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*Nutritional Behaviours Among Teenage Students in Pankshin Area Inspectorate of Education of Plateau State.

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Abstract

The study aimed at determining the nutritional behaviors among adolescent students in Pankshin Area Inspectorate of Education (AIE) of Plateau State. Survey research design was used for the investigation. Three objectives were formulated for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 564 adolescent students. Percentages, and means were used in data analysis. The mojor findings that emerged was adolescent students had positive behaviors towards nutrition (M: 3.5).

Introduction

Food is a must for all living things. Human beings when they eat regardless of the type, one is making a decision concerning the future part of his/her health. But it is normally good to know the type of food one should take and to be eating it. Nutrition is a process through which food eaten is assimilated into the body in order to nourish it. This covers the choice of foods that contain the right nutrition's required by the body at different stages of growth (including the adolescent) and the processes involved from the time food is introduced into the body to the time its nutrients are picked up by the body cells for nourishment, growth, repairs and health maintenance. It is not surprising therefore, that Madden (1980) described nutrition as the science that deals with the nature and composition of food, the amount of food required by the body, and the chemical and physical changes brought about by the intake of food. This implies that the choice of foods that contain the right nutrients required by the body is a consequent of knowledge regarding nutriention.

The teenage students are most likely to posses considerable amount of knowledge about nutrition. Those who possess adequate knowledge about nutrition are expected to demonstrate by practice and behaviour. Though knowledge alone, according to Oberteaffer (1960) may not be enough to ensure modified behavior, the human's facility to understand and solve problems is enhanced by one's ability to judiciously use already acquired knowledge. The degree of self-awareness, of commitment, and of direct exposure and presence of peer accountability are strong predictors of behavior.

Behaviour. As explained by Rowntree(1981) is the response made by any organism (e.g individual) to a stimulis; which may be internal (eg. A though) or external (eg. Someone else's question).

This is implicative that an individual will normally hold a range of beliefs about possible consequences of performing a particular behaviour. For example, the person may hold the belief that performing the behaviour leads to some good outcomes and some bad ones.

Whether the overall judgment of behviour is favourable or not may depend on how strongly the person believes the likelihood of the different outcomes. It could be deduced that any given health behaviour is a funaction of collective influence.

The term teenage, as used by the investigators, refers to adolescent. Adolescents are also popularly known as teenagers because their ages are from thirteen through nineteen. Aina, Etta and Zeithin (1992) explained adolescence as the period of human development which spa the period between childhood and adulthood corresponding –highly to the age between twelve and eighteen years. Teenage shall be used in this work to mean, that period of human existence between twelve and below the age of twenty years.

Preferences for certain type of foods mainly carbohydrates or foods with little nutrient value are usually exhibited during the adolescence period.

According to Musiager (1975), there were differences in food consumption patterns and food preferences of school pupils. He recorded that the consumption of milk, egg and cheese by girls at breakfast was greater than that of boys, but schoolboys skipped breakfast less than girls did.

Hill and Blundell (1991) posited that feeding behaviour is a frequent and familiar human activity. Atkinson (1991) explained that unbalanced diets can prevent normal growth. Rossi (1995) found out that adolescents have a notion of health eating, which equated with balanced diet and with food being nutritious. Barasi (1992) emphasized that peace appetite occurs around the age of 12 in girls and 14 in boys apparently corresponding to the most growth period.

The adolescent period is known to be a period of storm and strees. It is characterized by Physical and emotritional. There tend to be increases in food intake to supply the nutrients required for theses changes. Regetably, during this period, many of the teenagers eat erratically, rather than at commonly accepted meal times. There is also the tendency to miss meals at the home environment, so that few well-balanced meals are eaten. Based on these assertions, it is implicative that certain factors may exist that are yet unknown. This inform the need to investigate the nutritional behaviour of teanage students in Pankshin Area Inspectorate zone of Education in Plateau state.

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study.
This design was considered appropriate because it permits investigation on a cross sectional sample of the entire population (Ehoh, 1998).

The population for the study consisted of all JSS II and SSII students in 2000/2001 Academic sessions. Therefore the population for the study comprised 1450 students. Of this, 775 males and 675 were females.

