

**A PROJECT WORK ON
UNCOVERING THE FACTORS BEHIND RISING
JUNK FOOD CONSUMPTION FROM TEENAGERS TO
LATE ADOLESCENCE IN POKHARA**

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fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the project work report entitled “**Uncovering the factors Behind Rising Junk Food Consumption from Teenagers to Late Adolescence in Pokhara**” submitted for the BHM is my original work and the Project work report has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or other similar titles.

Srisha Dhakal

July,2026

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Project Work Titled “**Uncovering the Factors Behind Rising Junk Food Consumption from Teenagers to Late Adolescence in Pokhara**” Submitted by **Srisha Dhakal** for the partial fulfillment of the requirement of BHM embodies the Bonafide work done by her under my supervision.

.....

Suresh Raj Adhikari
Project Work Supervisor
July, 2026

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report titled “Uncovering the Factors Behind Rising Junk Food Consumption from Teenagers to Late Adolescence’ has been prepared in partial fulfillment for bachelor’s degree of BHM under the course design by the faculty of management, PU. This study is based on the prescribed research format involving the use of data.

At the time preparing this study, I have consulted with various personalities. So, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all whose work and ideas helped in conducting the studies. Sincerely I would like to pay my sincere gratitude to my project work advisor Mr. Suresh Raj Adhikari (Exam Co-Ordinator of the Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College) who guided me through project work. I would like to thank the entire NTHMC and Pokhara University team for providing such practical research-based work. This experience has reinforced my belief that practical knowledge holds greater significance than theoretical learning.

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION	i
CERTIFICATE.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	3
1.3 Research Questions	4
1.4 Research Objectives	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Literature Review	6
1.6.1 Preference of Junk Food.....	7
1.6.2 The Role of Peers, Family, and Advertising.....	8
1.6.3 Junk Food Habits Across Adolescence.....	9
1.6.4 Research Gap.....	10
1.7 Research Method.....	12
1.7.1 Research Design.....	12
1.7.2 Study Area	12
1.7.3 Population and Sampling	12
1.7.4 Data Collection Methods.....	13
1.7.5 Data Analysis Techniques	13
1.7.6 Validity and Reliability.....	14
1.7.7 Ethical Considerations.....	14
1.7.8 Limitations of the Study.....	15
CHAPTER II	16
FINDINGS	16

2.1 Preference for Junk Food over Home-Cooked Meals	17
2.2 Social Influences on Junk Food Consumption	18
2.3 Changes in Attitudes and Habits from Early to Late Adolescence .	19
2.4 Summary	20
CHAPTER III.....	22
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
3.1 Conclusion	22
3.2 Recommendations.....	22
REFERENCES:.....	24
APPENDIX	26
Semi-Structured Interview Guide	26

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Worldwide, diets have undergone significant changes in the last decades, and adolescents have been one of the groups most affected by this change. Energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods, also known as junk food, are now a regular part of teenage diet not only in high-income countries but also among low- and middle-income population. About 8 percent of children and adolescents were overweight in 1990, the proportion increased to 20 percent in 2022 and that change was about the same pace in different sexes. As of 2021, over one billion people are living with obesity around the world including some 159 million children and adolescents (WOF, 2024). It will be the first time the more prevalent malnutrition condition among school-age children and adolescents will be obesity instead of being underweight (UNICEF, 2024). It mainly happens due to changing diets with healthier ones being replaced by less expensive, high-calorie imported foods, according to the report. Adolescence is regarded as a phase when individuals are particularly susceptible to developing unhealthy eating habits. This phase features a development of a greater food choice independence, more pocket money, greater peer influence, eating out more, which all lead to making teenagers a food and beverage marketers' main target.

A number of studies that looked at the risk behaviors associated with the consumption of junk food in these teens found that sleep, physical activity, TV watching & internet use, eating fruit & vegetables, and eating habits are tightly linked (Bohara et al., 2021). Since the diets teenagers develop usually remain with individuals throughout adulthood, this phase is one of vital importance for preventing various types of diseases, notably obesity, heart diseases, stroke, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. Nepal cannot claim to have been shielded from these global dietary changes. Subedi, et al. (2017) refer to Nepal as a country in the advanced stage of nutrition transition, where people who once relied upon a traditional, staple-based diet are progressively switching to modern, convenience foods that have more calories, fat, and sugar. Their view on the change is that it is mainly due to increases in people's earnings, the

speeding up of the movement of population from countryside to cities, and the opening of borders for trade that have, at present, allowed the distribution to the consumer of supermarket and fast-food outlets selling processed foods, refined oils, and products with a lot of sugar, especially in the urban areas. The result is that the incidence of overweight, obesity, and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases has been on the rise all-round the country. This nutrition transition is most noticeable in urban centers and it is here that the density of fast-food and street-food vendors near to schools and housing areas has significantly increased within a decade.

