

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

A paper presented at the 47th Annual General Meeting & Scientific Conference of The Nutrition Society of
Nigeria held from 19th -23th September, 2017

by

**Alaba, K.E and Addo Adenike*

**Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro.*

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

**Corresponding Author: kikelomoalaba1@gmail.com*

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 score 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 nutrition newsletter. Findings indicated 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 ($p>0.05$). Curriculum planner needs to include more food based topics in the existing subject which are means of nutrition information in primary school, which could be meaningful by using adequate teaching aids such as poster and games (practical). Government and parent should encourage and fund school lunch program 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 foods 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 excrete 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. Nutritionist have also speculated that life could be sustained, although probably not enjoyable by a supply of purified nutrients. Nutritional deficiency disease 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 70s 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 wellbeing. 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. Chemist makes artificial foods from chemicals. Educators teach correct food habit, Agriculture researchers works 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 desirables 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 characteristic of a group.

Education is regarded as part and parcel of the overall social economic growth of many society 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 enter 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.

Psychologist and educationists agrees 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 according to Gift *et al.*, (1982) direct man's behavior by providing criteria for decisions. 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 subject 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) continue 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 examines the available data on the quality of the education provided in Nigerian schools as measured by test 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 right 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 of primary school teachers. An assessment of the nutrition knowledge of the teachers can provide information that will evaluate their accumulated knowledge of nutrition. 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 this teaching at the 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 still be very much present expect that the pattern is changing. Recent surveys have shown that 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

- 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 nutrition education of the teachers.
4. To identify the method of teaching nutritional education at the primary school level.

Significance of the study

This study revealed the nutrition knowledge of primary school teachers and method of transmitting it.

Materials and Method

Study Area

The study area was Ilaro under Yewa South Local Government 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 peopled by the Yewa with other sub ethnic groups like Anagos, Aworis, Eguns and Aworis co-existing in a peaceful atmosphere. The principal town include Ilaro, Owode, Ajilete, Erinja, Oke Odan, Iwoye, Ilobi, Idogo. The main language spoken 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 office at Oke Odan, Owode and Idogo. Each is being manned by an area officer.

Sampling technique and **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 are:

1. U.A.M.C. Eleja Primary School
2. Nawarudeen Primary School
3. Methodist Primary School
4. Polytechnic Primary School
5. Ahmadiyya Primary School

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is made up of three sections.

SECTION A: Comprises of the personal data

SECTION B: Collects information on sociodemographic characteristics

SECTION C: Nutritional knowledge test

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Data from questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics.(chi-square).

RESULT

The result of the personal data and socio demographic characteristic of the primary school teachers interviewed for the study is relevant in every survey work as it shows the much needed framework upon which the discussion of the result would be based is presented in Table 1-5. As evident from table 1 most (about 56 percent) of the respondent interviewed are within the age group of 41-50 years as illustrated in table 2 most

(about 74 percent) of the respondents interviewed are Christians. Table3 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 respondent interviewed are NCE holders. As evident from table 5 majority (about 30 percent) of the respondent 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 respondent interviewed got their information from nutritional newsletter.

Data obtained from nutrition knowledge test of teachers shows that most (about 95 percent) of the respondent interviewed are knowledgeable on the nutrition concept food contains nutrient needed for proper development, all nutrient 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.

Table 1: SOCIO DEMOGRAPIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL TEACHER

Variables	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		
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

Table 2: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS AND NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE.

	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	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	1.406	0.704
21-30	9(9)	0(0)	0(0)		
31-40	30(30)	4(4)	0(0)		
41-50	50(50)	5(5)	0(0)		
Religion					
Islam	22(22)	4(4)	0(0)	1.749	0.186
Christianity	69(69)	5(5)	0(0)		
Ethnicity					
Yoruba	90(90)	9(9)	0(0)	0.100	0.75
Igbo	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)		
Educational level					
B.Sc	8(8)	1(1)	0(0)	1.235	0.975
HND	4(4)	0(0)	0(0)		
ND	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)		
Phd	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)		
Msc.	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)		
Grade II	3(3)	0(0)	0(0)		
NCE	72(72)	8(8)	0(0)		
Monthly income					
10-15,000	25(25)	5(5)	0(0)	7.392	0.193
16-20,000	18(18)	1(1)	0(0)		
21-25,000	23(23)	0(0)	0(0)		

26-30,000	14(14)	3(3)	0(0)
31-35,000	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)

**P is
statistically
significant
(p≤0.05)**

Table 3: ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATION LEVEL AND NUTRITION INFORMATION

	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)	0(0)	2(2)		

**Each
nutrient has
specific use
in the body**

Yes	9(9)	4(4)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	72(72)	2.174	0.903
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	8(8)		

**Nutrient
needs
depend on
physiological
condition**

Yes	8(8)	3(3)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	77(77)	4.708	0.582
No	1(1)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	3(3)		

BSc.	HND	ND	Phd	MSc	GradeII	NCE	X ²	P-value
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**Egg is a
good
source**

of protein									
Yes	6(6)	3(3)	0(0)	0(0)	1(1)	3(3)	63(63)	15.122	0.235
No	2(2)	1(1)	2(2)	1(1)	0(0)	0(0)	15(15)		

Protein

is a

source

of

energy

Yes	2(2)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	12(12)	2.643	0.998
No	7(7)	4(4)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	67(67)		

Eating

enhance

healthy

growth

Yes	9(9)	4(4)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	75(75)	1.316	1.000
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	4(4)		

BSc	HND	ND	Phd.	MSc.	GradeII	NCE	X ²	P-value
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Knowledge

on reason

for eating

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)	0(0)	1(1)		
Knowledge of teachers on food spoilage									
Yes	9(9)	4(4)	2(2)	1(1)	1(1)	3(3)	78(78)	0.510	0.998
No	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	2(2)		
Knowledge on prevention of food spoilage									
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)	0(0)	2(2)		
P is statistically significant (p≤0.05)									

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 makes a vital contribution towards instilling thought and habit in the child.

The result obtained on source of nutritional information of the teacher 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 Corinne H. Rolanson (1973) who reported that we eat food to live, to grow, to keep healthy and well.

The result obtained from nutritional concept “all nutrient needed by the body are available in foods” is in agreement with the opinion of Corinne H. Robinson (1973) who said that food is made up of different nutrients needed for growth and health and with the opinion of Wardlaw and Kessel (2002) who reported that one way to balance your diet as you consume a variety of food is to select foods from the five major food groups every day.

The result of the nutritional concept, “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 Corinne 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 of the nutrition concept “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

This study revealed that most of the respondents interviewed are knowledgeable, they used oral and teaching aids to teach nutrition and majority of the teachers source their nutrition information from nutrition newsletter.

It can be concluded that the study met its objectives

- (i) To evaluate the nutrition education knowledge of primary school teachers.
- (ii) To identify the method of teaching nutrition at the primary school level.
- (iii) To identify the source of nutrition education of the teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

- (i) Government and parent should encourage and fund school lunch programme which could be an excellent medium for nutrition education in primary schools.

- (ii) Curriculum planner should include more food bases topics in the existing subject which are means of nutrition information in primary school, which could be meaningful by using adequate teaching aids such as postals and games (practicals).

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