

Introduction has  
changed with time is  
alarming



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## **Introduction**

The rate at which the American diet has changed with time is alarming such that America has turned out to be a 'Fast Food Nation' within a short span of time. Probably it is because everything else is happening too fast. Junk food has replaced healthy and nutritious food in many people's life at an alarming high rate.

America is soon becoming an obese nation if immediate measures to fight fast foods will not be taken. One may wonder why the rate of fast food has gone up so fast. Surprisingly, many people find themselves in this bandwagon unconsciously, yet others make deliberate decisions. Certainly, food has influenced America in so many aspects.

## **Influence of fast food**

Many Americans nowadays eat much junk food than in time past. There is a sudden sway in diet change to fast foods yet the healthy and nutritious food is still available in the country. Among the good reasons that could make many people turn to fast foods is that they are most cheap, tasty and easily available.

In almost every corner in the U. S. streets, there is a fast food restaurant. Further, this food is easy to heat and cook. On the other hand, nutritious healthy food is not as tasty as junk food and it takes long time to cook, on top of its high cost. However, statistics from Edwards indicates, " Americans currently spend about \$134 billion dollars per year on fast food more than they spend on college education, computers, software or new cars" (15). As the English people say, cheap is expensive! While many think that fast food

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is cheap, it costs them a lot than they would ever imagine. Many people have embraced fast food at the expense of their health.

The health of many is in danger because of what they eat. Some do it out of ignorance while others do not just care. Schlosser writes that, " Hundreds of millions of people buy fast food every day without giving it much thought, unaware of the subtle and not so subtle ramifications of their purchases" (43). Schlosser further observes that, " They rarely consider where this food came from, how it was made, what it is doing to the community around them... "(43). Unfortunately, people care less about the source of the food they consume and the outcomes are horrifying including rise in health complications.

Health problems that did not exist in half a century ago are so rampant today. The rate at which people are becoming overweight and obese is alarming. Research shows that in every three children born in the year 2000, one will develop diabetes in their lifetime (Thomas 43).

Should the fast food intake rate remain constant or rise a degree higher, obesity will outdo smoking as the chief reason of avertable death in the U. S. Obesity is affiliated with other more dangerous conditions like " hypertension, coronary heart disease, adult onset diabetes, stroke, gall bladder disease, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory complications, endometrial, breast, prostate and colon cancers, dyslipidemia, steatohepatitis, insulin resistance, breathlessness, asthma, hyperuricaemia, reproduction hormone abnormalities, polycystic ovarian syndrome, impaired fertility and lower back pains" (Thomas 75). Greed and drive of the appetite

makes many live in medication and suffering. It makes a lot more others lose their lives and leave still more suffering behind. The nation loses or will lose many people and others even prominent members of the society, just because of indulgence in appetite. Apart from health, fast foods have pulled down agriculture in America in a thud. Farms are no longer farms but processing industries, and the few that remain to grow and rear natural foods and animals respectively, do not have a market.

The market is for selected groups, which own multinational fast food industries like the McDonalds. Companies that used to supply agricultural products are at verge of closure since fast food industries have taken over. As a result, even more health concerns come up. Schlosser says that these changes in food production and livestock rising increase the chances of extensive outbreaks of food-related pathogens like E. coli (45). The conditions in which these animals live make the spread of the pathogens even easier.

Cattle stand in manure reaching up to their knees before getting to the slaughterhouse. This increases the chances of infection of more cattle for they live in a more conducive environment for the pathogens' infection. This explains the many cases of E.

coli infection currently than in the past. The economic status of many small-scale farmers is highly affected and their lives left miserable by a group of some few wealthy people. They no longer need to rear cattle for meat production in the nation since the McDonalds have their own farms that produce higher number of animals within a very short time.