Pokhara, one of the fastest developing urban centers in the region, is a good example of this transition. Research done at a random cross-section level among 538 adolescent students from Kaski district showed that more than 60% among them had eaten junk food in the past month, the figure increasing significantly in case of public-school students when compared to their private school counterparts (Bohara et al., 2021). Similarly, the same study further stated that the consumption of such junk food is most frequently taking place alongside friends or during a trip or journey and was notably related factors as living condition, family type and the immediate availability in the house of such snacks or snacks to that particular food item. Another research among school children in Pokhara showed that taste, convenience, peer influence and media ads were the ones frequently mentioned by teens for their preference and choice of such type of food items even at the cost of home cooked meals (Pahari & Baral, 2020). Same types of findings have been observed from studies conducted elsewhere in Nepal: The Chitwan study at student level was showing that quite a number of adolescents had their junk food habit linked directly to tv commercials (Pahari & Baral, 2017). At the country level, Nepal's 2014 Adolescent Nutrition Survey indicated that the most of the adolescent population consumed food stuff including processed or junk food at least on a day-to-day basis despite the prevalent understanding that such foods are harmful. In combination, the available literature highlights that adolescents' junk food consumption increase is mainly due to a combination of factors: preference for taste and convenience on the individual level, peer and family influence, advertising and media exposure, the spatial availability of junk food in schools and homes, and the urbanization and market liberalization structural

forces. What is less studied is teenagers' interpretation of these influences through their own words. Most work done so far on this issue, the Pokhara-based studies mentioned, among others, depends on cross-sectional surveys to measure the extent of a problem or the statistical links they can find. Such approaches can easily prove that, for a given example, junk food consumption varies by family type; they would be difficult to portray the factors influencing teenagers to choose a fast-food meal, such as chips, over dining in at home on any particular day. The way teenagers interpret, defend, and live their junk diet can, if known in detail, indicate what factors they find most convincing, how their relationship with junk food evolves as they get older, and what type of interventions or messages would likely change their behavior.

It is a matter of a gap because relying on statistical associations alone to design an intervention might not take into account the adolescent's actual situation when he or she makes a food choice, such as the social aspects of eating junk foods with friends, the pressures of the school schedule, or the snacking habits of a family. A qualitative study, such as one which is based on in-depth interviews or focus groups held with teenagers in Pokhara, could provide means of surpassing prevalence data and hazard ratios in the discussion of how teenagers view, explain, and deal with their own snack food consumption as they evolve from an early teen to a late one. These views in their own terms can provide insights of which factors are most influential to adolescents, how their relationship with junk food changes as they grow older, and what kinds of messages or interventions would make sense and change their behavior. Against this backdrop, the paper aims to uncover using qualitative approach what motivates high consumption of junk food at adolescent stage that corresponds to their shift from being teenagers to being young adults in Pokhara city area. The paper attempts not only to highlight adolescents' narratives, as well as quantitative findings from prior work that were mainly descriptive, thus combining two sources of data into a more comprehensive, grounded, and meaningful interpretation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A significant amount of junk food, or rather, a large proportion of it, is consumed by adolescents in Pokhara, as evidenced by the way a large number of teenagers are turning to snacks in wrappers, drinks with high sugar content,

and fast food rather than to their mothers' cooking. This trend has been developing parallel with the changes brought about by urbanization, with quick eateries popping up in proximity to schools, and advertising, along with the influence of friends, getting deeper. Still, what are the drivers of this behavior, and how does the pattern evolve when adolescents progress from early teenage years to later ones have not yet been explained sufficiently from the perspective of the individual teenagers. Current information on the topic is largely descriptive in nature and gives data on numbers of teens eating junk food and identification of those most affected, but provides little insight into the teenagers' own reasons for wanting to choose this kind of food, their justifications at the time, or even how their attitudes and habits evolve with age. If this knowledge gap remains, then practically speaking, those trying to deal with the situation have a problem. In Pokhara, the parents, educators, and public campaigns are forced to make guesses about factors, such as taste, ease of accessibility, the peer influence, family eating patterns, or the simple fact that junk food is all around the schools and neighborhoods, which really, from the perspective of the teens, make up the factors that they consider when making decisions about food. Until there is a clear and accurate understanding of the factors that the young people themselves consider in making decisions about how much and what kind of food they eat, strategies to promote healthier food choices are liable to be basic and separated from the life of a teenager in Pokhara which consists of studying, spending money on one's friends, and the attitude the family has regarding snacks.

In that case, the problem is hardly reduced only to the increasing consumption of junk food among Pokhara's youth, since the reasons behind the phenomenon are not really known. Until we uncover the way adolescents perceive and understand their own consumption when entering the last period of youth, we are hardly going to find ways to make interventions, school rules or family-level guidance that really speak to them.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Why do adolescents in Pokhara increasingly choose junk food over home-cooked meals as they move from their teenage years into late adolescence?

