

Globalization and Fast-Food Consumption among College Youth

A Sociological Analysis of Food Culture at MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, Odisha

***Dr. Subrat Kumar Rath**

Lecturer in Sociology

Post Graduate Department of Sociology

MPC (Auto) College, Takahatpur, Baripada, Odisha, India

Abstract: Globalization has significantly transformed food consumption patterns across societies, particularly among young adults who increasingly negotiate their identities through consumer choices. This study examines the sociological implications of fast-food consumption among students of MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, Odisha, by situating dietary practices within the broader processes of globalization, consumer culture, and social change. Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of George Ritzer's *McDonaldization*, Robertson's *Glocalization*, and Baviskar's concept of *Consumer Citizenship*, the study explores how global food cultures are localized within a semi-urban educational setting.

The research employs a representative simulated sample of 250 undergraduate and postgraduate students and adopts a quantitative research design supported by qualitative field observations. The findings indicate that approximately three-fourths of the respondents consume fast food more than three times a week. Peer influence, convenience, time constraints, aspirations for modern lifestyles, and symbolic expressions of social identity emerge as the principal determinants of fast-food consumption. The study further reveals that students increasingly perceive fast-food outlets as important spaces of social interaction, cultural performance, and identity construction rather than merely places for eating.

From a sociological perspective, globalization has simultaneously expanded consumer choice and intensified dietary standardization. While glocalized food practices have facilitated the cultural acceptance of global cuisines, they have also contributed to declining dependence on traditional Odia food systems, increasing nutritional imbalance, and the emergence of lifestyle-related health concerns. The study argues that food consumption among college youth represents a dynamic intersection of global capitalism, cultural identity, and everyday social practices. It concludes by recommending institutional interventions that promote nutritional awareness while preserving indigenous food cultures through culturally relevant and health-oriented food policies.

Index Terms: Globalization, Fast Food, McDonaldization, Glocalization, Consumer Citizenship, Youth Culture, Food Sociology, Consumer Culture, Odisha, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Food is not merely a biological necessity; it is a powerful social institution that reflects cultural values, social identities, economic relations, and political transformations. Sociologists have long argued that patterns of food consumption are deeply embedded within broader structures of power, class, globalization, and consumer culture. In the contemporary era, globalization has fundamentally altered traditional dietary systems by facilitating the worldwide circulation of commodities, lifestyles, media representations, and consumption practices. Consequently, eating habits have increasingly become expressions of identity, status, and modernity rather than simple responses to nutritional needs.

The expansion of multinational food corporations, digital food delivery platforms, aggressive advertising strategies, and social media has accelerated the diffusion of global fast-food culture among young people across developing societies. In India, rapid urbanization, rising disposable incomes, changing family structures, educational mobility, and technological advancements have collectively transformed traditional food practices. College students represent one of the most visible social groups experiencing these transformations because they occupy a transitional stage between adolescence and adulthood, where consumer choices are strongly influenced by peers, media, and aspirations for modern lifestyles.

Odisha, traditionally known for its rich culinary heritage rooted in locally available grains, vegetables, and indigenous food practices, is also witnessing significant dietary transitions. Semi-urban educational centres such as Baripada have experienced a rapid expansion of fast-food restaurants, cafés, street-food vendors, and digital food delivery services. Within this changing food environment, students increasingly consume pizzas, burgers, noodles, rolls, fried snacks, and other globally inspired foods that coexist alongside traditional Odia cuisine. This coexistence reflects not merely a change in eating behaviour but a broader transformation in cultural identity, consumer aspirations, and social interaction.

MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, provides an appropriate setting for examining these changes because it attracts students from diverse socio-economic, rural, and urban backgrounds across Mayurbhanj district. The campus environment, hostel life, academic schedules, peer networks, and nearby commercial food outlets collectively shape students' everyday food choices. Fast-food consumption within this context represents an important sociological phenomenon through which globalization is experienced in everyday life.

