

# Changes in the inclination of women towards high calorie fast food and packaged food items

GEETA KUMARI AND MAMTA KUMARI

The study was undertaken to evaluate the organoleptic characteristics of the food products prepared by incorporating nutraceuticals singly and in blended forms. Three variants were prepared with incorporation of nutraceuticals at 7 per cent, 14 per cent, 21 per cent along with a bland nutraceutical free variant to serve as control. The four variants were prepared and served fresh to 15 semi-trained personals for the evaluation of organoleptic characteristics like colour, flavour, taste, texture and overall acceptability. Results revealed that the first two variants were accepted as well as control in terms of all the sensory attributes but not the third variant. Thus, it can be concluded that the two nutraceuticals can be successfully incorporated up to 14 per cent level.

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, women's choice of food habits has been changing. Their inclination towards high calorie fast food diets has been increasing. The changing social structure with increasing contribution of women is a chief factor contributing to the change in their food habits. The scarcity of time for cooking food, modern lifestyle and fashion-first attitude is driving them towards high calorie fast food, junk food and packaged food items. Previously, grains were cooked in the traditional way for consumption but today processed food items are very much in use. Although we acquire nutrition from both kinds of food but in junk and processed food, natural nutrients, proteins, fats, riboflavin, thiamine, niacin etc. get destroyed. The preservatives used to preserve these food items may prove very injurious to health if one starts using them quite often. These packaged food items can be prepared easily

in a very short time and they taste delicious as well. Due to this, a genuine inclination of women towards these food items has been seen. But still many of them value traditional food and consume it without being tempted towards fast food. As traditional foods are full of vital nutrients, they help to keep the individuals healthy. In traditional food, the natural form of fruits are used which along with minerals and vitamins also contain fibers which are very helpful in proper digestion. But nowadays the consumption of fruit juice has increased. If this juice is obtained from natural fruits, the individual automatically gets most of the essential nutrients but if the juice is artificial or contains chemical flavors, it is deficient of all nutrients and may also be harmful to health. Continuous consumption of fast food and high calorie diet results in various mental and physical disorders. Due to their taste, these food items create a kind of intoxication which attracts people towards them. Such foods if taken once a day may help in fulfilling the energy requirements of the day but once we get accustomed to them, we consume them frequently and hence become victims to various unwanted diseases. These days fresh vegetables used in most dishes are over cooked with lots of oil, spices and sauces which not only destroys the nutrients present in fresh vegetables but the preservatives used also harm our health

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### MEMBERS OF RESEARCH FORUM

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**Address for correspondence :**

**GEETA KUMARI**, Department of Food and Nutrition, Faculty of Home Science, T.M. Bhagalpur University, BHAGALPUR (BIHAR) INDIA

E-mail: geeta.kumari2512@yahoo.com

**Associate Authors :**

**MAMTA KUMARI**, Department of Food and Nutrition, Faculty of Home Science, T.M. Bhagalpur University, BHAGALPUR (BIHAR) INDIA

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(Heather *et al.*, 2006)

## METHODOLOGY

A survey of 500 women from the Bhagalpur district in Bihar was conducted to study the changing patterns in their food habits. The survey was conducted through a questionnaire prepared for the purpose. Women surveyed were divided on the basis of various parameters such as age, caste, religion, occupation, family income, educational qualifications, etc. and analyzed on various questions to get the overall effect of different parameters on the choice and inclination of women towards fast food and packaged food items. The values thus obtained were plotted against the particular parameter and further analyzed to get the overall impact of various factors causing the change.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

Study showed that the interest of women towards fast food is changing and they are becoming more and more inclined towards fast food and packaged food items. Lack of time is an important factor behind this shift from traditional food to fast food. These days not only the youth but even the kids are becoming deeply interested in fast food. They eat noodles, maggi, pizza, burger, etc. comparatively with much more interest than rice, pulse, milk, roti, green vegetables, etc.

Modern lifestyle and the increasing inclination towards urbanization have redefined the role of women in the society and the country. The greatest change has been noticed in the economic structure. The changing concept of a family has affected the lifestyle and food habits of women. The different modes of advertisement and the needs of working women have

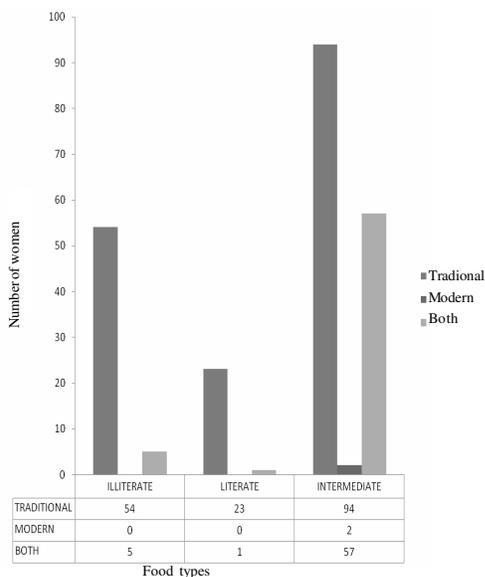


Fig. 1. Food items considered more suited for good health

made fast food and packaged food items very popular. Women of different age groups and educational qualifications have started eating them now and then. Its circulation has increased in spite of the fact that some women know about the harmful effects of some of the liquids and preservatives used in these food items (Fig. 1, 2, 3 and 4).

