

AWARENESS OF HOUSEHOLD FOOD LITERACY AND SECURITY FOR HEALTHY LIVING AMONG NCE HOME ECONOMICS STUDENTS.

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Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the awareness of household food literacy and security for healthy living in College of Education Minna Niger State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design in which two research questions guided the study. The population of the study consists of all NCE 1, 11 and 111 students of Home Economics Department (2017/2018) academic session. They are forty-seven (47) in number as the total population used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was self-designed questionnaire which was subjected to validation by experts. Findings of the study revealed that Home Economics students in the College are literate about foods. Similarly, they are aware of food security. Based on these findings, it was recommended among others that Home Economics department should liaise with the host community to launch a community-based food literacy and security programs in order to put the Home Economics students to task by increasing awareness to the general public.

Keywords: Household, literacy, Food, Security and Healthy living

1. Introduction

With the rise of human population, the availability of varieties of foods and the accessibility of food preservative technologies and food storage. food literacy is gaining increasing attention in contemporary society Bickel, Nord, Price, Hamilton and Cook (2000), defined food literacy as having the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to choose, grow, prepare and enjoy healthy food to support one's health, community and environment. Food literacy means understanding the impact of food choices, preservation, storage, preparation and intake on our health, environment and our economy. It contributes to the ability of a person to feed himself and others in a nutritionally healthy way. Surprisingly, food that was traditionally known as a source of calories for human sustenance is now considered a ticket for healthy or unhealthy living. Lindberg, Barbour and Godrich, (2020) stated that the concept of literacy takes many forms, such as local food literacy, modern food literacy, food preservation and food storage.

Recently, food literacy makes people strive to understand the technical, cultural and

ethical aspects of food they eat. In line with this, the notion of food literacy has now broadened to include eating easily digestible foods and understanding the nutritional value of foods, drinking clean and healthy water (Food & Agricultural Organization, 2008). With these conceptions, a new form of food literacy is now needed among the growing generations to help them analyze and address the needs of future food demands.

The food literate person in the generation to come may be able to develop some resilience to changing personal circumstances in order to avert food insecurity. Food insecurity is defined as the disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and other resources.

For example, features of food insecurity in high income countries are the over consumption of high energy foods, reduced intake of fruit and vegetables and limited diet diversity (Gallegos, 2016; Begley, Paynter, Butcher and Dhaliwal, 2019). These features are emanating from poor eating habits and are the cause of many health conditions as it relates to lack of personal knowledge and skills in food security and low income earners to mention but a few. Lindberg, et al., (2020) mentioned the requirement of the body for food in order to generate energy to work optimally and keep the body alive.

The human body energy is generated from nutrients in the food eaten, mostly carbohydrates, fats and proteins while, minerals and vitamins are other nutrients that are also important in diets to help stay healthy. Baker, Auld, Ammerman, Lohse, Serrano and Wardlaw (2020) remarked that it is important to find the right balance between these different nutrients to achieve maximum health benefits. Healthy eating means consuming the right quantities of foods from all food groups in order to live a healthy life. Diet is often referred to as some dietary regime for losing weight. However, diet simply means what food we eat in the course of a 24-hour, one week, or one month and so on.

A good diet is a nutritional lifestyle that promotes good health. A good diet must include several food groups because one single group cannot provide everything human needs for good health. Therefore, the crucial part of healthy eating is an adequate diet. An adequate diet or a good diet means consuming from all the different food groups in the right quantities. Nutritionists say there are five main food groups - whole grains, fruit and vegetables, protein, dairy, and fat & sugar. The World Health Organization (WHO) makes the following five recommendations they apply both to populations and individuals. That we should aim for an energy balance and a healthy body weight, we should limit our energy consumption from total fats, we should also aim for more unsaturated fats and less saturated fats, we should up our consumption of fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains and nuts, we should consume as little simple sugars as possible and as well as making sure our salt is iodized, while also limiting our consumption of salt/sodium.

For this reason, food literacy programmes often aim to improve food security status by building self-efficacy and skills in budgeting and cooking. Food literacy is thought to improve aspects of food insecurity as improved knowledge and skills may assist to

maximize income, but only to a certain point as education cannot change the cost of food or resolve other food insecurity caused by economic turbulences. Food security means food availability year-round, accessibility to those in need and affordability of food to all the citizens at all times. Food availability refers to the stability of its supplies. Food accessibility denotes a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious foods that meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Nutrition security is what every family in Nigeria needs today. In addition, Nigeria families need to ensure access to adequate quantity of food, adequate quality, safety of foods, water and proper intra-household food distribution. According to Lord and Novick (1995) availability of food is a function of increased food production, stake holding and trade. Access to food by households and individuals is conditioned by income distribution and poverty, since the poor lack adequate means to secure access to food. (Food and Agricultural Organization FAO, 2018). Although, some countries can ensure food security through importation, the most desirable form of food security is self-sufficiency through household food literacy and food security (Bickel et al., 2000; and Begley et al., 2019).