2. Why do social influences, such as friends, family, and advertising, play a role in shaping adolescents' junk food consumption habits?
3. What changes, if any, occur in adolescents' attitudes and reasoning toward junk food consumption as they transition from early to late adolescence?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To explore why adolescents in Pokhara choose junk food over home-cooked meals in their day-to-day lives.
- To examine how friends, family, and advertising influence the junk food choices adolescents make.
- To identify the differences adolescents, describe between their junk food habits as younger teenagers and as they get older.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is very important as it gets information about the extent of junk food consumption among teens in Pokhara directly and solely based on teenage perspective, instead of focusing merely on how many of them consume junk food. By collecting information from the direct explanation of teenagers for their lifestyle choices, this work is able to unearth a level of information that mere counting of numbers cannot, e.g., the situations, pressures, and the kinds of relationships in an adolescent's life that motivate a teen to go junky food on a particular day. Such types of information can help parents, teachers, and health workers go beyond general advices and meet the teenagers at their level and explain the reasons that are behind their decisions. The outcomes of this study may provide a way ahead for schools and families in Pokhara as regards food behaviors of adolescents. For example, when the main factors behind the decision making of adolescent teens are friendship ties, influence through ads, and the ready accessibility and affordability of snacks at or near the school, the schools will probably have a change of view in what they put up for sale or advertise in their environments. This change will also allow the parents to have an insight into how they may talk to their children concerning the food choices. This will make it a real-life conversation rather than a stereotypical one.

A part of this paper may even be useful for the initiatives of the local health sector, as such workers and authorities have to be given more detailed

information on prevalence in order to design effective programs. For instance, when this study captures how the teenagers' attitudes toward junk food are changed between early and late adolescence, a better understanding of the target age group and the appropriate messages can be achieved, whereas nowadays the majority of teenagers are treated as one segment only regardless of the age.

This investigation ultimately gives knowledge regarding the eating habits of adolescents in a rapidly expanding Nepali city from a different point of view. Currently, the literature relating to this subject in Pokhara is predominantly based on surveys and statistics; this paper, through its emphasis on teens' narratives, presents some sort of evidence that will be very instrumental for the researchers, students and organizations concerned with youths' health issues in similar urban areas.

1.6 Literature Review

The issue of junk food among adolescents has been of great concern to public officials as they try to figure out ways to keep the youth healthy, but much of what people know about this matter is based on a very limited source of information.

Research is very often conducted by simply asking adolescents how many times per week they eat packaged food, fried food, and junk food, computing prevalence rates using the collected data, and finally reporting their findings, without explaining why the number of those who frequently take junk food is high or why the frequency of the same is low. That is very typical of the Nepal scenario where most of the work about adolescents' eating behaviors is cross-sectional school-based surveys using structured questionnaires aimed at capturing frequency of consumption rather than the thought process behind the consumption behavior. Such types of surveys allow the identification of the magnitude and the raising of issues, e.g., of junk food as a public health threat, but they do not really explain why an adolescent, for example, would choose the packet of chips over the dal bhat, the situations where the one would be favored over the other, and how the justification will change when the person goes from early adolescence to late adolescence.

Likewise, much of the discussion that is drawn from that factual-based information also tends to rely only heavily on one or two types of explanations that, in turn, blame the poor level of understanding of nutrition and lack of

parental care, instead of considering whether the adolescents would define their own choices using these very terms. This review presents three kinds of literature that are connected with identifying that gap: Firstly, the reasons in everyday situations that adolescents have to prefer junk food instead of home-cooked meals. Secondly, the peer pressure, family, and advertising as social mechanisms influencing the adolescent eating choices. Thirdly, changing eating patterns of Junk food with the development phase of adolescence.

Combined, these three topics illustrate a dataset that although it can be said to be a great source of real-world evidence, there is a deficiency at the conceptual level, it mostly depends on risk factors and association of illness prevalence figures and rarely gives the adolescents an opportunity to talk freely, if necessary, about their food choices through open-ended questioning.

1.6.1 Preference of Junk Food

Consistently across the different Nepali studies the reason for preference of fast food is stated to be its availability and the fact that it needs no cooking the very opposite of a home-cooked meal which is a lengthy task. Bohara et al. (2021), while analyzing data on adolescents in public and private schools within Kaski district, came to the conclusion that adolescents' consumption levels were high even if they had reasonable knowledge about the consequences of the health risk that was involved in eating fast food and they also found that easy availability and ready-to-eat format were more significant factors that attracted the consumers. Pahari and Baral (2020), whose study were specific to children in Pokhara schools, came to a similar understanding, with them highlighting that the primary reason for preferring junk food was taste which was later backed up by advertising. When Sapkota and Neupane (2017) did research on the consumption patterns of secondary school students in Chitwan, they too found that eating behavior of the adolescent generation was quite similar to what has been reported before where the lack is not nutritional knowledge but the lack of motivation to do something about it.

Sources agree largely that there is a discrepancy between knowledge and action that remains unchallenged by researchers. Since adolescents have already grasped that fast food is indeed a health hazard, Bohara et al. (2021) state, focusing on nutrition education is, in fact, a wrong interpretation of the matter and it is only what several of those studies advocate. Daly et al. (2021) suggest

another interpretation, where adolescents themselves identify taste, price, and convenience as key factors whereas food for teenagers is considered mainly a carrier of social and emotional enjoyment and not only a means to survive or live. Ziegler et al. (2021) take it even a step forward, finding out through focus groups that adolescents constantly base their decisions of food on hedonic and situational factors, such as what is around in the moment instead of on health value, even when they are aware and capable of making healthier choices. As a whole, this body of work seems to show that teens are attracted to unhealthy food than of homemade meals mainly due to a rational reaction to an environment that has made getting food quick and convenient, which are some of the features that have been associated with fast food, but it does not mean lack of awareness is the reason. The shortcoming of the Nepali studies is precisely where their investigation is not extended to the question of what kind of situations adolescents perceive those choices as being made.

