First Bite

Fast food consumption has risen dramatically among youth and is a serious public health concern because it supplies the diet with excess fat and added sugars. This makes it critical to understand direct, automatic processes and indirect, mediated processes that may explain fast food consumption.

Abstract

Methods

This cross-sectional study uses baseline data from the Food, Health & Choices (PHC) study. A questionnaire measured students’ fast food consumption and cognitive mediators, and assessed the food environment surrounding the schools. A multi-level structural equation model assessed relationships between fast food consumption, mediators, and environment.

Results

The number of fast food outlets was directly associated with fast food consumption among non-regular/fast food consumers. The number of fast food outlets was associated with behavioral intention and outcome expectations for fast food consumption among both boy and girl habitual consumers.

Conclusions

Background

More frequent fast food consumption is associated with a poorer diet quality, characterized by a greater intake of solid fats and added sugars. Access to food outlets in the neighborhood surrounding schools is inconsistently associated with fast food consumption among children.

We examine a sample of urban upper elementary school students using an established theoretical framework to identify the pathways through which access to food outlets may influence fast food consumption.

Objectives

Using the Environmental Decisional Framework for Weight Gain Prevention (EDFP) framework (Kremers & de Vries, 2012), we examined access to fast food outlets and grocery stores in relation to fast food consumption among boy and girl non-habitual consumers of fast food.

Funding Source

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Figure 1. The Environmental Decisional Framework for Weight Gain Prevention (adapted from Kremers et al., 2007).

Figure 2. Associations between environmental factors, cognitive mediators, and fast food consumption among boy and girl habitual consumers.

Figure 3. Associations between environmental factors, cognitive mediators, and fast food consumption among boy and girl non-habitual consumers.

Background

A recent study by Poti et al. (2014) examined associations among fast food consumption, cognitive “psychosocial” mediators, and neighborhood food environment factors among children. The results suggest that the neighborhood environment may influence behavior through direct and indirect pathways.

More frequent fast food consumption is associated with a poorer diet quality, characterized by a greater intake of solid fats and added sugars. Access to food outlets in the neighborhood surrounding schools is inconsistently associated with fast food consumption among children.

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