

ASSESSMENT OF NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN ILARO, OGUN STATE.

by

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ABSTRACT

Today many people are paying considerable attention to what they eat because food intake is closely related to health and a sense of well-being. Recent surveys have shown that prevalence of malnutrition is common among preschool children both in public and private schools due to inadequate knowledge about nutrition. This study was carried out to assess the nutrition education knowledge among primary school teachers in Ilaro Ogun State, Nigeria. One hundred teachers from various schools were randomly selected for the survey. A structured questionnaire was used to obtain information on socio demographic characteristics. Knowledge of nutrition concepts was assessed and scored on twenty-one nutrition knowledge questions. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of chi-square. Result showed that 55% of the respondents had knowledge of nutrition while 37% of the respondents got their nutrition information from a nutrition newsletter. Findings indicate that higher percentage of the respondents (95%) were knowledgeable on concepts of nutrition as probed and no significant association was observed between the overall nutritional knowledge and other variables ($p > 0.05$). It was concluded that majority of the respondents interviewed were knowledgeable; they used oral and teaching aids to teach nutrition. We therefore recommend that Curriculum planners need to include more food based topics in the existing subjects that are means of nutrition information in primary schools, this could be meaningful by using adequate teaching aids such as posters and games (practical). Government and parents should encourage and fund school lunch programs, which could be an excellent medium for nutrition education in primary schools.

Key words: Nutrition, Education, Teacher, Knowledge and School

Introduction

Nutrition and health are closely linked because of the roles they play in human health (Atinmo, 1982). The Council of Food and Nutrition of the American Medical Association defines nutrition as the "Science of food, the nutrient and other substances therein, their action, interaction, and balance in relation to health and disease and the processes by which the organism ingests, absorbs, transports, utilizes and excretes food substances". The saga of human nutrition and the improvement of human health is reflected in the belief that human performance and well-being both mental and physical, depend primarily on what is eating. Nutritionists have also speculated that life could be sustained, although probably not enjoyable by a supply of purified nutrients. Nutritional deficiency diseases that was common in the past, such as scurvy, rickets, goiter, and pellagra, have been either eliminated or greatly reduced in incidence because of nutrition education. (World Book Encyclopedia 1980).

Another measure of the progress made in the field of nutrition is that the average life expectancy in the United State has increased from about 40 years at the time of the twentieth century to more than 70 years in the 1990s, an increase that can be partially attributed to improvement in nutritional knowledge.

Today, many people are paying considerable attention to what they eat, with the idea that food intake is closely related to health and a sense of well-being. Nevertheless, knowing how nutrition influences well-being may help people decide what kind of life to lead. Experts in many professions try to solve problems concerning nutrition. Home economics study the management and preparation of food. Chemists make artificial foods from chemicals. Educators teach correct food habits. Agriculture researchers work to develop high yield and high-quality crops (Rao 1987)

One of the ways to ensure proper nutrition is by educating people so that they can transfer this educational information both in deed and in teachings through their attitudes and habits. It is suggested by social psychologists that how a person feels and what he knows influences his behaviors. Thus, there is a strong association between nutrition knowledge and attitudes (Gift et al., 1972). School age children need certain foods for growth and health. Eating such foods during childhood has a lot to do with their health in later years. Atinmo (1982) stated that the earlier children form desirable eating attitude, the better the chances are that these positive traits will stay with them throughout their lives. Food habits are dependent on attitudes, prejudices and taboos acquired early in life and from a pattern of behavior which is a characteristic of a group.

Education is regarded as part and parcel of the overall socio-economic growth of many societies and the principal role of education is to promote and improve the knowledge and value system of the society (Rao, 1987). Good or poor nutrition education begins early in life from the time a child first enters school, he regards his own eating habits as the norm but his attitude are influenced to greater extent by formal and informal education. Poor nutritional status is the result of poor habit and belief. Education is believed to give knowledge, skills and confidence. Afigbo, (1983) stated that "education is one of the revolutionaries of our age because it is among the very few programs that leaves positive impact on every sector of society". This is especially true about nutrition education because the food habits of a nation determine to a large extent the nutritional well-being of its people and according to FAO/WHO (1992) nutritional well-being is recognized as a precondition for the development of societies.

Psychologists and educationists agree that the training which a child receives in his earliest years has a profound influence on his behaviour as an adult. Accordingly, the primary schools teachers make a vital contribution towards instilling thought and habits in the child. Thus the knowledge of the nutrition is essential especially at the young age such as the school age so that they may have adequate knowledge to cater for themselves and their children in future. It may also allow them to influence their parents and relatives who are staying near them at present with their knowledge of the nutritional values. In essence, values that are modified by individuals in the social system may influence interest in acquiring nutritional knowledge and motivate implementation of that knowledge into sound food practices.