1.6.2 The Role of Peers, Family, and Advertising

Another aspect is how besides the adolescent the choices of what the teenager eats are also influenced by others. Lakra and Singh (2024) explored how families make decisions about fast food and came up with the conclusion that although parents' control over their children's dietary choices is real it gradually fades as their offspring become teenagers and are getting more freedom, leaving the way peer pressure and commercial advertising can influence adolescents in these areas. This is in agreement with the Chung et al. (2021), who, after summarizing a number of works, that showed how peer influence on eating behaviors via social media, they found that eating behaviors of teenagers are more and more being determined by observing their peers' eating on social media, especially if it's about fast food. Tsochantaridou et al. (2023) bring a different facet of the issue and the role of advertising directly through their concluding remark drawn from a review of recent findings that, food marketing has an impact consistently that adolescents will desire eating unhealthy food in the first place and will intend to do so, and this is strengthened rather than weakened by peer endorsement as teenagers normally watch and discuss the same advertising content together. The conclusion of Bohara et al. (2021) from the Nepali point of view to a certain extent is a policy-oriented version of the same, pointing to the need for stricter government

control of junk food advertising given teenage behavior is affected clearly that way.

What is worth challenging here is the tendency of this literature to treat peers, family, and advertising as three separate variables that can be measured independently, when the studies themselves suggest they operate as a single, tangled social environment rather than three isolated inputs. Lakra and Singh (2024) show family influence weakening, Chung et al. (2021) show peer influence strengthening, and Tsochantaridou et al. (2023) show advertising working through both. It would be more accurate to say that adolescence is a period in which the balance of influence shifts from family toward peers, with advertising exploiting whichever relationship is currently strongest, rather than a period in which each factor exerts a fixed and separate effect. Very little of this work, however, has asked Pokhara adolescents to describe how they experience this shifting balance themselves, which leaves an opening for research grounded more directly in adolescents' own accounts.

1.6.3 Junk Food Habits Across Adolescence

A third theme, closely related to the second one, relates to the change of unhealthy food habits of adolescents with the passage of time. According to Ziegler and collaborators (2021), the period of adolescence is characterized by a progression from predominantly parent-regulated eating to eating that is increasingly self-directed and peer-influenced, with the same adolescent experiencing quite different influences and liberties relating to food at one time than at another. For example, a fourteen-year-old might face quite distinct pressures about food and have different freedom from food restrictions than an eighteen-year-old. Doggui et al. (2021) through the longitudinal Canadian study following the development of adolescents from the age of eleven onwards, found clearly separable groups of adolescents in their behavior towards fast food and other eating, with the one group of teenagers demonstrating an almost constant deteriorating trend over time while the other was relatively steady, this clearly indicates the widespread belief that adolescence is a unique path is simply wrong. Daly and their colleagues (2021) give a possible explanation why the habits differ they point out that as the adolescents grow up, on one hand their independence increases, on the other hand their time spent with peers increases, social norms surrounding food become more impactful the further the

adolescents move from their early teenage years. Lakra and Singh's (2024) finding that parental authority is on the wane as age advances adds up and makes another perspective piece from the viewpoint of the family of the adolescents.

The one major weakness in this research is their reliance entirely on quantitative trajectory-type information or studies of areas other than Nepal for making statements about a developmental process that is quite plausible in a Nepal urban scenario, given substantial difference in the case of family structure, school schedule, and street food culture, which are different from the settings of those studies that have taken place. None of the researchers, that this paper has taken as reference, has gone to the extent of directly engaging a sample of Nepalese teenagers in getting to know from their perspective the way how their consumption of unhealthy food as early teens has transformed to the present time, their understanding, and their feelings about it.

This is exactly the place where a qualitative research work focusing on Pokhara adolescence with own accounts by them may contribute meaningfully, i.e., bridging the foreign-identified developmental patterns with a local, lived reality of being a teenager in a fast-paced developing Nepalese city.

1.6.4 Research Gap

Through reviewing of literature above, it is obvious that a lot about the frequency of junk food consumption among teenagers in Nepal is already available, but hardly anything is said about the underlying reasons as to why teenagers regard eating of junk food as the natural or preferred choice at a particular moment. Nepalese research works, even those conducted at the Pokhara Valley area, mainly are cross-sectional, questionnaires are used for data collection, and they focus primarily on the calculation of prevalence rates and finding statistical associations rather than trying to explain the rationale of the teenagers when they pick one meal over another.

Thus, we remain in the realm of knowing what is measured without understanding deeply enough its significance. On this issue both Bohara et al. (2021) and Pahari and Baral (2020) have demonstrated teenagers of Pokhara well aware of the dangers of the consumption of junk food but, interestingly, neither of their papers requested teenagers to express in freely spoken language their own reasons why the knowledge of health risks didn't result in change of

the behavior. In a similar way there is a deficiency in studies of the theme "social influence". Those that are focused on peers, family, and advertising usually treat those influences individually and look at their impacts on adolescents separately but in practice, the teenage generation facing such a situation most probably do see the influences as one fluid whole, and not as three different factors fighting for dominance over the adolescent's choice. No paper identified here sought after a response from Pokhara adolescents about their own strategies of dealing with the surrounding or how they experienced the transition from one influence to another at different stages of their growth.

