

CHAPTER ONE

INRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Nowadays the economy and society in Thailand have changed quickly, so has people's lifestyle. In the past, the economy and society had a more dependent relationship. People helped one another even though they were not relatives or friends. At present, everything has apparently changed. Their lives are competitive; they have to compete with time and one another in order to get things they need. This change in the Thai economy and society has a significant impact on the eating behavior of children. The main reason is most parents these days mainly focus on their work that they hardly have enough time to take good care of their children's diets. Healthy meals of their children are ignored. Consequently, children consume a vast quantity of junk food and fast food such as hamburgers, pizzas, Coca-Cola, and potato chips. They not only love the taste of those kinds of food but think it is trendy as well.

Even though junk food and fast food do not seem so dangerous, they indeed affect children's health in the future. Junk food or fast food can contribute to obesity and many diseases relating to obesity. World Health Organization (2008) indicated that in the 21st century obesity among children represents one of the most critical public health problems which affects many nations including both low and middle-income countries. Thailand is one of the countries that is concerned about this problem.

According to Schlosser (2001), 25% of American children these days became obese and overweight, and this percentage had increased over the last few decades as well as fast food consumption. In *Fast Food Nation: the Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, James O. Hill said, "We've got the fattest, least fit generation of kids ever" (p. 240).

Parents who take a significant role to closely take care of their children should consider what their children consume in each meal or during meals in order to make sure that they get essential food to enhance their health. If children

do not consume food with enough nutrition, it can lead to sickness which may cause a lower working and studying capacity. If they consume too much fat which comes from junk food, obesity and its complications can develop. To prevent the above mentioned problems and protect their children from obesity and related diseases, parents are required to be more concerned about what children consume and the harmful effects of what they like and often consume such as junk food and fast food. The knowledge of junk food and fast food and their harmful effects are crucial for all parents who would like to maintain the good health of their children.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Children at present tend to consume much more junk food, so parents should take an important role to protect their children from the harmful effects of junk food consumption. To keep children away from the perils of junk food, parents' knowledge of the harmful effects of junk food is a concern. This study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 Do parents have a knowledge of junk food and its harmful effects on their children?

1.2.2 How much are parents aware of the harmful effects of junk food?

1.2.3 Are parents concerned about their children's junk food consumption?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following:

1.3.1 Main Objective

To investigate whether parents have a knowledge of junk food and its harmful effects on their children

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To identify how much parents are aware of the harmful effects of junk food

2. To find out whether parents are concerned about their children's junk food consumption

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS/ VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

The definition of the terms of this study is as follows:

Table 1: Definition of Terms

Term	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Knowledge	The facts, skills, and understanding that you have gained through learning or experience	Understanding of the information about junk food and the harmful effects of junk food consumption
Harmful effects	The way in which an event, action, or person changes someone or something and causes harm	The bad effects to health and capacity of the schoolchildren
Junk food	Food that is not healthy because it contains a lot of fat, sugar, or carbohydrate.	Food containing high levels of refined sugar, white flour, trans fat and saturated fat, salt, and additives such as preservatives and coloring agents. It also lacks proteins, vitamins, fiber and essential nutrition. Junk food in this term also refers to some kinds of unhealthy fast food, snacks, and beverages such as hamburgers, pizzas, popcorn, and Coca-Cola

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Table 1 (continued)

Term	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition
Children	Young persons from the time they are born until they are aged 14-15	Both schoolboys and schoolgirls who are between Grade1 (Pratomsuksa 1) and Grade6 (Pratomsuksa 6) of a school in Bangkok
Concern about children's junk food consumption	A feeling of worry about children's junk food consumption	The way to carefully focus attention on children's junk food consumption and the way to control children's consumption during regular meals. For instance, to take care of children's meals.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to investigating the parents' knowledge of junk food and awareness of its harmful effects on their children. One hundred and fifty parents of schoolchildren at a school in Bangkok were selected as the subjects. The school in this study was a middle-class school that had about 750 students. Thus, this study can be a guideline towards other middle-class schools. The result of the study cannot generalize the knowledge of parents of schoolchildren in lower-class and higher-class schools, for in these two kinds of school the parent's background such as education level and income is different.

The term junk food in this study includes fast food, snacks, and beverages containing high levels of refined sugar, white flour, trans fat and saturated fat, salt, and additives such as preservatives and coloring agents. Thus, junk food did not include all kinds of junk food, fast food, snacks, and beverages.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to investigate whether parents had a knowledge of junk food and awareness of its harmful effects on their children's junk food consumption, so the result of the study was designed to be like a mirror for other parents. The other parents can know the harmfulness of junk food from this study; in addition, they will be able to refer to this study in order to take good care of their children's consumption and to develop healthy meals for them. In addition, it is believed that this study or some parts of it can benefit the government and private sectors involved in children's health care. Although the result shows that the parents have enough or a little knowledge of the harmful effects of junk food, the result of the study will be a useful reflection for the government and private sectors to educate parents through the mass media about the adverse effects of junk food.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study in this paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter consists of background, a statement of the problem, objectives of the study, a definition of terms/ variables and definitions, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study. The second chapter is a review of related literature. The third chapter consists of subjects, material, procedures, and data analysis. The fourth chapter shows the results of the study. The last chapter includes the summary of the study and findings, discussions, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.