One important inference from the present study is that fast food has become popular among women of all age groups although its popularity is more among women of low and middle age groups. It has been found that women see the usage of fast food and junk food as status symbol in the society. Most women of high and middle age groups have started using fast food due to lack of time thus gradually resulting in an increasing fondness towards them. Some women have started using them

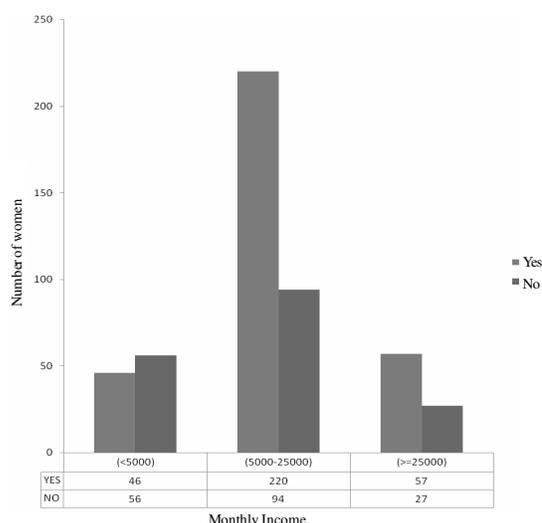


Fig. 2. Whether modern changing trends in food items are necessary

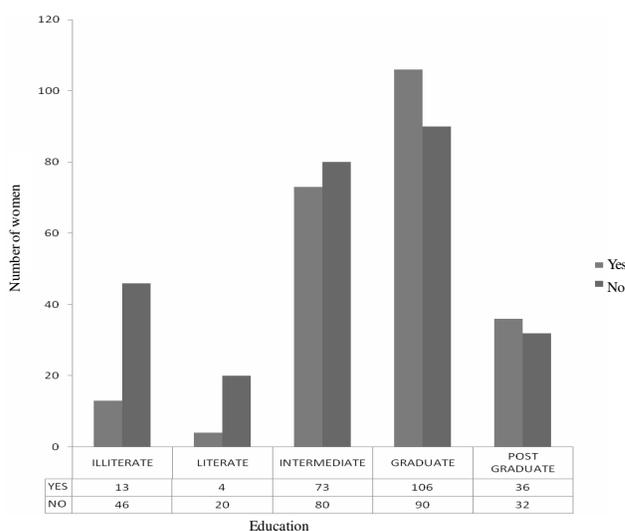


Fig. 3. Whether modern food habit is a form of status symbol

for a change in their food habits and also due to their children's tenacity.

Even women with high educational qualifications have started using fast food on regular basis although they are aware of the fact that conventional food items are more nutritious and healthy. The increasing popularity of these food items in marriage, birthday and business parties has also attracted highly educated women towards them.

It has also been found that most women of different age groups, monthly salary and educational qualifications use fast food although they are of the view that fast foods are not a better alternative to traditional food.

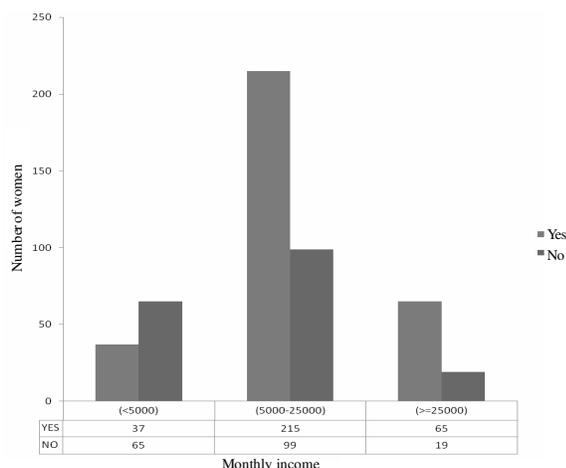


Fig. 4. Whether modern food items are used owing to time constraint

**Conclusion:**

While surveying women and studying their psychology for the changing trends in food habits among women in Bhagalpur district, it was found that the food habits are rapidly changing. The impact of monthly income, education, caste and

family type were also seen on their food habits. It can be concluded that women within the age of 35 years were more inclined towards fast food items. Working women are lesser interested in giving time for preparing food as it provides them time for other activities. Today fast food has not only become popular among youth but it has also become very popular among small children. Rather than eating rice, pulse, milk, bread, curd, green vegetables, etc., they eat noodles, maggi, pizza burger, etc. with greater interest. Today women have also started including fast food in their daily food habits. We should avoid eating foods with deep frying, over flavored and imbalanced diet in the food. Try to minimize eating fast food. One should also avoid long frozen raw materials and processed foods. One should take advantage of healthy side dishes offered at many fast food restaurants. For example, instead of French fries choose a side salad with low fat dressing or a baked potato or we may add a fruit bowl or a fruit and curd option to your meal. Other healthy choices include apple or orange slices, corn, steamed rice or baked potatoes. It must be kept in mind that fast food should be taken in such combination that they satisfy the taste and fondness of the user without having any ill effects on his/her health.

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