The sample consisted of six secondary schools out of nine co-educational schools in Pankshin AIE. Simple random sampling by balloiting without replacement was used to select the six schools. From each of the six schools selected, ninety-four students were selected through the simple random sampling technique of balloting without replacement. Out of this number, 47 students were from JSS II while another 47 students were from SSII. Therefore, the sample for the study comprised 282 JSS II students and an equal number of SSSII students. The sample for the study therefore consisted 564 students.

The instrument used for the study was the questionnaire. It contained fourteen items that enquired about the nutritional behaviour of the respondents.The content validity of the instrument was established through the judgement of three lecturers in the department if health and physical education. Federal College of Education.

A realiability coefficient score of. 85 which was obtained and considered high enough to use the instrument. The investigators with the held of the for masters of the selected classes in each school administered 564 conies of the questionnaire. The students were allowed some time to complete the questionnaire. This was done under strict supervision to ensure that none of them influences the responses of the other. Thereafter, the completed copies were returned.

The returned copies of the questionnaire were cross examined for completeness of responses. Out of the 564 copies returned 551 copies were found useable representing 97.9 percent. The responses were converted into raw scores and presented in frequency table. Likert's 5-point scale was used to determine a criterion mean for nutritional behaviour. Each category was assigned a numerical value. For example, 5 Strongly Agree, 4 Agree, 3= Undecided 2= Disagree and, 1= Strongly Disagree. (5+4+3+2+1=15_5=3.0). Therefore, any mean score of the responses equal or greater than 3.0 was considered accepted food behaviour. All mean response scores less than 3.0 were not accepted as food behaviour.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study, are hereby presented in the tables below:-

Table 1Mean and Standard Deviation of Adolescent Students Responses Showing Behaviour Towards Nutrition (N=551)

S/NO	FOOD ITEMS	RESPONSES	
1.	Green vegetable	3.5*	.58
2.	Beans	3.5*	.45
3.	Fried foods	3.1 *	..33
4.	Maize flour foods	3.6*	..58
5.	Egg and meat	3.4*	.44
6.	Yam and Potato chips	3.3*	..39
7.	Acara	2.9	. 30
8.	Milk and cheese	3.3*	.37
9.	Bread with butter	3.4*	.49
10.	Guinea corn flow and millet flour foods	3.2*	.35
11.	Break fast	4.2*	.1.20
12.	Lunch	4.2*	.1.09
13.	Supper	4.1*	.1.04
14.	Snacks	3.3*	.47
	Grand mean	3.5*	..58

- Positive Behavior

Table 1 showed mean response scores about the criterion mean in all aspects except 'Acara' with mean response score (x=2.9) less than the criterion mean which was then considered the only food item the students showed negative behaviour. The table further revealed that the students showed highly positive behaviour towards their breakfast and lunch (x=4.2), and supper (x=4.1).Generally, the adolescent students had positive behaviour *towards nutrition as shown by their grand mean of 3.5.*

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Adolescent Students' Responses Showing Behaviour Towards Nutrition by Gender.

S/NO	FOOD ITEMS	MALE (= 285)		FEMALES (N=266	
		X	SD	X	SD
1.	Green vegetable	3.5*	.56	3.6*	.60
2.	Beans	3.5*	.47	3.4*	.43
3.	Fried Foods	3.2*	.38	3.0*	.31
4.	Maixe flour foods	3.7*	.59	3.5*	.56
5.	Egg and meat	3.3*	.40	3.5*	.54
6.	Yam and potato chips	3.2*	.35	3.5*	>46
7.	Acara	2.9	.27	2.9*	.28
8.	Milk and cheese	3.2*	.35	3.2.*	.39
9.	Bread with butter	3.3* .46		3.4*	.53
10.	Guinea corn flour and millet flour foods	3.1* .35		3.5*	.35
11.	Break fast	4.2* 1.15		4.5*	1.38
12.	Lunch	4.2* 1.11		4.1*	1.08
13.	Supper	3.9*	95	4.2*	1.13
14.	Snacks	3.2*	.44	3.4* .51	
	Grand Mean	3.5*	.54	3.6* 61	

*Positive Behaviour .