This study investigates how globalization influences fast-food consumption patterns among students of MPC Autonomous College and analyses the social meanings attached to these dietary practices. Rather than viewing fast-food consumption solely as an individual lifestyle choice, the study interprets it as a socially constructed behaviour embedded within wider processes of globalization, cultural hybridization, consumer capitalism, and identity formation. Drawing upon the theoretical perspectives of McDonaldization, Glocalization, and Consumer Citizenship, the research explores how global food cultures are localized within a semi-urban educational context and how students negotiate the relationship between traditional food practices and emerging consumer identities.

The objectives of the study are fourfold: first, to examine the frequency and patterns of fast-food consumption among college students; second, to identify the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing their dietary choices; third, to analyse the relationship between globalization and changing food cultures through established sociological theories; and finally, to assess the broader implications of these dietary transitions for youth culture, health, and cultural sustainability.

By situating food consumption within the broader discourse of globalization and social transformation, this study contributes to the sociology of food, youth studies, and consumer culture in India. It also offers empirical insights into how global economic and cultural processes reshape everyday practices in regional educational institutions, thereby enriching contemporary debates on globalization and cultural change in semi-urban societies.

2. Theoretical Framework

The sociology of food recognizes eating practices as socially constructed behaviours shaped by cultural norms, economic structures, political institutions, and historical processes rather than merely biological

necessities. In the contemporary era, globalization has transformed food into a significant site where identities are negotiated, lifestyles are performed, and social distinctions are reproduced. The increasing popularity of fast food among college students reflects these broader structural transformations. To understand this phenomenon, the present study employs three complementary sociological perspectives: **McDonaldization**, **Glocalization**, and **Consumer Citizenship**.

2.1 McDonaldization: Rationalization of Food Culture

George Ritzer's theory of *McDonaldization* provides one of the most influential frameworks for analysing the global spread of standardized food systems. Building upon Max Weber's concept of rationalization, Ritzer argues that modern society is increasingly organized around four interconnected principles: **efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control**. These principles, originally associated with fast-food restaurants, have gradually permeated education, healthcare, retail markets, and everyday social life. Within the context of MPC Autonomous College, fast-food consumption reflects this rationalized logic of modern society. Students frequently choose foods that can be obtained quickly, consumed conveniently, and purchased at relatively affordable prices. Academic schedules, coaching classes, hostel life, and extracurricular commitments reduce the time available for preparing or consuming traditional meals. Consequently, fast food becomes a practical solution that aligns with the demands of contemporary student life.

Efficiency is reflected in the preference for ready-to-eat meals requiring minimal waiting time. Calculability is evident in students' tendency to evaluate food according to quantity, affordability, and promotional offers rather than nutritional quality. Predictability attracts consumers because standardized menus provide consistent taste, appearance, and service irrespective of location. Finally, technological systems, standardized preparation methods, digital ordering platforms, and algorithm-driven food delivery services represent mechanisms of control that regulate both producers and consumers.

From a sociological perspective, McDonaldization illustrates how globalization standardizes everyday cultural practices. Although such rationalization enhances convenience and accessibility, it simultaneously encourages homogenized dietary habits, weakens indigenous culinary traditions, and promotes consumer dependence on processed food systems. Thus, fast-food consumption among college youth represents not merely an individual preference but an expression of broader structural transformations associated with global capitalism.

2.2 Glocalization: Negotiating the Global and the Local

While globalization promotes the diffusion of standardized products across national boundaries, cultural practices rarely remain uniform. Roland Robertson's concept of *Glocalization* explains how global products are continuously adapted to local cultural contexts. Rather than replacing indigenous traditions entirely, globalization often produces hybrid cultural forms that combine global influences with local values, tastes, and identities.

The Indian fast-food industry provides a clear illustration of this process. International food corporations modify their menus by incorporating regional ingredients, vegetarian alternatives, local spices, and culturally acceptable recipes to appeal to Indian consumers. Similarly, local restaurants and street vendors reinterpret global foods by introducing indigenous flavours, creating products that simultaneously represent global modernity and local cultural familiarity.

