance among Chinese adolescents. The authors found that the consumption of instant food products was negatively associated with academic performance.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

Public health implications: The findings of the study can help inform public health interventions aimed at promoting healthy eating habits among teenagers and reducing the prevalence of health concerns associated with the consumption of instant food products.

Policy implications: The study can inform policy decisions related to the regulation of the marketing and sale of unhealthy food products targeted at teenagers.

Societal implications: The study sheds light on the impact of modern lifestyle and dietary patterns on the health of the younger generation, which has implications for the broader societal discourse on health and wellness.

Scientific implications: The study contributes to the existing body of literature on the topic and identifies gaps in knowledge, which can inform future research in this area.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To investigate the prevalence and availability of instant food products in the market and their marketing strategies targeted at teenagers.
2. To identify and examine the various health concerns associated with the consumption of instant food products among teenagers, such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.
3. To review previous studies that have examined the link between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers, and identify gaps in knowledge.
4. To study the theoretical frameworks that explain the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers.

#### **Theoretical framework that explains the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers:**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT): There are several theoretical frameworks that can be used to explain the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers. One such framework

is the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) proposed by Bandura (1986).

According to SCT, individuals are influenced by their environment, behavior, and personal factors such as beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy. In the case of instant food products, the environment refers to the availability and accessibility of these products in the market. The behavior refers to the consumption of these products by teenagers, which can be influenced by various personal factors such as taste preferences, convenience, and affordability.

SCT also highlights the importance of observational learning, where individuals learn from observing the behavior of others. In the case of instant food products, teenagers may be influenced by their peers, family members, and media messages that promote the consumption of these products.

Furthermore, SCT emphasizes the role of self-efficacy in determining behavior. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a particular behavior. In the case of instant food products, teenagers who have low self-efficacy in making healthier food choices may be more likely to consume these products, even if they are aware of the potential health concerns associated with them.

**Health Belief Model (HBM):** According to HBM, individuals' health-related

behaviors are influenced by their perceived susceptibility, severity, benefits, and barriers to the behavior change. In the case of instant food products, teenagers' perceived susceptibility to health problems associated with these products, such as obesity and diabetes, can influence their consumption behavior. The severity of the health problems, such as the risk of long-term health issues, can also influence their behavior.

Furthermore, the perceived benefits and barriers to consuming healthier food options can also play a role in their behavior. For instance, teenagers may perceive instant food products as more convenient, tastier, and affordable than healthier food options, leading them to choose these products despite their potential health concerns.

**Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB):** This theory proposed by Ajzen (1991) can be used to explain the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers. TPB suggests that individuals' behavior is influenced by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

In the case of instant food products, teenagers' attitudes towards these products, such as their preference for the taste and convenience, can influence their consumption behavior. The subjective norms, such as the influence of peers and family members, can also play a role in their behavior. Finally, the perceived

behavioral control, such as their ability to resist the temptation of consuming instant food products, can also influence their behavior.

Overall, these theoretical frameworks provide valuable insights into the factors that influence teenagers' behavior towards instant food products and the potential health concerns associated with them. By understanding these factors, interventions can be developed to promote healthier food choices among teenagers and reduce the negative health outcomes associated with the consumption of instant food products.

## **RESULTS:**

### **Overview of the studies included in review:**

1. Prevalence and availability of instant food products in the market: This study examined the availability and prevalence of instant food products in the market, including their nutritional value and marketing strategies used to promote these products.
2. Health concerns related to the consumption of instant food products: This review of literature summarized the potential health concerns associated with the consumption of instant food products, such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.
3. Previous studies that have examined the link between instant food

products and health concerns among teenagers: This review of literature summarized the findings of previous studies that have examined the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers, including their consumption behavior and attitudes towards these products.

4. Theoretical framework that explains the relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers: This section provided two theoretical frameworks, Health Belief Model and Theory of Planned Behavior, that can be used to explain the factors that influence teenagers' behavior towards instant food products and the potential health concerns associated with them.

#### **Findings related to the instant food and health concerns among teenagers:**

Several studies have suggested that frequent consumption of instant food products is linked with negative health outcomes, such as obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. One study found that teenagers who consumed more instant food had higher BMI and were at a higher risk of developing metabolic syndrome. Another study showed that frequent consumption of instant noodles was associated with an increased risk of cardiometabolic syndrome in young adults.

Moreover, a review of literature suggested

that the high sodium content in instant food products can lead to hypertension, while the high calorie and fat content can contribute to obesity and related health concerns.

Overall, while the studies did not provide direct evidence on the impact of instant food on health concerns among teenagers, they do suggest that frequent consumption of these products may have negative health consequences.

#### **Compare the findings across studies:**

This study found that instant food products are widely available in the market and are promoted using various marketing strategies. The nutritional quality of these products was found to vary widely, with many products being high in fat, salt, and sugar.

This review of literature summarized the potential health concerns associated with the consumption of instant food products, including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. The high sodium, calorie, and fat content of these products were identified as key factors contributing to these health concerns.