The results in Table 2 showed that male and female adolescent students had similar behaviour towards nutrition. Both had the same mean score of 2.9 on Acara, which is below the criterion mean of 3.0. The table further revealed that male and female adolescents varied slightly in their mean scores on most of the food items and meals. The table also indicated that the male adolescent students grand mean score on behaviour towards meals is less than that of their female counterparts (male, x=3.5 Female x = 3.6).

Table 3 Mean and Standard Deviation of Adolescent Students' Responses on Behaviour Toward Nutrition by Class.

S/N	FOOD ITEMS	JSSII (N=310)		RESPONSES SSSII(N=241)	
		X	SD	X	SD
1.	Green vegetables	3.4*	.52	3.7*	.66
2.	Beans	3.5*	.44	3.5*	.46
3.	Tried foods	3.0*	.27	3.3*	.42
4.	Maize floor foods	3.5*	.57	3.8*	.62
5.	Egg and meat	3.3*	.38	3.6*	.54
6.	Yam and potato chips	3.2*	.38	3.3*	.42
7.	Acara	2.9	.29	3.0*	.30
8.	Milk and cheese	3.1*	.34	3.4*	.43
9.	Bread with butter	3.3*	.48	3.4*	.51
10.	Guineacorn Flour and millet flour foods	3.0*	.3 1/2	3.3*	.43
11.	Breadfast	4.1*	1.14	4.4*	1.29
12.	Lunch	4.1*	1.08	4.2*	1.10
13.	Supper	3.9*	.90	4.3*	1.21
14.	Snacks	3.3*	.49	3.3*	.45
	Grand mean	3.4*	.49	3.6*	.69

*Positive Behavior

Table 3 revealed that while adolescents in SSS II had mean response scores equal to or above the criterion of 3.0 in all the food items and meals, their counterparts in JSS II had a mean response score that is less than the criterion mean in Acara (x=2.9). The table further revealed that the adolescent students in SSS II showed more postive behavior towards meals than those in JSS II as shown by their mean scores on the table. Their grand mean (JSSII,x=3.4 and SSSII, x=3.6) showed that JSS II adolescent students" behavior towards nutrition is lower than that of their counterparts in SSSII.

Discussion

The interpretation of behavioral factors relating to a healthy diet depends upon assessing eating habits. Scores obtained by the analysis of data were used to interpret nutrition behaviors of the adolescent students.

Table 1 reveals that the adolescent students showed positive nutritional behavior in most items. Their grand mean response score of 3.5, which is well above the criterion mean of 3.0, was credited positive nutrition behavior among the adolescent students. This finding, if not influenced by other factors, showed greater understanding of importance of good nutrition to the body.

The finding that adolescent students had positive behavior towards nutrition complied with the norms as opined by Hill and Blundell (1991) that feeding behavior is a frequent and familiar human activity.

Table 2 revealed that the behaviors of male and female adolescent students toward nutrition were positively similar. The behavior or both sexes towards 'acara' calls for intervention.

Variations existed in the mean response scores on all items including the grand means of both sexes, but there was no significant difference in male and female adolescent students' behavior towards nutrition. The finding indicated positive health development as has been rightly observed by Atkinson (1991) who noted that adolescence is a highly critical time nutritionally, and unbalanced diets can prevent normal growth. The findings also agreed with Rossi's (1995) finding that adolescents have a notion of healthy eating, which equated with balanced diet and with food being nutritious. It also confirmed the findings of Barasi (1992) that peak appetite occurs around the age of 12 in girls and 14 in boys apparently corresponding to the most growth period. Adolescent students in junior and Senior classes showed positive behavior towards nutrition, but their mean response scores varied. The senior students scored higher in all the items indicating more positive behavior towards nutrition than the junior students.

These are welcome development since these young people are assuming responsibility for their own eating habits; health related attitudes and behaviors. The finding is also good because dietary behavior acquired during adolescence might be transitory in some individuals. Therefore, if this dietary behavior acquired in adolescence persists into adult life, it may have positive and important consequences for positive health.

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