

A Study on prevalence and influencing factors for junk food consumption among preschool children in Labuduwa Division

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Increased junk-food consumption among all age groups is common, creating a public health challenge with global prevalence of around 70%. Preschool children are a vulnerable group for junk-food consumption related diseases. Majority of studies addressed adolescent and teenagers only. This study was conducted to explore the prevalence of junk-food consumption among pre-school children. Sixty-eight pre-school children and their parents in Labuduwa Grama Sevaka division, Poddala MOH area were selected to study the influencing factors and the knowledge and attitude on junk-food consumption. Accordingly, literature study was conducted with online and hand searching. A survey was commenced with the approval from ERCFIM and necessary authorities. Cross sectional data was collected from parents by interviewer-administered questionnaire and analyzed. Prevalence of the junk-food consumption was 90% in participants and 87% in family members. Both 56% of boys and 44% of girls were consuming junk-food. Chocolate and ice-cream were the mostly consumed junk-foods. Children started junk-food consumption after one year of age and positive correlation was observed with the age and consumption. Most children consume junk-food as snacks and as breakfast and dinner. Majority expend over Rs. 200.00 on junk-food daily. Of the children, 69% were healthy and 31% were ill. Asthma was frequently observed while overweight and allergic rhinitis were in equal frequencies. Commonest influencing factor for junk-food consumption was taste. Convenience and lack of time were the reasons given by parents for providing junk-food. Among the parents, 55% knew the nutritional content of junk food, 45% of parents knew the effect of junk-food on overall health. If affordable, 95% parents were willing to switch to healthy alternatives. Therefore, awareness programs were conducted at the Pre-schools to provide practicable solutions.

Keywords: *Junk-food, Pre-school children, Overweight, Health, Consume*