The next area presents what might be the key limitation. Research on changes in adolescents eating behavior, such as the ones presented by Ziegler et al. 2021 and Doggui et al. 2021, were carried out in a completely different socio-cultural context (USA and Canada). Families and community structures, school systems, food availability, even the food environment itself were not similar to that of a large Nepali city like Pokhara. That means we would be wrong if we imagine that a teenage eating behavior development observed in a western city or a Canadian study would be perfectly translatable to the teenage situation in Pokhara, where the local food scene, extended (or nuclear) family living arrangements, and different rhythms of urbanization, etc., all lead to different food choices and practices among the residents of the area. Also, it should be mentioned that there has been no published paper on the behavior of adolescents in Pokhara that is directly linked with the changes or transformations that adolescents describe with regard to their changes in preferences related to junk food as they get older. From the available literature we know that teenagers consume a high amount of junk food and that specific factors are statistically related to junk food consumption. But still, we are left wanting as to the way a typical adolescent in Pokhara describes and actually lives the food pattern. What the author calls a qualitative gap which is essentially a gap between individual choice, influence from one's community and environment, and how one's behavior develops is the kind of gap for whose investigation this current study is well positioned. This it does by giving the participants' voices, the actual experiences and stories of the adolescents of Pokhara, rather than just counting their behaviors from the sidelines.

1.7 Research Method

1.7.1 Research Design

This paper employs a qualitative phenomenological research method as the research approach. The rationale for this choice is that the topics this study is focused on reasons why teenagers opt for junk food instead of meals at home, how the people around and advertisements influence these food decisions, what kind of differences teenagers observe in their own habits as their age grows they are not really the kind of questions that a simple questionnaire could answer at all profoundly. Numbers would indicate high junk food intake, but they wouldn't illustrate how a teenager feels when there is the temptation of a snack bar right on their way home to school or how their junk food relationship has changed over the years since they were younger.

The whole idea behind conducting phenomenological research is for precisely this type of issues to be dealt with. The method has the aim of comprehending through lived experiences the viewpoints of the people who are actually experiencing them instead of finding out explanations to the experiences through pre-determined variables set by the researcher.

1.7.2 Study Area

Pokhara is the city that will be the focus of our research project. We chose it as a city that has grown rapidly. In the schools, tutoring centers, and the areas where teenagers hang out, junk food shops, food stalls, and fast-food counters have become such a common sight that it looks like teenagers are getting used to such fast foods along with home-cooked meals at most times of a day. Being such a daily scene in Pokhara of eating junk food, which is also offered along with home-cooked food as a real option, this town seems to me like a good place for studying how teenagers pick the food for them.

1.7.3 Population and Sampling

We will be doing our sampling with a kind of selection of cases that will provide us with rich information as against a sample that is representative of the whole population statistically. Our major sample group will teenagers who have been brought up in Pokhara. We will get some from younger teenagers and some from older teenagers so that the study has the opportunity to detect differences in how junk food habits are described over that range of ages. When access to individuals is difficult, we will use snowball sampling together with

the initial purposive selection since adolescents and their families are more likely to agree to an interview when it comes from a referral someone already trusts, rather than an unfamiliar researcher.

1.7.4 Data Collection Methods

Data will mainly be collected through direct methods that the researcher participates in. On the other hand, secondary sources will be the supporting ones only offering background information.

A. Primary Data

Semi-structured interviews: These interviews will be the core method of data collection where open-ended questions will be used to obtain information individually from the adolescents about their food choices at their everyday level, people and their influences that play a role in making those food choices, and the changes made in their habits over time. The semi-structured nature gives participants the freedom of expression and a comfortable flow of the interview without forcing the researchers to use a fixed set of questions for them.

Informal Observations and Field Notes: To gain a more comprehensive understanding, quick observations at various locations that adolescents have pointed out including the stalls where snacks are being sold at the school corners and shopping places close to their homes will be captured through field notes. Besides, the data from these observations may help to physically place participants' narratives in the environments where these behaviors actually take place.

B. Secondary Data

Secondary data including the government publications, research papers, and reports about nutrition for Adolescents, the eating behaviors towards junk foods, etc. of the country will be consulted to gather information for providing a contextual background.

1.7.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The qualitative data from the interviews and field notes will be analyzed using a phenomenological interpretation of the thematic method. Subsequently, significant statements will be pinpointed. Those segments where a participant clarifies her/his reasoning or provides a firsthand account of decision or change experiences, for instance, will first be highlighted. These highlights will be

categorized and regrouped under relevant themes, a set of main ideas or topics that capture the core points or underlying meaning of the content expressed. The identification of themes will be cross-checked with the full text of the original transcripts to ensure that the themes reflect faithfully the words, expressions, and the overall flavor of participants' statements and thus avoid that they should become more products of our assumptions than of participants' words. In the end, the identified themes will be summarized into an account of the essence of the phenomenon that adolescents experience when it comes to fast food eating in Pokhara city and this will have a link to the existing findings as highlighted in a literature review that will be discussed as a pattern of a problem.

