

PARENTAL PRACTICE AND FOOD PREFERENCE OF PARENTS AND SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ILORIN LGA OF KWARA STATE

BY

OYERINDE, O O & OWOJAIYE, SUNDAY ONI
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
ILORIN.

ABSTRACT

This paper focused on parental practices and food preferences of parents and children in Ilorin Local Government Area of Kwara State. Two hundred (200) senior secondary school 2 student served as the sampled population. They were drawn from ten (10) secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State to participate in the study of parental practices and food preference of parents and school children. A structured questionnaire was used. The descriptive survey report was adopted for the study. All the students answered the questions raised. Percentages and frequency count were used to analyze the data collected. The result of the study show that: (1) 58% of the students preferred to eat carbohydrate foods always because that is the food class that is mostly available in their area and affordable to parents. (2) 54.5% of them do not take proteins because of erroneous believe of parents that consumption of proteins would make them to be fat and to steal. Based on the findings, the following recommendation!; were made: (1) nutritional education on balanced diet should be intensified by teachers (2) parents should be thoroughly sensitised and educated on the need to give proclincous foods to their wards constantly (3) Schools should intensify and continue with organised mid-day meal programmes to argument the supply of balanced diet to the students.

INTRODUCTION

Some students view food as a substance to fill the stomach, without which they feel they wouldn't grow well. The idea of a bulge stomach was found to be an indoctrination from parents. From homes, the students were fed with left over amala, eba, fufu and ewu iyan with or without fish, meat and snails (Folawiyo 1990). The conception of balanced diet to an average Nigerian student is the consumption of palatable food regardless of the nutrients in these meals. No wonder food vendors in Nigeria schools would prepare porridge, rice and yams mixed with fried onions and some curry to make those foods smell sweet and appealing to the child's appetite. Armstrong (1977) and Oyerinde (1994) suggested that students should be fed with nutrients and ingredients that build the body and those which make the tissues grow well, i.e. food nutrients like vitamins, protein (first and second class). First class proteins are meat, fish, eggs, shrimps, cray fish, snails while 2nd class protein foods are beans and pea groups. These foods also contain vitamins like A, B, B2, B3, B6, and B12, D C e.t.c and folic acid. All these vitamins are necessary in youths so that diseases like hemorrhage, rickets, scurvy, unhealing wound, anemia, beriberi and constipation would be prevented. Ogunsakin (1992) also submitted, that at secondary schools, good nutrition should be served to children and students because the energetic ones are targeted for athletic development. According to him, champion athletes cannot be produced without adequate feeding. Ogunsakin (1992) gave a requisite for adolescent nutritional requirement as mostly prote'mous and vitamin foods.

Owojaiye (2001) reiterated that traditional Nigerian parents whose children form 95% of adolescents in schools would not give eggs, meat or fish in required percentages and kilocalorie to their children due to poverty. The ~ parents are naive to nutritional requirement; children given eggs, meats, or fish are viewed to develop stealing habit. The palatable proteins were conceived as containing the ingredients to induce theft or kleptomania in children, where as, these proteins build, and repair the growing tissues of the young adolescents. Owing to the traditionally conceived feeding habits of parents, young adolescent females may suffer late breast development, menstrual delay or malformation of male genital hormones (Olowe 2001). In schools it is not uncommon to find stunted growth among boys and girls with muscular

arms, (biceps, triceps), legs (gastrocnemius, armstrings and calf) and rough skins.

Rather than consume beans, it is often complained by people that the food leads to running stomach, and dysentery. Some others claim that it burns the heart, and causes obesity (Mayer 1984). All these complains must have emanated from ignorance and long period of consuming carbohydrates (yams, eba, fufu, and Amala). There are also situations where parents encourage their children distaste for costly food stuffs like meat, fish, eggs or shrimps that are out of their reach due to poverty. There is no gainsaying the fact that the feeding habits of farmers differs from that of civil-servants. Farmers need huge amounts of energy and therefore consume several of glucose or saturated fat. But Civil-servants on the other hand, do not require much energy to sit and attend to files in their offices.

The purpose of this paper was to find out which food the adolescent students in Ilorin West Local Government prefer to eat and to ascertain the adolescent students' parents nutritional practice. This study is significant in that it would teach teachers the focal points of nutritional education in schools and it is a supportive research work for the school meal planners and supervisors. Parent attitudes toward feeding their children will also be influenced positively.

METHODOLOGY

This study was done using a descriptive research survey. 200 students were systematically sampled from 10 secondary schools in Ilorin West Local Government Area of Kwara State. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information for the study. Analysis of data was done by percentages and frequency counts. The researcher collected the information personally from the subjects. The results are put into tables as follows:

RESULT AND DISCUSSION Table 1 Students food preference

ITEM	NO	%
I prefer to take carbohydrate food because		
(a) that is my parents preference	48	24
(a) It is the type of food class available in my area/parents can only afford this.	68	34
(c) other food do not satisfy me	84	42
TOTAL	200	100

In table 1 above, 42% of the Students asserted that they prefer to eat carbohydrates because other foods do not satisfy them. Also 48 or 24% of them confirmed that they prefer to take carbohydrates because that is what their parents prefer. While 34% said that carbohydrate is the type of food class available in their areas and affordable to parents.