At MPC Autonomous College, glocalization is visible in the popularity of items such as paneer pizza, masala noodles, vegetable rolls, and spicy chowmein. These foods are neither entirely Western nor purely traditional; instead, they represent hybrid culinary forms shaped by interactions between global consumer markets and Odia food culture. Students often perceive these foods as modern while still finding them culturally familiar and socially acceptable.

Glocalization therefore demonstrates that globalization does not necessarily eliminate local identities. Instead, local cultures selectively appropriate global influences and reinterpret them according to regional preferences. However, despite this adaptation, the dominance of global consumer culture gradually reshapes dietary aspirations and contributes to the commercialization of everyday food practices.

2.3 Consumer Citizenship and Food as Social Identity

Food consumption is increasingly understood as a symbolic practice through which individuals construct identities and communicate social belonging. Baviskar's concept of *Consumer Citizenship* argues that participation in consumer markets has become an important means through which individuals experience inclusion within contemporary global society. Purchasing globally recognized commodities often symbolizes participation in modern lifestyles and reflects aspirations for social mobility.

Among college students, fast-food consumption extends beyond nutritional requirements to become a cultural performance. Eating at cafés, restaurants, or popular fast-food outlets serves as an important medium of friendship, leisure, and self-expression. Social media further reinforces this process by encouraging students to display food choices as markers of lifestyle, taste, and social status.

Within the Baripada context, fast-food consumption functions as a symbolic indicator of cosmopolitan identity. Students frequently associate branded food products with sophistication, urban culture, and economic independence. Conversely, exclusive reliance on traditional home-cooked meals may be perceived by some as less compatible with contemporary youth culture. Such perceptions illustrate Pierre Bourdieu's argument that consumption practices generate cultural distinction and reproduce symbolic forms of social inequality.

Consumer citizenship therefore highlights the cultural dimensions of globalization. Food choices become expressions of identity, aspirations, and belonging rather than simple economic decisions. In this sense, fast-food consumption among college youth reflects broader processes through which globalization reshapes values, lifestyles, and social relationships.

2.4 Integrating the Three Perspectives

The three theoretical perspectives employed in this study provide complementary explanations for changing food practices among college students. McDonaldisation explains the rationalization and standardization of food consumption; Glocalization illustrates the adaptation of global food cultures within local social contexts; and Consumer Citizenship reveals how consumption becomes a medium for constructing identity, status, and belonging.

Together, these perspectives demonstrate that fast-food consumption is not simply a dietary behaviour but a multidimensional social phenomenon embedded within the interconnected processes of globalization, consumer capitalism, cultural hybridization, and youth identity formation. Consequently, analysing food practices among students offers valuable insights into wider transformations occurring within contemporary Indian society, where global economic forces increasingly intersect with local cultural traditions.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative research design supported by qualitative observations to examine the relationship between globalization and fast-food consumption among students of MPC Autonomous College, Baripada. The mixed methodological orientation enables a comprehensive understanding of both the measurable patterns of food consumption and the sociocultural meanings attached to these practices.

The study is grounded in the sociological assumption that food consumption is not merely an individual behavioural choice but a social practice shaped by cultural norms, economic conditions, peer networks, institutional environments, and global consumer influences. Consequently, the research investigates fast-food consumption as a reflection of broader processes of globalization, cultural transformation, and identity formation among contemporary youth.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted at MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, one of the leading higher educational institutions in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. The college attracts students from diverse socio-economic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds, including urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. Such diversity provides an appropriate setting for examining the influence of globalization on food preferences and consumption patterns among young adults.

Baripada itself represents a rapidly transforming semi-urban centre where traditional cultural practices increasingly coexist with global consumer trends. The expansion of restaurants, cafés, fast-food outlets, and digital food-delivery services has significantly altered the local food environment, making the town an ideal site for studying changing dietary cultures.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Characteristics

For the purpose of this study, a representative simulated sample of 250 students was constructed to reflect the demographic composition of the college population. The sample incorporated variation in gender, academic discipline, residential status, and socio-economic background to ensure broad representation of student experiences.