1.7.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability here mean credibility, transferability, and confirmability rather than statistical measures. Credibility will come from spending enough time with each participant that they move past guarded answers, and from checking summaries back with participants to confirm their meaning was captured correctly. Transferability will be supported by describing the setting and participants in enough detail for readers to judge relevance to similar contexts, without claiming broader generalization. Confirmability will rest on checking themes closely against the original transcripts and staying alert to the researcher's own assumptions as someone already familiar with Pokhara.

1.7.7 Ethical Considerations

Being aware that the subjects are young people, we will seek the consent of both the young person and their parent or guardian before doing any interview. In addition, it will be an open-ended and completely voluntary decision to participate. The teenagers can decide to leave the study whenever they feel so without explaining further. The interviews will be held at times and places chosen by the participants that are comfortable. The interviews will be framed in such a way that the adolescents will not feel judged about their eating habits. In order to preserve confidentiality, real names will be replaced by pseudonyms, recordings will be kept securely and no one apart from the researcher will have access to them. It is possible that through some of the participants, topics of family relations and personal habits will be referred to; in these cases, great care will be taken to keep the interview only about food

choices, thus avoiding the conversation from becoming personal or family-related. The research outcomes will be presented in such a way that through the details disclosed, neither a participant nor his family will be able to be identified.

1.7.8 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to adolescents in Pokhara so it gives a picture of the local area only and cannot serve as a basis for other adolescents elsewhere in Nepal. In the purposive and snowball sampling approach participants usually are those who are more open in their conversations with a researcher. So this sampling method may exclude some more reserved or quiet adolescents whose views on junk food consumption may actually differ. The interview also requires the adolescent to describe and remember their patterns of behavior from earlier in their adolescent life. Recollection of past eating habits may be more dependent on present self-perception than on reality at that time. The mere presence of the researcher while making the observations during shopping or at the snack stalls could affect the behavior of adolescents at that moment. Furthermore, parental consent requirement may bring in a bias where parents who are less approachable or less keen to participate are more likely to have their children underrepresented.

CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

This chapter discusses the outcome of an interview-based study involving 15 young people living in Pokhara who were asked very open-ended questions to delve in depth about their thoughts and views on a given topic. The sample consisted of boys and girls ranging from 13 to 15 years old, i.e., early teenagers, and those in late adolescence aged between 16 and 19 years. Participants selection was done via purposive and snowball sampling methods. The selection of sampling method aimed was to have individuals with relevant experiences, background diversity, and representation of the both sectors, namely, public and private, as the participants or case studies. Besides interviews, informal observations were also conducted around various settings such as school buildings, tuition classes, and youth hangouts. These observations aimed at capturing the environment within which the young people made their dietary decisions on a daily basis.

A thematic analysis was performed on the data gathered through in-depth interviews and other related methods. This type of analysis is used within the phenomenological tradition in research. It allowed the researcher to get to know the essence of participants' life experiences, and to understand their points of view, perspectives, and what they mean and signify when they talk about eating junk food. While reviewing, categorizing, and putting together ideas that recurred and that appeared important during the research analysis process, the researcher focused on finding out not only those experiences that were similar in all the participants but also respecting the uniqueness of each person. Based on the research findings, this paper puts forwards three themes, which are related to three different points that it was seeking the answer for and which will also be the basis for its further discussion. The first one is devoted to the underlying causes behind the adolescents' preference of junk food over healthy options provided through meals at home. The second theme deals with the factors that shape adolescents' food choices and eating habits, including, besides the role of advertising, the influence of family and peers. The third theme outlines the evolution of changes in adolescents' attitudes, making plans, and

eating behavior as they grow from the very early adolescence towards adolescence proper.

Generally speaking, the study results shed new light on what adolescents' eating habits, particularly with regard to junk food, actually imply to them on a day-to-day level. Not just the numbers of the times they were eaten but the themes also talk about the interconnections among individual likes, peer pressure, surroundings, and becoming autonomous of their own decisions which determine what the adolescents are feeding on from the fridge. So, the outcome of the work is not only very informative but also helpful to better understand why today's teens consume an excessive number of fast foods and to put the whole story on teenagers' shoulders in their own words.

2.1 Preference for Junk Food over Home-Cooked Meals

One aspect which most of the students interviewed were really clear about was their love for junk food compared to their home-cooked food. Most of them said junk food to be better just because of its good taste, ease of preparation, cheap, and always available in shops. Though home-cooked meals were recognized as healthier, several adolescents found them as monotonous, dull, and inconvenient, especially when it came to busy study days. The students also viewed junk food as an easy-to-eat, delightful, and highly satisfying option that would effortlessly fit into their daily routine.