Table 2 Students attitude towards 2nd class protein (beans)

ITEM	NO	L%
I It do not eat beans because		
(a) It burns my heart	35	17.5

(b) I pass watery stool	(c)	47.5
It cannot fill my stomach	I 70	35
1 TOTAL	I 200	100

Table 2 above revealed that 47.5% of the students do not take beans because it makes them pass watery stool, and that-it gave them constipation. While 35% of the students asserted that beans do not fill their stomach. Only 17.5% said that they had heart burn as a result of eating beans

Table 3 Students attitude towards 1st class proteins

ITEM	NO	%
1 do not eat 1 st class proteins like egg, meat because		
(a) my parents say children that eat them would steal	37	18.5
(b) It can not satisfy /fill me (c) its consumption results into too much fat in the body	54 109	27 54.5
TOTAL	200	100

In table 3 above, 54.5% of the students, (10Q of them) do not* eat protein and foods like egg., meat, milk, because its consumption results into much fat in the body. 27% confirmed that they cannot satisfy or fill them. Mean while, 18.5% of them asserted that their parents do not give them because it was construed that these foods would make them steal.

Table 4 Parental practice on provision of protein food

ITEM	NO	%
when meat is cooked in our house		
(a) Daddy eats the biggest part (b) Mummy eats the biggest part © Children eat the biggest part	157 8 35	78.5 4 17.5
TOTAL	200	100

Table 4 above revealed 'that 82.5% or 165 of them confirmed that in their homes, it is a tradition that when meat was cooked, their parents ate the largest parts of the meat. 78.5% said daddies took the lion share. 4% said mummies do, while 17.5% agreed that Children took the lion share.

Table 5 Parents views on some nutritious food items

ITEM	NO	%
Some type of diet are denied us because		
(a) parents think they are not good	50	25
(b) parents do not know their filling and satisfaction/Nutritional values	76	38
(c) parents do not wan to spoil their children	74	37
(d) Parents do not want to send money on such food	74	37
TOTAL	200	100

Table 5 above shows that 38%, (16 students) confirmed that certain food types are denied them because their parents thought that these foods/diets are not good for them. 37% (74 students) asserted that their parents denied them certain foods/diets because they taught these foods would spoil them. On further interrogation, the same set of students (37%) claimed that parents do not want to spend money on such food items. Also, 38% of subjects claimed that parents do not give them the foods because they do not know the satisfaction/nutritional values

DISCUSSION

The results presented thus far indicated that nutrition education with practical demonstration may have to be taught to children and parents in the area of study. This is because parents influence the diets of their children, their views of the values of protein foods, what they choose to eat and what would benefit them. This result confirms the ascertainment by Folalawiyo (1990) and Mohammed and Fritz (1996) who wrote that parents often fed their children with left over carbohydrate foods like amala, eba, yam, fufu, and pounded yam with no meat or other forms of first class proteins. Also, Students' preference for carbohydrates is an indication of parents' preference for this class of food which may be due first and foremost to the fact that they can not afford the seemingly more expensive food types namely, first class proteins, vitamins and mineral foods. According to McLaren (1981) there are many persons with inadequate income who only eat mediocre rather than optimal diet. Secondly, this poor parental and children food preference may also be attributed to the fact that they are unaware of the recommendations of most authors on nutrition and diet about serving school children and adolescents with highly nutritious foods mostly proteins and vitamins (Bengo 1974, Mayer 1984, Ogunsakin 1992). Thirdly, this may be so because carbohydrates are more available in their areas and therefore, the only major source that they believe in: The writings of McLaren (1976) and Pane & Hann (1998) have summarized the premises and factors that may have accounted for the findings of this study that the choice of food may be influenced by the geographical location of the area, economic condition, "beliefs as well as availability of food in a particular locality.

Surprisingly too, most of the subjects believe that protein foods especially beans do not benefit them in that it makes them run stool, constipate them and that food items like eggs, meat, fried fish, milk and pork can lead to stealing. This is surprising because Armstrong (1977) and Oyerinde (1994) among others have highlighted the benefits of all classes of protein and vitamins in children for sound health and growth. However, when the work of Mohammed and Fritz (1996) on food practice in different societies was noted that avoidance of food types are prevalent in line with religion, culture, taboo and other related factors, it becomes coherent and less surprising that parents and children in the 21st century can be found to nurse such erroneous beliefs about proteins. It also explains the beliefs of the subject in the present study. The belief of children that protein foods do not fill them is interpreted to mean that it does not satisfy them and do not make them feel strong. This shows that these children are not conversant with the role of nutrition in diet as explained by Ogunsakin (1992), Armstrong (1977), Oyerinde (1994) and Viedma (1988) that proteins and vitamins are highly beneficial in building of a good body and posture, add to overall energy required by the body and that their significance can only be appreciated in the sense that equilibrium in nutrition is only a gradual achievement from conception to adolescent and adulthood.

Parental food practice in the study also show an emphasis on items that are carbohydrate for their children in their wrong practice of taking the lion share of the available meat in the family's pot of soup. This confirms further their Ignorance of dietary

needs of children, adults and older adults and their understanding of what constitutes a balance diet for their children.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the investigation, it was concluded as follows: Students consumed carbohydrates more because that is what they prefer and that is what is available in their area.

Students do not eat beans because it would make thenxpass watery stool, give them heart burns and will not fill them and constipate tern .

Students do not eat meat, milk, eggs because they thought it would make them fat and make them steal.

Students do not eat meat because their parents always consumed the biggest part.

Students were denied certain foods because their parents could not provide them and that these foods would spoil them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. That nutrition education i.e. the values of vitamins, proteins, mineral salts, fat and oil that constitute balanced diet should be taught to parents using all available avenues e.g. adult education, normadic education, formal education and PTA meetings.

Schools should include nutrition education into the school curriculum to correct erroneous indoctrination on diet gathered from their homes.

Also schools should intensify and continue with organised mid-day meal programmes to supplement and complement the baseline nutritional status of students from their homes;

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