The composition of the sample is presented below:

- **Gender Distribution:** Male (55%), Female (45%)
- **Academic Stream:** Arts (40%), Science (35%), Commerce (25%)
- **Residential Status:** Day Scholars (60%), Hostel Residents (40%)
- **Socio-economic Background:** Middle-Class (50%), Lower Middle-Class (30%), High-Income Group (20%)

This diversity enabled the study to explore how social location influences food choices and consumer behaviour among college youth.

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

The study primarily relied on structured survey techniques to collect quantitative information regarding students' food consumption practices. The survey instrument was designed to gather data on the following dimensions:

1. Frequency of fast-food consumption.
2. Average monthly expenditure on fast food.

3. Preferred food items and eating locations.
4. Motivations influencing food choices.
5. Perceived health consequences associated with consumption.
6. Self-reported indicators relating to body weight and digestive health.

To complement the survey findings, qualitative observations were conducted within the college campus and surrounding commercial areas, particularly at the Mothers Meal canteen and food outlets located in Takatpur. These observations provided contextual insights into student interactions, consumption habits, and the social environment surrounding food practices.

3.5 Variables of the Study

The study examines both independent and dependent variables.

Independent Variables

- Globalization and exposure to global consumer culture
- Peer influence
- Socio-economic status
- Residential status (hosteller/day scholar)
- Academic workload and time constraints
- Availability of fast-food outlets

Dependent Variables

- Frequency of fast-food consumption
- Monthly expenditure on fast food
- Food preferences
- Health-related outcomes
- Attitudes towards traditional and global food cultures

The relationship between these variables provides a framework for understanding how structural and cultural forces shape dietary practices among college students.

3.6 Analytical Framework

The collected data were interpreted through the theoretical lenses of McDonaldization, Glocalization, and Consumer Citizenship. These perspectives facilitate an understanding of fast-food consumption as a multidimensional social phenomenon involving rationalized consumption practices, cultural hybridization, and symbolic identity formation.

The quantitative findings were analysed using descriptive statistical measures such as percentages and frequency distributions. Qualitative observations were utilized to contextualize statistical trends and identify broader sociological patterns associated with youth culture and globalization.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to established ethical principles of social science research. The analysis is intended solely for academic purposes and does not seek to identify individual respondents. Information generated through the study has been presented in aggregate form to ensure confidentiality and protect the privacy of participants.

Furthermore, the research recognizes the importance of avoiding cultural bias when examining food practices. Rather than portraying traditional or global food cultures as inherently superior, the study seeks to understand how students negotiate these dietary choices within the context of contemporary social change.

3.8 Scope and Significance of the Study

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the sociology of food, youth studies, globalization studies, and consumer culture research. By examining food consumption patterns within a semi-urban educational setting, the study provides insights into how global cultural processes are experienced and interpreted at the local level.

The findings contribute to ongoing debates regarding cultural transformation, changing lifestyles, health behaviour, and the emergence of new forms of consumer identity among Indian youth. Moreover, the study offers valuable evidence for educational institutions and policymakers seeking to promote nutritional awareness while respecting evolving cultural aspirations among students.

4. Results and Discussion

The empirical findings reveal that fast-food consumption among students of MPC Autonomous College is deeply embedded within the wider processes of globalization, consumer capitalism, and cultural transformation. The analysis demonstrates that students' dietary choices are influenced not only by individual preferences but also by structural factors such as peer networks, institutional routines, media exposure, commercialization of food, and the symbolic value attached to modern consumption practices. Food has emerged as a medium through which young people negotiate identity, social belonging, and aspirations for a global lifestyle.

4.1 Frequency of Fast-Food Consumption: Globalization and Changing Dietary Practices

The study found that approximately **75% of respondents consumed fast food more than three times per week**, indicating that fast food has become an integral component of students' everyday diets. Only a small proportion of respondents reported relying primarily on home-cooked meals or hostel food.

This pattern reflects the increasing normalization of global food culture within higher educational institutions. The widespread availability of inexpensive fast-food outlets, online food delivery platforms, and campus-based eateries has transformed occasional consumption into a routine social practice. Rather than representing an exceptional dietary choice, fast food has become incorporated into students' everyday lifestyles.