For instance, McDonalds farms rear chicken twice the size of a chicken fifty years ago within 49 days unlike the normal chicken that takes 3 months to develop fully. Edwards says, “ Four major meatpacking firms slaughter nearly 85% of the nation’s cattle, and the majority of the nation’s beef comes from thirteen large slaughterhouses” (17). Consequently, small-scale farmers lack market for their cattle, which have taken them so much time and effort to rear. Even if they were to find a market, the price at which they would sell them would not repay their labour, efforts and expenses in rearing them. The fortunate farmers who happen to get business from these fast food industries have to keep their firms up to date with the most recent technological advances and machines, which are expensive and failure to this they lose their contract with these companies. Their efforts to remain updated do not pay much, as their returns in the whole process are very low.

Primarily, fast foods entice small children, who unfortunately lack strong control over their appetite and desires. If children, who are the future leaders and occupants of America, vanish at their young age and maybe leave behind another weak generation, then America does not have a future.

Edwards reports that a “ typical American child sees 20, 000 junk food ads a year...one out of every five American toddlers eat French fries every day” (Edwards 17). McDonald has identified the best ads strategy - children. Their loyalty to his products will not only be through their childhood but through adulthood and probably to old age, if they are lucky enough to reach that age. The documentary, Food Inc, gives a detailed view of more effects and influence of fast foods.

The workers in the industries' animal farms are overworked and underpaid. They keep on getting sick due to poor working conditions, yet the greedy business owners do not care about them, all they are interested in is making profits. Food has made Americans to allow a select group of wealthy and powerful people to exploit many, take advantage of them, violate human rights, risk and even lose many lives. Food has turned some industry owners to inhuman beings who violate the very essence of living.

The food processing steps are among the unhealthiest, unsafe and dangerous activities in the U. S. Edwards avails that " Meatpacking is one of the most dangerous jobs in the United States...In 2001; the rate of serious injury was three times higher than that in a typical American factory" (17). Yet the people concerned do not care about the workers' as well as the consumers' safety. They neglect any environmental, social and economic damages they cause and all they care about is making enormous profits at low expenses and input. They hide and leave out the information on the contents and ingredients of the food from common citizens and so people keep on suffering while others keep on making profits. From Edwards statistics, every year, about 76 million Americans are sick from something they ate (16).

With all this happening, the government is either silent about it or biased towards the food processing industries. Fast food industries have managed to control the government's decision-making capability. Owners of the industries or affiliations to owners are the one that work in the government as regulators.

They cannot regulate their own businesses when they know that by so doing they limit their profits. The number of these industries is so high, yet the government does not control it. Food industries have somehow managed to win the favour of the government such that they have different protective covering from other industries. It is illegal to disapprove foods from food industries, such that one woman was sued for having said she will never eat another burger! From the documentary *Super Size Me*, by Spurlock, a quarter of American adults go to a fast food restaurant everyday. The food is both addictive physiologically and physically harmful. In his experiment, Spurlock ensures he eats three meals per day from McDonald's fast food restaurant: breakfast, lunch and super.

The results are weight gain of 24.5 lbs or 11.1 kg within one month.

This takes him 14 months to lose, an explanation of the increased rate of obesity and weight gain has gone so high in U. S. In schools, junk foods have increased cases of frequent sickness, mood swings, and overweight in children on top of reduced concentration in class. Majority of the fast foods contain sugar, which is the content that entices most children. High levels and continuous intake of sugar reduces brain cells and as a result, memory and concentration levels are reduced (Thomas 79). If this does not change, then children will face even more difficulties in their academics, goals pursuit and achievements.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident that the cons of fast food in the society are way high than the pros.

The negatives outweigh by far any positive such that the positives are negligible. However, it is very sad to know that many Americans have become addicted to fast foods such that even though they know the far-reaching repercussions resulting from their unhealthy behaviour, they choose not to quit. It is the high time that Americans awoke from their sleep before a group of few corporate individuals who do not care about them but their moneymaking businesses sweep away the whole nation.

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