At the household level, food security implies that there is adequate access to food over time. This is possible when there is adequate food availability in the household, and an adequate income capacity for the purchase of the available foods (FAO, 2018). Therefore, stability of food implies that the food availability is not affected by any shocks or risks affecting food production at all times.

Food access has three components. These components include, physical access to foods, economic access to foods and sustainable access to foods. Availability of food, stability of food supplies and access are therefore three essential determinants of food security. Thus, physical access implies food availability or food supply to the household, as there might be food available at the national level which however may not trickle down to the household level. A number of factors such as income, educational level, household sizes and awareness of food literacy and security are known to affect household food security Nanayakkara, Margerison and Worsley (2017)

There is a dual relationship between food security and food literacy (Nanayakkara, et al., 2017). Whereby inadequate food literacy may contribute to food insecurity: in that food insecurity may limit the ability to use food literacy behaviors to achieve adequate dietary quality. Food literacy is important because good eating habits at a younger age can lay the foundation for life long dietary patterns. It is essential that Home Economics students are aware of where their food comes from, how food impacts their health and how to make informed choices about food consumption. Nanayakkara et al (2018) mentioned that for one to be food literate that should contribute to his understanding of food security. This is because, food security has been discovered for centuries and that man cannot survive without food.

Awareness of food literacy and security among Home Economics students is a condition for our future survival of a nation and for healthy living. According to Gallegos (2014), food security involves not only being aware of food availability through storage and trade but also more importantly food access through domestic locations and local home production. It is the contentions of Food and Agricultural Organization (2018) that for a country to have sustainable food security there should be awareness among the populace that food supplies must keep pace with increase in population and urbanisation. This is to ensure that there is a right balance between food consumption levels and the growing human population. It is also important that Home Economic students are aware that poor nutrition can contribute to stress, tiredness and poor capacity to work over time, which equally contribute to the risk of developing some deficiency illness and other health problems such as being overweight, underweight, marasmus, kwashiorkor, goiter, low calcium, bleeding gums, river blindness, vitamin related diseases to mention but a few. Awareness of healthy diet according to Barbour, (2016) may help to prevent certain long time diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Home Economics Students are expected to be resource persons in terms of food literacy in schools and communities to educate the younger generation. These activities have tendencies of raising a literate generation that will provide food security to the nation. At present, food insecurity is on the increase as many are leaving their homes for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps because of the rise of insurgency and due to insufficient money to feed the household (family). The researcher observed that people migrate to where food is available. They also consume foods without putting their dietary requirement into consideration. This negligence may be due to poor knowledge on food nutrients. The question is; are Home Economics Students aware of these food challenges? Thus, the need to assess Home Economics Students' awareness of household food literacy and security for healthy living in Niger State College of Education Minna becomes a matter of concern, as some students may have come from households displaced from their localities.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess home economics students' awareness of household food literacy and security for healthy living in Niger State College of Education Minna.

The specific objectives of the study are;

- i. To determine the level of food literacy awareness among Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education Minna
- ii. To determine the level of Home Economics Student awareness of food security in Niger State College of Education Minna

4.0 Research Questions:

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- i. What is the level of food literacy among Home Economics students in Niger State College of Education Minna?
- ii. What is the level of Home Economics student awareness of food security in Niger State College of Education Minna?

5.0 Materials and Methods

Research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey. It was adopted because it is suitable where a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from their representatives in order to obtain empirical knowledge of contemporary nature. The population for the study consists of all the Home Economics NCE 1, 11 and 111 students, 2017/2018 academic session, Niger State College of Education, Minna. They are forty-seven (47) in number and this constitute total number of the population that was used for the study as sample. This is in line with the suggestion of Mc Clarve and Dietrich (1986) who said that "where the population is small all the number of that population can be used as the sample". The research instrument used for the study is self-structured questionnaire designed by the researcher to elicit responses from the respondent. The questionnaire titled "Household food literacy and security for healthy living Questionnaire" (HFLSHQ) was divided into two sections i.e., Section A and B. Section A focused on food literacy among home economics students while Section B dealt with Home Economics Students awareness of food security. The total number of items in the questionnaire are fourteen (14). The questionnaire was validated by two Chief Lecturers in the Department of Home Economics Education, College of Education Minna. Correction and suggestions were used in producing the final copy of the instruments for the study. The questionnaire was restructured, modified and some were completely erased. Face and construct validity were carried out to ensure that the instrument measures the construct intended for the study.