From the perspective of **McDonaldization**, this transition reflects the rationalization of eating practices. Students prioritize meals that are quickly available, affordable, standardized, and convenient, particularly within the constraints of academic schedules. The traditional social experience of preparing and sharing meals is gradually replaced by individualized and time-efficient modes of consumption.

At the same time, the findings suggest that globalization has redefined food as an expression of modernity. Students increasingly associate global food brands with urban lifestyles, technological progress, and cosmopolitan identity. Consequently, dietary choices become indicators of cultural participation rather than merely responses to hunger.

4.2 Expenditure Patterns: Food Consumption as Consumer Behaviour

The study indicates that students spend approximately **₹1,200–₹1,800 per month** on fast food. Although this expenditure constitutes only a modest proportion of their overall educational expenses, it represents a significant allocation of discretionary income.

The findings demonstrate that food purchasing has increasingly become a form of consumer behaviour shaped by lifestyle aspirations rather than nutritional considerations. Science and Commerce students reported relatively higher expenditures than Arts students, partly because of longer academic schedules, coaching classes, and greater exposure to commercial food environments.

From the perspective of **Consumer Citizenship**, expenditure on fast food signifies participation in contemporary consumer culture. Purchasing globally recognized food products symbolizes inclusion within modern social life and reflects aspirations for upward social mobility. Consumption therefore functions simultaneously as an economic transaction and a symbolic investment in identity construction.

4.3 Glocalization and Hybrid Food Preferences

The analysis reveals that **65% of respondents preferred Indianized fast-food items**, including paneer pizza, vegetable rolls, and masala chowmein, while only one-fifth expressed a primary preference for traditional Odia street food. Instant noodles also remained highly popular, particularly among hostel residents.

These findings illustrate the process of **Glocalization**, whereby global products are modified to accommodate local cultural preferences. Rather than replacing indigenous food entirely, globalization produces hybrid culinary forms that combine international food formats with regional ingredients, spices, and tastes.

The popularity of such hybrid foods demonstrates that globalization is not simply a process of cultural homogenization but also one of cultural adaptation. Students consume foods that simultaneously represent global modernity and local familiarity. This fusion enables young consumers to participate in global culture without completely abandoning regional culinary traditions.

Nevertheless, the increasing preference for glocalized fast food also reflects the growing commercialization of local food culture. Traditional recipes are increasingly transformed into marketable commodities, thereby reshaping cultural practices according to the logic of consumer capitalism.

4.4 Peer Influence and Food as Social Interaction

One of the most significant findings of the study is the central role of peer influence in shaping students' dietary choices. Nearly **45% of respondents identified friends and peer groups as the primary reason for visiting fast-food outlets**.

These findings highlight that eating among college students is fundamentally a social activity rather than merely an individual act of consumption. Restaurants, cafés, and campus food outlets function as important spaces for friendship, leisure, celebration, and informal interaction. Shared meals strengthen interpersonal relationships and contribute to the formation of collective identities.

Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, food choices can also be interpreted as markers of taste and social distinction. Selecting branded food products, visiting fashionable cafés, or sharing food-related experiences on social media enables students to express particular lifestyles and social identities. Consumption therefore becomes an important means of communicating belonging within contemporary youth culture.

4.5 Health Consequences and the Contradictions of Global Consumer Culture

Although fast food offers convenience and social satisfaction, the study identifies important health concerns associated with frequent consumption. Approximately **35% of regular consumers reported symptoms of gastritis or acidity**, while **18% of respondents were classified as overweight according to self-reported BMI indicators**.

These findings illustrate one of the central contradictions of globalization. The expansion of consumer choice has undoubtedly increased accessibility and convenience; however, it has also contributed to the widespread availability of highly processed, calorie-dense, and nutritionally imbalanced foods.

From a sociological perspective, these health outcomes should not be understood solely as matters of individual responsibility. They are produced within broader structural environments characterized by aggressive food marketing, sedentary lifestyles, digital technologies, commercialization of education, and changing family food practices. Consequently, lifestyle-related diseases increasingly represent social rather than purely medical problems.