Food related issues had been included in the primary school curriculum by incorporating it in subjects such as elementary science, social studies, home economics etc. (National Primary Education Commission). This is an effort directed towards promoting health and reducing to minimum the problem of malnutrition which according to Atinmo (1982), Osilesi and Akesode et al. (1994) has continued to be the most outstanding health problem in Nigeria. This is expected to help individuals in choosing from their environment the most ideal means of meeting their physiological needs for growth, survival, physical activities and reproduction thereby gradually preventing the prevalence of malnutrition in Nigeria. One of the key goals for the year 2000 set by the World Summit for Children (WSC) and the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) is to examine the available data on the quality of the education provided in Nigerian schools as measured by tests of learning achievement and examinations. The importance of giving young children the quality care, nutrition and stimulation needed for their healthy growth and development has increasingly been receiving recognition both internationally and within Nigeria. This was prominent not only in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), but more recently in the EFA 2000 Declaration of the Dakar World Education Forum.

Therefore, it is imperative to know the extent of knowledge of nutrition among primary school teachers. An assessment of the nutrition knowledge of the teachers can provide information that will assist in evaluating their accumulated knowledge of nutrition and consequently make suggestions on how to improve their knowledge. This study is thus designed to enlighten us on the knowledge of primary school teachers about nutrition and to evaluate the effectiveness of their ability to influence their feeding pattern with their knowledge of nutrition in order to fulfil the objective of teaching at primary school level of education.

Statement of the problem

The cases of malnutrition have been an age long problem in Nigeria due to lack of nutritional education, the problem appears to be very much present except that the pattern is changing. Recent surveys have shown that the prevalence of malnutrition is common among pre-school children both in public and private schools. This study is design to assess the nutrition knowledge among primary school teachers in Ilaro Ogun state of Nigeria.

General Objective of the Study

This study is aimed at assessing the nutrition education knowledge among primary school teachers in Yewa South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

The aim of this study will be achieved through the following specific objectives:

1. To know the socio-economic characteristics of the teachers in the study area.
2. To evaluate the nutrition education knowledge among primary school teachers in the study area.
3. To identify the source of information on nutrition by the selected teachers.
4. To identify the methods of teaching they adopt in teaching nutrition in their schools.

Materials and Method

Study Area

The study area was Ilaro. Ilaro is under Yewa South Local Government which was created in 1977. Yewa South Local Government shares boundaries in the North with Yewa North local government and in the South with Ipokia local government, in the west and east with Ifo and Ado-Odo/local government respectively. Yewa South Local Government has a land area of about 163,890 by 1991 provision population. Yewa South Local Government is predominantly dominated by the Yewas with other sub ethnic groups like Anagos, Aworis, Eguns and Aworis co-existing in a peaceful atmosphere. The principal towns include Ilaro, Owode, Ajilete, Erinja, Oke Odan, Iwoye, Ilobi and Idogo. The main language spoken is Yewa and Egun. Yewa South people are mainly farmers and traders while a few people engage in craftsmanship. Ilaro is the headquarter of Yewa South Local Government. For proper administrative convenience and effective coverage, the local government has three area offices at Oke Odan, Owode and Idogo. Each is being manned by an Area Officer.

Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

One hundred teachers from various socio-economic group participated in this survey. The teachers were selected from the public primary schools using the attendance register for a random sampling. The schools used were U.A.M.C. Eleja Primary School, Nawarudeen Primary School, Methodist Primary School, Polytechnic Primary School, and Ahmadiyya Primary School.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire is made up of three sections. Section A comprises of personal data of respondents, section B gathered information on socio demographic characteristics, while section C is about the nutritional knowledge test. Data from questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics (chi-square).

Result

The analysis in table 1 (see appendix) showed that most of the respondents interviewed are within the age group of 41-50 years. Also, table 2 indicated that most (about 74 percent) of the respondents interviewed are Christians. Table 3 revealed that most (about 81 percent) of the respondents are female. Table 4 shows the distribution of respondents according to educational qualification. As revealed from the table most (about 80 percent) of the respondents interviewed are NCE holders. As evident from table 5 majority (about 30 percent) of the respondents interviewed are within the average monthly income range of ₦10,000-15,000.

Data obtained from method adopted in teaching nutrition as shown in table 6 shows that most (about 55%) of the respondents interviewed used oral and teaching aid to teach nutrition in primary school.

Table 7 shows the distribution of primary school teachers according to source of nutritional fact as evident from the table majority (about 37 percent) of the respondents got their information from nutritional newsletter.

Information obtained on degree of nutritional knowledge among the teachers show that most (about 95 percent) of the respondents are knowledgeable on food nutrition and its significance. According to them, all nutrients needed by the body are available in foods, each nutrients has specific use in the body, nutrient needs depends on physiological condition, eating can make us grow healthy and properly etc.

Discussion

The result obtained from sociodemographic characteristics of the primary school teachers on educational level are consistent with the earlier reports of Rao, (1987) who stated that education is regarded as part and parcel of the overall socio economic system of any society and the principal role of education is to promote and improve the knowledge and value system of the society. It also agrees with the finding of Afigbo, (1983) who stated that "education is the revolutionaries of our age because it is among the very few programs that leaves positive impact on every sector of society".

The result obtained on method adopted in teaching nutrition in this study are consistent with the earlier report of Proust, (1972) who reported that the primary school teachers make a vital contribution towards instilling thought and habit in the child.