In order to determine the reliability index of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out at Federal College of Education Kontagora Niger State. The instrument was administered once to 20 Home Economic Students to fill and return. The reliability coefficient obtained was .78 and .72 for the two constructs (food literacy and food security) using Crombach Alpha. By virtue of the values obtained, the instrument was adjudged to be reliable for this study. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the selected Home Economics students with the help of a research assistant.

Face to face method of distribution was adopted by the research assistant and an interval of 2 days was given for the return of filled questionnaires. This gave the respondents enough time to answer the questions adequately. The data collected from the administration of the research instruments were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools. Mean, (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer the research questions. The arithmetic mean of the values was computed as $5+4+3+2+1= 15/5 = 3.0$. Therefore, any item with weighted mean of 3.0 was considered accepted and any items with weighted

mean less than 3.0 was considered rejected as a decision rule

6.0 Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What is the level of food literacy among Home Economics Students in Niger College of Education?

S/NO	Items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I am knowledgeable about food in my community	2.79	1.530	Disagree
2	I often check the nutritional content on food label	3.20	1.384	Agree
3	I knew the nutrient composition in food	3.20	1.336	Agree
4	I knew about fast food meals like pizza, sharwama, chips	3.36	1.271	Agree
5	I learn about local and exotic food preparation	3.65	1.321	Agree
6	I knew about soft drink, flavored mineral and water	3.72	1.278	Agree
7	When buying food, I often go for quality.	3.66	1.072	Agree
8	I often add fruits and vegetables in my meal	3.24	1.300	Agree
	Cumulative mean:	3.35		

Decisions Mean = 3.0

Key 5: Highly literate, 4: Literate, 3: Undecided, 2: Illiterate, 1: Highly illiterate

Table 1 reveals the mean responses on the level of food literacy among Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education. The baseline for agreement on all the items presented to the respondents is 3.0. From the mean responses, it would be seen that the respondents agreed with all the items except one. The average mean of all the items is 3.35, which is above the cut-off point of 3.0. This indicates that Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education are literate about foods.

Research Question Two: What is the level of Home Economics Student awareness of food security in Niger State College of Education?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Level of Awareness of Food Security

S/NO	ITEMS	MEAN	SD	Decision
1	I participate in food security campaigns and discussion more actively in my community	3.22	1.400	Agree
2	I am conscious about food preservation	3.17	1.125	Agree
3	I compare food prices before taking decision to buy	3.22	1.230	Agree
4	I buy food items during harvest	3.25	1.290	Agree
5	I knew different methods of food storage	3.54	1.148	Agree
	Cumulative mean:	3.28		

Decisions Mean = 3.0

Table 2 reveals the mean responses on the level of Home Economics Student awareness of food security in Niger State College of Education. The baseline for agreement on all the items presented to the respondents is 3.0. From the mean responses, it would be seen that the respondents agreed with all the items. The average mean of all the items is 3.28, which is above the cut-off point of 3.0. This indicates that Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education are aware of food security.

7.0 Discussion of Findings

The finding of research question one on the level of food literacy among Home Economics students in Niger State College of Education indicated that Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education Minna are literate about foods. This implies that the respondents are knowledgeable about food, nutritional content on the food labels and the nutrient composition in food. The finding agrees with the finding of Baker, et al., (2020) who revealed that nutrition education students are aware of the best practices for low-income audiences.

The finding of research question two on the level of **Home Economics students' awareness of food security in Niger State College of Education** indicates that Home Economics students are aware of food security in Niger State College of Education. This implied that Home Economics students are aware of the conditions that ensure food security. The finding agrees with the earlier finding of Begley, et al (2019) who revealed that students are aware of the association between food literacy and food insecurity and are ready to uphold practices that are aligned with food security.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that Home Economics Students in Niger State College of Education Minna are literate about foods and that their level of food literacy reflects their personal behaviors for planning, selecting, preparing and eating healthy foods and have considered it a necessary life skill. Similarly, Home Economics Students are aware of food security in Niger State College of Education. Their consciousness about food security mirrors their personal behaviors for planning, selecting, preparing and preserving food for future use.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The Home Economics department should liaise with the host community to launch a community-based food literacy program in order to put the Home Economics Students to task by increasing awareness among the general public. This can play at least a short-term role in building skills and addressing food literacy and food security in the area.
- ii. Home Economics Lecturers in conjunction with their students should develop a nutrition guideline to be used for planning purchases, preservation and storage of food. In addition to other relevant information that will ensure food security for the college community.

9.0 References

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