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Factors associated with processed food consumption among school-going adolescents in Karachi

Samia Ahmed Khan

School of Public Health Dow University of Health Sciences, Pakistan

Nutrition transition may have influenced processed food consumption, particularly in middle-income countries like Pakistan. Rise in consumption of processed food items is observed due to ongoing nutritional shift. The excessive consumption of processed food and lack of physical activity is associated with obesity and other diet-related non communicable diseases. To find out contributing & promoting factors towards processed food consumption and frequency of consumption among school-going adolescents in Karachi, a cross sectional survey was conducted with sample n=478. Of the total, 92% of adolescents consumed processed food on weekly basis due to taste (64%) and diversified range of items (41%). Out of these, 59% were males and 52.3% older adolescents (15 to 19 years) consuming more. Affordability (98%) and availability (94%) were found as the two main contributing factors for the high consumption, whereas print and electronic media advertisements (91%), peer pressure (83%) and women employment (59%) were found as the major promoting factors for excessive consumption of processed food. Most consumable items included cold drinks (76%), breads and buns (68%), Banaspati ghee (67%), butter (64%), tetra pack sweetened milks (60%), ready to eat parathas (44%), jams and marmalades (43%), crisps and snacks (42%), fruit juices (40%), and chocolates (39%) weekly. Convenience, affordable prices, peer influences, and heavy marketing has increased processed food consumption and its major impact on health are commonly seen in adolescent group.

Keywords: Processed Food, Adolescents, Factors of Consumption, Advertisement, Affordability, Availability.

khansamia804@gmail.com