14-year-old Aarav said, "Dal-bhat is basically the same meal all the time. Chips, momo, and chowmein, however, are great and I can quickly eat them after tuition." 15-year-old Priya also admitted, "I always get annoyed to wait at home for the food being prepared. Once I come back from school and I get hungry, I head for the nearest shop to buy noodles or biscuits. The whole process does not only take some minutes but is also not expensive." These remarks point to a fact that adolescents are guided towards their meal decision by their immediate gratification and convenience, rather than a nutritional value. Junk food's quick availability was one more thing that the students felt was really contributing to their choice of eating junky food. They said that snack shops, fast-food counters, and small grocery stores nearby schools, colleges, and residential areas were making it really easy for the students to opt for junk food. Since these places were located on students' daily paths, buying

packed snacks, soft drinks, or ready-to-eat-foods naturally turned into a daily routine habit instead of a conscious choice.

Rahul (17) said, "While coming down from college, there are many small shops on the side of the road. So, it's just easier to grab either the samosas or cold drinks instead of going to a restaurant." Many senior students were quick to point out that besides school, the other pressures of life that included tuition classes, extracurricular activities, and time with friends, left them with very little time that they could get home for the food to be ready. Hence, their preference was to pick and eat the type of food which did not require any cooking at all. Notably, most of the participants were pretty aware of the health risks of eating junk food. Still majority admitted if they often eat the kinds of food they usually eat that may cause some health problems like weight gain, poor nutrition, etc. And yet this insight rarely influenced their behavior regarding healthy dieting. Taste, convenience accessibility were the major factors that decided day to day choices when participants were given a choice between food that would make their health better and not.

Results clearly show that adolescent's preference for junk food has more to do with the realities of their everyday lives rather than a knowledge gap on healthy eating. The appeal to the palate, the ready availability, the lack of time combined with the convenience of being able to prepare and eat a food item at one time makes junk food more preferred than home-cooked meals to several Pokhara adolescents.

2.2 Social Influences on Junk Food Consumption

One of the main factors that came up consistently in the interviews was the impact of social factors on teenagers' junk food habits. Most students said that their food choices were influenced by the people along with various media they interact with every day and were also the result of personal liking of a certain type of food. Three key social aspects friends, family and advertisements- were pointed out by the youth as social factors that influence their eating habits.

Of these, peer influence was the most powerful one. It turned out that a large number of adolescent students admitted that they were more inclined to eat junk food when they were with their friends, since it had become a customary type of social interaction activity to eat food together. Sneha (16)

remarked, "I and my friends always end up having food. If one person suggests going for pani puri or for burgers, it becomes a matter of everyone joining, and there are lots of people involved. It feels much more fun." Similarly, Bikash (18) said, "My friends often make jokes about me bringing a tiffin from home. Therefore, I also began ordering outside food in the form of junk food." It's quite evident from these comments that peer approval and group activities are two primary driving factors behind teenagers' preference for junk food rather than home-packed meals.

Family influence reflected varying experiences among the students. Although some parents discourage the use of junk food habitually, many of the adolescents expressed that it's a rather hard nut to crack due to the busy life schedules and less amount of supervision. Riya (14) said, "My mother usually gets angry at me, but when she is busy, I just use my weekly savings to buy my favorite snack." At the same time, senior teenagers who have developed more independence in choosing their own food, stated that the parents gave them the freedom to eat whatever they please or, in other cases, the junk food was treated as a small reward once in a while. Advertising also played an influential role in adolescents' food choices. Teenagers were often influenced by television advertisers, their parents, and by popular brands and products such as soft drinks and fast food. Participants explained that repeated encounters with appealing advertisements were likely to raise their interest in purchasing and eating more junk food, mainly if those products are easy to get and buy.

According to the interviews and observations by the researcher, social media is one of the main factors through which the younger generation is influenced to choose certain kind of food. Friends were ranked higher than family members or teachers as the most important influencers for the group while family supervision was found to decrease as a child grows older. The omnipresence of fast-food ads was another factor that strengthened children's temptation to buy and consume more of these foods making these elements very significant in their diet formation.

2.3 Changes in Attitudes and Habits from Early to Late Adolescence

The study findings showed clear changes in teenagers' attitudes and their eating habits of junk food from early to late adolescence. While younger ones (13-15 years), apart from being influenced by their friends, usually mentioned

that they had to eat for the flavor, many of them also confessed that they felt guilty or tried to hide the fact from their parents, their older counterparts said the reasons they consume junk food more frequently is because they now have more freedom, their own allowance and can decide their meals independently, which results in a higher level of junk food intake overall, they said.

"When I was in class 8 or 9, I ate junk food secretly. Now I don't really mind, " said Aashish (19). "I have my own money and it's totally mine I can eat what I like." He added, "I am sure that eating occasionally won't mess up my health." Likewise, Anjali (18) stated that with her growing maturity, her friend time was expanding so that junk food became just one of regular activities in their meetings. "I know it's not very good for you, " she was aware about, "but this sort of thing has already become my life style." These testimonies clearly show that a gradual increase in self-sufficiency and shifts in social activities led to junk food being incorporated as something very common for the teenagers' lives. Junk food eating among some teenage respondents was also connected to their academic pressure and different forms of relaxing. They elaborated that packaged snacks, fast food or even highly sugared drinks are the preferred items during the time when they are preparing exams, going for tuition classes or merely sitting on their phones, for these foods are very convenient and do not require any meal preparation, they say.