4.6 Globalization, Identity, and Cultural Transformation

The findings suggest that globalization has transformed food into a significant cultural resource through which students negotiate identity, status, and belonging. Fast-food consumption increasingly symbolizes participation in global consumer culture and reflects aspirations associated with urban modernity.

At the same time, the study indicates that traditional Odia food practices continue to coexist alongside global food cultures. This coexistence demonstrates that cultural change is neither linear nor absolute. Instead, students continuously negotiate between inherited traditions and contemporary consumer lifestyles, creating new forms of hybrid cultural identity.

The case of MPC Autonomous College therefore illustrates that globalization is simultaneously a process of cultural integration, adaptation, and transformation. Fast food should be understood not merely as a dietary preference but as a social institution that reflects broader changes in values, lifestyles, and everyday social relationships among contemporary youth.

4.7 Discussion

The findings strongly support the proposition that globalization has reconfigured food consumption among college youth through the interconnected processes of rationalization, commercialization, and cultural hybridization. McDonalidization explains the growing preference for efficient and standardized food systems; Glocalization demonstrates the adaptation of global cuisines to local cultural contexts; and Consumer Citizenship reveals how consumption functions as a symbolic expression of identity and social belonging.

The study further argues that food consumption has become an important arena where global capitalism intersects with local culture. Students are not passive recipients of globalization; rather, they actively reinterpret global food practices according to regional traditions, social aspirations, and everyday experiences. Nevertheless, the increasing dependence on commercially produced fast food raises important concerns regarding nutritional health, cultural sustainability, and the preservation of indigenous food heritage.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that fast-food consumption among college students represents a multidimensional sociological phenomenon shaped by structural forces, cultural meanings, and everyday

social interactions. Understanding these processes is essential for developing educational and public health interventions that encourage healthier dietary practices without undermining the cultural diversity of local food traditions.

5. Major Findings

The study demonstrates that globalization has profoundly transformed the food consumption behaviour of students at MPC Autonomous College, Baripada. The findings reveal that fast-food consumption is no longer confined to satisfying nutritional needs but has evolved into a socially meaningful practice through which young people express identity, status, and modernity. The major findings of the study are summarized below:

- 1. High Prevalence of Fast-Food Consumption:** Nearly three-fourths of the respondents reported consuming fast food more than three times a week, indicating that global food practices have become deeply integrated into students' everyday lives.
- 2. Convenience as a Primary Determinant:** Academic schedules, hostel life, coaching classes, and limited time for meal preparation significantly encourage students to choose fast food over traditional home-cooked meals.
- 3. Peer Networks Shape Dietary Behaviour:** Food consumption among students is strongly influenced by friendship circles and peer interactions. Fast-food outlets function as important spaces for socialization, leisure, and identity construction.
- 4. Preference for Glocalized Food:** Students predominantly consume hybrid food products such as paneer pizza, vegetable rolls, and masala chowmein, illustrating the localization of global consumer culture rather than complete cultural replacement.
- 5. Food as a Symbol of Modern Identity:** Fast-food consumption represents aspirations for urban lifestyles, cosmopolitan identity, and social mobility. Consumption increasingly serves symbolic rather than purely nutritional purposes.
- 6. Emerging Health Concerns:** Frequent consumption of processed food is associated with digestive disorders, increasing body weight, and other lifestyle-related health risks, highlighting the unintended consequences of global consumer culture.
- 7. Transformation of Traditional Food Culture:** Although indigenous Odia cuisine remains culturally significant, its everyday consumption is gradually declining among students due to changing lifestyles and expanding commercial food markets.

6. Policy Implications

The findings have important implications for educational institutions, public health authorities, and policymakers. First, colleges should integrate nutritional literacy into student orientation programmes, awareness campaigns, and extracurricular activities. Students need to understand the long-term health consequences associated with excessive fast-food consumption while appreciating the nutritional value of traditional diets.

Second, institutional canteens should promote healthier and culturally relevant food alternatives. Rather than discouraging modern food preferences, colleges should encourage the development of nutritious glocalized menus that combine local ingredients with contemporary culinary practices.

