

EFFECT OF DIETING HABIT ON YOUTHS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Onwurah, F. B.; Nwogbidi, K. and Tew, C.

Abstract

This study examined the dieting habit of students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State using questionnaire items. Means of data generated from three tertiary institutions in the state were subjected to t-statistics. Results indicate non-significant ($t_{0.05} (7) = 2.365$) differences for feeding habit and supplemental feeding while fatty acids intake and disease infection amongst boys and girls of tertiary institutions were significantly ($t_{0.025} (7) = 2.365$) different.

Introduction

Longevity in good health is a blessing everyone would want to have. Healthy living is the result of good diets, adequately and promptly taken, and rich foods are necessary for nutrients supply necessary for energy, growth and repairs and defence mechanism strengthening. These functions must necessarily be carried out by the body for longevity to be meaningful.

The word "youth" has been variously described to mean different age brackets by different people. In the Nigerian context, it may be erroneous to put youth age bracket between 15-18 years. At this age bracket the individual is still immature physically, socially, psychologically and even morally. Youth in the context of this study is put in the age bracket of 15 - 40 years of age.

Dieting habit may have positive/negative effects when the individual attains maturity. These problems range from nutritional disorders to psychosocial misfits later in the adult stage (41 years and above).

This study examines the effects of dieting habit in youths (boys and girls) between 15-40 years in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Hypothesis

H_A: Dieting habit has no significant ($t_{10} 25 (7) - 3.365$) effect among the young (boys and girls) in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Objectives of the Study

This study was designed to investigate the effect of dieting habit on

Eating habit

Supplement feeding -

Fatty acids intake, and

Disease infections among boys and girls (youths) in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Rivers State using questionnaire for data collection. The population of the study comprised of all students of tertiary institutions in Rivers State. Stratified random sampling technique, according to Ihiegbufem and Amini (2000), was used to administer the questionnaire to 140 students (70 boys and 70 girls; that is 140 student each) from College of Education, Polytechnic and the University. A total of 420 questionnaires were administered to students of the three categories of tertiary institutions in the State.

Reliability of the research instrument was tested using Cronbach Alfa (measure of internal consistency), and validity by construct validity according to Ezeudo, Agwagah and Agbaegbu (1997).

Means of all data generated were used for analysis using t-statistics (Wahua, 1999).

Results and Discussion

Parameter	Boys	Girls	Difference
Missed meals	68	60	8
Traditional meals	62	36	26
Fast food	16	53	37
Drugs	31	11	20
Alcoholics	26	16	10
Carbonated drinks	18	42	24
Meal satisfaction	16	34	18
Σ	237	252	143
\bar{X}	33.86	36.57	20.43

From table I, feeding habits of boys and girls were not significantly ($t_{0.025}(7) = 3.365$) different. Youths in tertiary institutions miss meals. This agrees with **Okosun** and Agu (2006) who reported dietary restraints, hunger strikes and food liking, and snacking as some of the dietary behaviours of our youths. The boys from the result of this study appear to eat more traditional meals while the girls eat more of fast foods. This implies that girls take more fat foods than boys. The choice of food outside the traditional meals can be a kind of fat food (Tsado, 2006). Girls also take more carbonated drinks while the boys are more into alcohol and drugs.

Increase in the use of carbonated drinks could be attributed to pleasure, while increase in alcohol and drugs could be attributed to frustration, disappointment, failure and stress.

Majority of such causes of alcoholism and drug additions is largely environmental. According to Nihi (1990), parents play major roles in driving their children into using drugs. The increased use of alcohol and drugs in boys could be the reasons why they are not satisfied with meals.

Table 2: Dieting Habit and Supplement Meals Intake

Parameter	Boys	Girls	Difference
Vegetable	18	6	12
Fruits	10	36	26
Drugs	16	22	6
Oily fishes	10	34	24
Lean meat	8	28	20
Red meat	36	22	14
Egg	8	26	18
Σ	196	174	120
\bar{X}	15.14	24.86	17.4

From table 2, supplementary intake of foods and drugs were not significantly ($t_{0.025}(7) = 3.365$) different. Boys take more vegetables and red meat which supply fibre and fatty acids (plants and animals fats) while the girls consume more fruits, drug supplements, oily fishes, lean meat and egg. This implies that the girls consume more vitamins, fish oil (Omega - 3s) and protein than the boys. The high intake of fish oil (Omega - 3s) could be responsible for the supple skin of the girls. Fatty fish is an idea/ source of Omega 03s which keep cells supple flexible in, man, helping maintain joint suppleness, skin and blood vessels elasticity which are signs of youths (Saldeen, n.d).

Table 3: Dieting Habit on Fatty Acid intake

Parameter	Boys	Girls	Difference
Palm oil	70	70	0
Coconut oil	20	6	14
Fish oil	0	0	0
Cod liver oil	0	0	0
Cottonseed oil	0	0	0
Groundnut oil	18	32	14
Margarine (butter)	12	33	21
Σ	120	141	21
\bar{X}	17.4	20.14	7

Effect of Dieting Habit on Youths of Tertiary institutions

From table 3, there is a significant (to.025 (7) = 2.365) difference in the intake of fatty acids. Palm oil is equally consumed probably because of its regular feature in most meals. Boys, however, take more coconut oil while girls consume more groundnuts and margarine (butter). The high intake of coconut oil is reflected in academic performance. Coconut supports thyroid functions, and the thyroid governs brain development^

Parameter	Boys	Girls	Difference
Diarrhea	2	6	4
Dermatitis	22	8	14
Ulcers	4	16	12
Diabetes	12	16	4
Cholera	8	22	14
Constipation	6	24	18
Stress	48	30	18
Σ	102	122	84
14.57	17.43	12.00	12.00

From table 4, difference (to.025 (7) = 2.365) difference in disease infection between the boys and girls in tertiary institutions in Rivers State due to dieting habit. Girls suffer more infections than boys. These include diarrhea, ulcers, diabetes, cholera and constipation. This implies that girls suffer more nutritional disorders than boys probably because they take fewer vegetables (fiber), more fats and more fad foods. Diarrhea and constipation could be attributed to low fibre intake, cholera to fad foods, diabetes to carbonated drinks and ulcer to missed meals. The boys suffer more of dermatitis probably due to reduced Omega - 3s intake. Omega - 3s, common in the diets of Eskimos who take diets containing 20 times more fatty acids than the Europeans and Americans, makes heart joint and skin diseases uncommon (Saldeen, n.d). The stress factor among boys could be attributed to financial -instability and social life among boys.

Conclusion

According to Ifeanacho (2006), adolescents who restrict food or fluid intake run the risk of j developing some short term or long-term illness, some of which may be as a result of compromised - immune function. To Akogon (2006), food habits are very difficult to break when established. During adolescence, most young people develop poor feeding habit such skipping meals (Nwokolo, 2006).. Youthful stage according to (Tsado, 2006), witnesses a great period of independence for self, which increases participation in social life characterized with general busy schedule of activities. This could be the reason our youths in tertiary institutions, particularly the girls resort to fad foods. This unhealthy eating habit can have negative impact on cognitive development and performance of the youths.

This study, therefore, recommends that:

All school canteens should incorporate vegetables in their menu.

All tertiary institutions should be have vegetable/fruit markets.

Fatty fishes should be incorporated into all tertiary institutions canteen food menu.

Alcohol/cigarette sales and use should be banned in all tertiary institutions.

Drugs used by students in schools must only be those prescribed by medical doctors.

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