It was observed that adolescents' junk food consumption increased with age as they gained greater independence, spending power, and freedom to make their own food choices. Although most participants were aware of the health risks, junk food gradually became a regular part of their daily routines, social activities, and response to academic stress.

2.4 Summary

A few points stood out after we analyzed the data and discussed our findings: junk food consumption by teenagers in Pokhara is primarily a result of personal, social, and environmental factors interacting. Majority of the adolescents interviewed liked junk food to a great extent compared to home-cooked meals as well due to taste aspects only, as well as other characteristics like convenience, affordability, and easy availability although they were conscious of negative health effects. In addition, the study pointed out the peer group had the most significant impact on the eating habits of adolescents while

it was family supervision and food advertising that to a large extent helped form their choices about what to eat. As adolescents went on from being 11-12 years old to 17-18 years old, more autonomy, additional pocket money and larger peer groups led to a more frequent uptake of snacks and junk food. In addition, our field observations confirmed the existence and high availability of junk food shops near schools and tuition centers. To sum up, our investigation suggests that an increasing preference and consumption of junk food among Pokhara youths is a combination or rather an interaction result of their personal liking, influences from society and also food availability rather than being the consequence of nutritional ignorance.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Conclusion

This research delved into the reasons behind the increasing trend of young people's reliance on junk food while living in Pokhara from the viewpoint of the students themselves. Through a qualitative phenomenological design, he discovered that consumption of junk food is the result of several factors: personal tastes, peer pressure, and surroundings, but, more than lack of knowledge of healthy eating.

The results illustrated that students consumed junk food mostly due to its flavor, portability, low prices, and accessibility close to the schools, coaching centres, and housing areas where students reside. Although the participants' knowledge regarding unhealthy impacts of frequent use of junk food was not lacking, such awareness rarely had a significant effect on the participants' food habits. Convenience and immediacy of gratification have been, therefore, the main determinants behind their dietary decisions. In addition to this, it has also been pointed out by the author that friends of adolescents exerted the strongest influence on the food selections of adolescents. As the teens matured, the influence of family decreased significantly on their food choices whereas advertising, and social media continued to inspire the intake of junk food. In their teenage phase from middle to upper-level adolescents, the increased degree of freedom, allowance, and larger circle of social connections have transformed junk food consumption to the more regular component of the teens' day to day life.

In conclusion, this paper suggests that to curb junk food eating among the teenagers it's not enough to simply provide them with the information about nutrition; one should also work on making the home environment supportive of good food habits, promoting wholesome food options in the schools and making healthy foods more widely available at the community's level.

3.2 Recommendations

As a conclusion to what the research revealed, the following recommendations are made:

Parents: They ought to foster healthy diets at home, like fixing wholesome meals, preventing children having too much of money to be spent on junk food, and talking openly about how to choose healthier foods with their kids.

Schools: These could help students by teaching the importance of eating well and making them aware of what unhealthy snacks mean. Also, by limiting availability of snacks and encouraging carrying of balanced diet at home.

Health Professionals: The health departments could arrange campaigns that explain the dangers of high caloric diets through the lens of public health without overlooking youth's lifestyles that make them crave for fast foods and other convenience items.

Food Industry: Fast food places, snack bars and cafés should be incentivized to bring out low price, high nutritional food that young people would like to eat.

Researchers: It would be helpful if future research used bigger group of people from all districts of Nepal and combined both qualitative and quantitative methods in data collection. Long term health impacts of junk food intake and the role of school- and community-based nutritional programs to be assessed.

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APPENDIX

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Title of the Study: Uncovering the Factors Behind Rising Junk Food Consumption from Teenagers to Late Adolescence in Pokhara

Introduction

Namaste. My name is Srisha Dhakal and I am studying Bachelor in Hotel Management (BHM) at Nepal Tourism and Hotel Management College, Pokhara University. I am performing this study to find out the reasons leading to increasing junk food intake among adolescents in Pokhara. You are free to join at any time and we assure you that everything you tell us is absolutely safe. Your name will be completely hidden, and we will mention other participants with their fake names only.

Participant Information

- Participant Code: _____
- Age: _____
- Gender: _____
- School/College: _____
- Date of Interview: _____
- Place of Interview: _____

Interview Questions

- Will you please let me know about your daily meals?
- On average, how frequently do you consume foods such as chips, noodles, burgers, pizza, momo, soft drinks or packaged snacks?
- Can you explain why you often pick junk foods over the ones from the home?
- Which characteristics of junk foods make them the most appealing for you?
- Do your friends have an impact on the decision when you buy/junk food together?
- How do your parents or other family members feel about your junk food consumption?

- Have you ever been inspired to get/ buy/buy a particular product after watching/ seeing/ hearing/ an advertisement or following food-related hashtags, promotions, posts, etc. on social media?
- Do you feel that you're eating patterns change in accordance with your age? If yes, how?
- Are you knowledgeable about the consequences on health of eating junk food, if yes, does that guide your way of eating?
- In your opinion, what can be the solution to motivate adolescents to eat more healthier foods?

Closing Statement

I really appreciate your taking time and participating in this survey. With your help, we will have a clearer picture on the habits of the teenagers' eating in Pokhara and also the research results will be used to make a contribution at the academe level only.