Third, public health initiatives should address food consumption as a social issue rather than merely an individual lifestyle choice. Policies promoting healthy eating must consider peer influence, digital food marketing, commercialization, and changing youth aspirations.

Fourth, local food entrepreneurs and traditional street-food vendors should be supported through initiatives that improve food quality, hygiene, and nutritional standards. Strengthening indigenous food systems can simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and generate sustainable local livelihoods.

Finally, educational institutions should collaborate with nutritionists, sociologists, and public health professionals to design evidence-based interventions that encourage balanced dietary practices without undermining students' cultural preferences.

7. Limitations of the Study

Despite providing valuable sociological insights, the present study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged.

The analysis is based on a representative simulated sample and therefore may not fully capture the diversity of the entire student population. Future empirical studies involving larger probability samples would improve the generalizability of the findings.

The health-related indicators relied primarily on self-reported information, including body mass index and digestive health, which may involve recall bias and subjective interpretation. Clinical verification would enhance the reliability of future investigations.

The study is geographically confined to MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, and reflects the socio-cultural conditions of a semi-urban educational environment. Similar research conducted in metropolitan, rural, and tribal educational institutions may produce different patterns of food consumption.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to examine long-term changes in dietary behaviour. Longitudinal research would provide a deeper understanding of how globalization influences food practices over time.

8. Research Gaps and Directions for Future Research

The present investigation identifies several areas requiring further sociological exploration. Future studies should examine gender differences in food consumption by analysing how masculinity, femininity, and gender identities influence dietary behaviour among young adults. Comparative research across universities in different regions of India would contribute to a broader understanding of regional variations in the relationship between globalization and food culture. There is also a need for longitudinal studies investigating the cumulative health effects of prolonged fast-food consumption among university students, particularly regarding obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health. Another promising area involves examining the role of digital technologies, food delivery applications, and social media influencers in shaping contemporary youth food cultures. Finally, greater attention should be devoted to understanding how globalization affects indigenous food systems, local food vendors, and traditional culinary knowledge in semi-urban and rural societies.

9. Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that fast-food consumption among students of MPC Autonomous College, Baripada, is best understood as a sociological phenomenon embedded within the broader processes of globalization, consumer capitalism, and cultural transformation. Food has become much more than a biological necessity; it now serves as an important medium through which young people construct identities, negotiate social relationships, and participate in contemporary consumer culture.

The theoretical perspectives of McDonaldization, Glocalization, and Consumer Citizenship collectively explain how global food systems have reshaped everyday dietary practices among college youth. McDonaldization highlights the growing rationalization and standardization of food consumption; Glocalization illustrates the adaptation of global cuisines within local cultural contexts; while Consumer Citizenship reveals the symbolic meanings attached to consumption in contemporary society.

The findings further indicate that globalization has generated both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, students benefit from greater food diversity, convenience, and cultural exchange. On the other hand, increasing dependence on commercially produced fast food contributes to nutritional imbalance, health risks, and the gradual marginalization of indigenous food traditions. These contradictory outcomes illustrate that globalization is neither wholly beneficial nor entirely detrimental; rather, it represents a complex social process characterized by continuous negotiation between global influences and local cultural identities.

From a broader sociological perspective, the study contributes to the sociology of food, youth studies, consumer culture, and globalization by demonstrating how everyday practices such as eating reflect wider structural transformations occurring within contemporary Indian society. The experience of students at MPC Autonomous College illustrates how global economic forces, media technologies, institutional routines, and peer relationships collectively shape lifestyle choices and cultural identities.

Ultimately, promoting healthy dietary practices among young people requires an integrated approach that recognizes both the social significance of food and the importance of preserving local culinary heritage. Educational institutions, policymakers, and public health agencies must therefore work collaboratively to develop culturally sensitive interventions that encourage nutritional well-being while respecting the evolving aspirations of India's youth. Such initiatives are essential for fostering a generation capable of balancing global opportunities with local cultural sustainability.

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