The result obtained on source of nutritional information by the teachers agree with the finding of Lonergan and Parry, (1976) who reported that good or poor nutrition education begin early in life from the time a child first enter school, he/she regard his /her own eating habit as the norm but his attitude are influenced to greater extent by formal and informal education.

The result obtained from nutritional concept "food contains nutrient needed for proper development" agree with the finding of H. Rolanson (1973) who reported that we eat food to live, to grow, to keep healthy and well. The result obtained from the notion- "all nutrient needed by the body are available in foods" is in agreement with the opinion of H. Robinson (1973) who said that food is made up of different nutrients needed for growth and health.

The result of the idea- "each nutrient have specific use in the body" agrees with the opinion of Wardlaw and Kessel (2002) who said that nutrient are the nourishing substances obtained from food, if a nutrient is omitted from the diet, it will lead to a decline in certain aspect of human health, if the omitted nutrient is restored to the diet before permanent damage occurs, those aspects of human health hampered by its absence should regain normal function.

The result of nutritional concept "nutrient needs depends on physiological condition" agree with the finding of H. Robinson (1973) who reported that the amount of nutrients needed by an individual are influenced by age, sex, size and activities and state of health.

The result from the idea- "eating can make us to grow healthy and properly" agree with the finding of Atinmo (1982) who stated that nutrition and health are closely linked and there is no doubts about the role of nutrition in health.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study revealed that most of the respondents interviewed have good nutrition knowledge, they used oral and teaching aids to teach nutrition and that majority of the teachers source their nutrition information from nutrition newsletter. Conclusively, we suggest that Government and parents should encourage and fund school lunch programme as this could be an excellent medium for promoting nutrition education in primary schools. Also, Curriculum planners should include more food base topics in the existing subject as this could be a dissemination means of nutrition information in primary school.

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Appendixes

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the School Teacher

Varriable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	19	19
Female	81	81
Total	100	100
Age		
15-20	2	2
21-30	9	9
31-40	34	34
41-50	55	55
Total	100	100
Religion		
Islam	26	26
Christian	74	74
Total	100	100
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	99	99
Igbo	1	1
Total	100	100
Monthly income (N)		
10,000-15,000	30	30
16,000-20,000	19	19
21,000-25,000	23	23
26,000-30,000	17	17
31,000-35,000	2	2
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey (2004)

Table 2: Association between Demographic Characteristics of the School Teachers and Nutrition Knowledge

Variables	Good	Average	Poor	X ²	P-value
Sex					
Male	15(15)	4(4)	0(0)	4.161	0.064
Female	76(76)	5(5)	0(0)		

Age 15-20 21-30 31-40 41-50	2(2) 9(9) 30(30)	0(0) 0(0) 4(4)	0(0) 0(0) 0(0)	1.406	0.704
Religion Islam Christian	50(50) 69(69)	5(5) 5(5)	0(0) 0(0)		0.186
Ethnicity Yoruba Igbo	90(90) 1(1)	9(9) 0(0)	0(0) 0(0)	0.100	0.75
Educational level B.Sc HND ND PhD MSc Grade II SNCE	8(8) 4(4) 2(2) 1(1) 1(1) 3(3) 72(72)	1(1) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 8(8)	0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0)	1.235	0.975
Monthly income(N) 10,000-15,000 16,000-20,000 21,000-25,000 26,000-30,000 31,000-35,000	25(25) 18(18) 23(23) 14(14) 2(2)	5(5) 1(1) 0(0) 3(3) 0(0)	0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0) 0(0)	7.392	0.193

P is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$)

Table 3: Association between Education Level and Nutrition Information

Statement	B.Sc	HND	ND	PhD	MSc.	GradeII	NCE	X ²	P-value
Foods contain nutrients needed for development									
Yes	9(9)	4(4)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	77(77)	0.773	1.000
No		0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)		

	0(0)								
Each nutrient has specific use in the body Yes No	9(9) 0(0)	4(4) 0(0)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	72(72) 8(8)	2.174	0.903
Nutrient needs depend on physiological condition Yes No	8(8) 1(1)	3(3) 1(1)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	77(77) 3(3)	4.708	0.582
Egg is a good source of protein Yes No	6(6) 2(2)	3(3) 1(1) 2	0(0) 2(2)	0(0) 1(1)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	63(63) 15(15)	15.122	0.235
Protein is a source of energy Yes No	2(2) 7(7)	0(0) 4(4)	0(0) 2(2)	0(0) 1(1)	0(0) 1(1)	0(0) 3(3)	12(12) 67(67)	2.643	0.998
Eating enhance healthy growth Yes No	9(9) 0(0)	4(4) 0(0)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	75(75) 4(4)	1.316	1.000
Knowledge on reason for eating Yes No	9(9) 0(0)	4(4) 0(0)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	77(77) 1(1)	0.773	1.000
Knowledge of teachers on food spoilage Yes No	9(9) 0(0)	4(4) 0(0)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	78(78) 2(2)	0.510	0.998
Knowledge on prevention of food spoilage Yes No	9(9) 0(0)	4(4) 0(0)	2(2) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	1(1) 0(0)	3(3) 0(0)	77(77) 2(2)	0.773	1.000

P is statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$)