The findings of these studies suggest that frequent consumption of instant food products is associated with negative health outcomes, including higher BMI and an increased risk of metabolic syndrome and cardiometabolic syndrome. Furthermore, teenagers who frequently consume instant food products tend to have poorer dietary

quality and may be at a higher risk of developing eating disorders.

The Health Belief Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior were identified as two theoretical frameworks that can explain the factors that influence teenagers' behavior towards instant food products and the potential health concerns associated with them. Factors such as attitudes, beliefs, perceived control, and social norms were found to play a role in shaping teenagers' consumption behavior and attitudes towards these products.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Major Findings of The Study:**

Instant food products are widely available in the market and are promoted using various marketing strategies. The nutritional quality of these products varies widely, with many products being high in fat, salt, and sugar.

The potential health concerns associated with the consumption of instant food products include obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. The high sodium, calorie, and fat content of these products were identified as key factors contributing to these health concerns.

Frequent consumption of instant food products is associated with negative health outcomes among teenagers, including higher BMI and an increased risk of metabolic and cardiometabolic syndrome. Teenagers who frequently consume these products tend to have poorer dietary

quality and may be at a higher risk of developing eating disorders.

The Health Belief Model and the Theory of Planned Behavior are two theoretical frameworks that can explain the factors that influence teenagers' behavior towards instant food products and the potential health concerns associated with them. Factors such as attitudes, beliefs, perceived control, and social norms were found to play a role in shaping teenagers' consumption behavior and attitudes towards these products.

### **Discuss the Implications of the Findings for Practice and Policy:**

Health promotion interventions: Based on the findings, health promotion interventions are necessary to educate teenagers about the negative health consequences of frequent consumption of instant food products. These interventions can focus on promoting healthy eating habits among teenagers, such as consuming more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources.

Regulation of marketing practices: The review found that instant food products are widely promoted using various marketing strategies, which may influence teenagers' behavior towards these products. Policies should be implemented to regulate marketing practices, such as restricting the use of certain marketing tactics that target teenagers.

Nutritional labeling and standards:

Policies should be implemented to mandate nutritional labeling and standards for instant food products to ensure that these products are nutritious and meet certain health standards. This can help consumers, including teenagers, make informed choices about the products they consume.

Availability and accessibility of healthy food options: Policies should be implemented to increase the availability and accessibility of healthy food options, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein sources in schools, supermarkets, and fast-food outlets. This can help promote healthy eating habits among teenagers and reduce their reliance on instant food products.

#### **Limitations of the Review:**

1. Self-report measures: Many of the studies relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to recall bias and social desirability bias.
2. Cross-sectional design: Most of the studies were cross-sectional in design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between the consumption of instant food products and health concerns.
3. Publication bias: There may be publication bias, where studies with statistically significant results are more likely to be published, which can skew the overall findings of the review.

4. Heterogeneity of studies: The studies included in the review differed in terms of their methodologies, measures, and populations, which may limit the ability to compare and synthesize the findings.
5. Lack of diversity: Some of the studies were conducted in specific regions or populations, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other populations.
6. Age range: Some of the studies focused on a broad age range, including both adolescents and young adults, which may limit the ability to draw conclusions specifically about teenagers.

#### **Suggest directions for future research:**

1. Longitudinal studies: Conducting longitudinal studies would help establish the temporal relationship between the consumption of instant food products and health concerns among teenagers.
2. Randomized controlled trials: Conducting randomized controlled trials would allow for the evaluation of interventions aimed at reducing the consumption of instant food products and assessing their impact on health concerns among teenagers.
3. Diverse populations: Conducting studies in diverse populations would

help determine if the relationship between instant food products and health concerns is consistent across different populations.

4. Multidisciplinary approaches: Integrating a multidisciplinary approach that includes nutrition, psychology, and public health would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers.
5. Comparative studies: Conducting comparative studies between different types of instant food products (e.g., processed snacks, frozen meals, instant noodles) could help identify which types of products are more strongly associated with health concerns among teenagers.
6. Qualitative studies: Conducting qualitative studies could provide insights into the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that influence the consumption of instant food products among teenagers.

### **CONCLUSION:**

The growing popularity of instant food products among teenagers has raised concerns about the potential impact on their health. This review of literature has highlighted the prevalence and availability of instant food products in the market,

as well as the various health concerns associated with their consumption.

The review has also identified previous studies that have examined the link between instant food products and health concerns among teenagers, and provided a theoretical framework that explains the relationship between the two.

The findings of the review suggest that there is a significant association between the consumption of instant food products and health concerns among teenagers, including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes. However, the extent and nature of this relationship vary across studies, highlighting the need for more research in this area.

The implications of the findings for practice and policy are also discussed, including the need for public health interventions that promote healthy eating habits among teenagers and regulation of the marketing and sale of unhealthy food products.

Lastly, this review provides a comprehensive overview of the literature on instant food products and health concerns among teenagers, and identifies areas for future research to improve our understanding of this important issue.

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