

Foods Commonly Consumed Bychildren From Five African Nations Living In Nigeria

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Objective: *This study was carried out to evaluate the feeding pattern of children from four African countries residing in Nigeria in relation to that of Nigerian children, the identifying factors that influence their differences in the dietary pattern of the children based on their nationalities and choice of food.*

I. Introduction

African foods is as diverse as the hundreds of cultures and groups that inhabit the continent. This reflects in the feeding pattern from country to country. Children who reside within the borders of their home country usually conform to the feeding pattern of adults, while other children who find their way into country make do with whatever that come their ways due to poverty caused by lack of family and government support.

In East Africa, the Arab influenced their foods while West African meals were influenced by Europeans who invaded our land centuries ago. These foreign foods and our local staples form part of our cuisines and meals.

Food consumption patterns can be defined as the common order or ways of eating foods. Rural residents tend to adhere to their eating patterns instead of changing to a new and more appropriate eating habits (Ogunniyi, 2012). In order to maintain healthful diet, Jama (2002) stated that a variety and balance of foods from all food groups and moderate consumption of all food items is very important.

According to UNICEF, widespread poverty resulting in chronic and persistent hunger is the biggest problem in the developing countries especially in Africa and this has resulted into wasting and stunting of a large children population(UNICEF 2013). Malnutrition is a condition which occurs among large sections of the poor, mainly amongst women and children. In a broader sense, the variable of concern is household's welfare, which is an important component for determining nutritional status. In Nigeria, malnutrition is associated to food shortage linked to both quantity and quality of food to provide a balanced diet (Durojaiye, 1987). Other African countries experience food shortage and ultimately malnutrition also. This rising cases of malnutrition among African children is a major concern for health workers and practitioners and therefore need to be researched in order to bring-up recommendations.

II. Materials And Methods

A study was conducted to compare the feeding patterns of Nigerian and children of four other nationalities residing in Nigeria. 120 children between ages 1 and 10 from five different nations (19 Liberians; 27 Sierralonians; 2 Congolese; 2 Rwandans; 70 Nigerians). Convenience sampling method was utilized because it helped in gathering useful data and there were fewer foreign children domiciled in Nigeria willing to participate in the study. The Nigerian children were randomly selected within Surulere Local Government of Lagos State.

A verbal informed consent was sought and obtained from parents, caregivers and community leaders of participants as the case may be. The children of other nationalities whose caregivers wanted them were given the questionnaires in the camp and the interviewers assisted them to write and tick the food frequency checklist, demographic characteristics.

The food frequency checklist grouped foods according to similarities in food composition. For example, milk, cheese, and yogurt were grouped under dairy foods; the meat group included fish, chicken, turkey, eggs, groundnut, and dry beans; fresh vegetables were grouped into a vegetable group; citrus fruit or juice, mango, guava, and pawpaw were grouped as fruit; bread, cereals, yam, potato, cassava, rice, and pasta were grouped as grain products. There was a column for specifying other foods not within the group.

Statistical Analysis The study was basically descriptive. Data from each questionnaire were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16 VERSION. The food consumption frequencies were derived by sorting the responses into two groups of Nigerian and other four countries together.

III. Result

Meal Skipped By Nigerian And Other African Children

MEAL SKIPPED	NIGERIANS	NON-NIGERIANS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE
Breakfast	8	3	11	16.9%
Lunch	10	33	43	66.2%
Dinner	9	2	11	16.9%
Total	27	38	65	100%

Food Consumption Of Other African Children

Breakfast

Bread & Margarine	Rice & beans	Rice & veg.	Pap	Eba/ Tuwo/solid meals & soup	Usually skipped	Yam & stew	Bean Pottage
26 52%	3 6%	5 10%	5 10%	1 2%	3 6%	5 10%	2 4%

LUNCH

Bean pottage	Rice & beans	Rice & stew	Pap	Eba/Tuwo/ solid meals & soup	Usually skipped	Bread & stew/tea	Biscuit/ Pastries
3 6%	1 2%	5 10%	2 4%	3 6%	33 66%	1 2%	2 4%

SUPPER

Bean pottage	Rice & beans	Rice & veg.	Rice & stew	Yam	Eba/ starchy solid meal & soup	Usually skipped	Bread & Egg/Stew	Snack/ Biscuit	Bread & tea
2 4%	8 16%	6 12%	20 40%	3 6%	3 6%	3 6%	1 2%	1 2%	3 6%

Food Consumption Of Nigerian Children

BREAKFAST

Yam & Egg/	Bread & Tea	Bread & stew	Pap	Plantain & egg/stew	Usually skipped	Rice & Stew	Noodles/ Pasta
10 14.3%	10 14.3%	17 24.3%	5 7.1%	5 7.1%	8 11.4%	5 7.1%	10 14.3%

LUNCH

Beans & yam	Rice & beans	Rice & stew	Eba/starchy solid meals & soup	Usually skipped	Bread & Stew/Egg	Noodles/ Pasta
8 11.4%	7 10%	10 14.3%	10 14.3%	10 14.3%	10 14.3%	25 35.7%

SUPPER

Rice & beans	Rice & stew	Rice & veg.	Yam & egg	Eba & veg.	Usually skipped	Bread & Egg	Pottage	Noodles/ Pasta
5 7.1%	15 21.4%	5 7.1%	10 14.3%	5 7.1%	9 12.9%	8 11.4%	1 1.4%	7 10%

Diertry Pattern Of Nigerians And Non-Nigerians For Breakfast

NUTRIENTS	NIGERIAN	NON-NIGERIANS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGES
Carbohydrate	15	5	20	18.3%
Protein	0	2	2	1.8%
Carbohydrate and protein	32	9	41	37.6%
Carbohydrate and vitamins	10	5	15	13.8%
Carbohydrate and fat&oil	0	26	26	23.9%
Protein and vitamins	5	0	5	4.6%
Total	62	47	109	100%

Diertry Pattern Of Nigerians And Non-Nigerians For Breakfast

NUTRIENTS	NIGERIAN	NON-NIGERIANS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGES
Carbohydrate	25	2	27	32.1%
Protein	0	3	3	3.6%
Carbohydrate and protein	45	7	52	61.9%
Fat & oil	0	2	2	2.4%
Total	70	14	84	100%

Diertry Pattern Of Nigerians And Non-Nigerians For Breakfast

NUTRIENTS	NIGERIAN	NON-NIGERIANS	TOTAL	PERCENTAGES
Carbohydrate	7	3	10	9.7%
Protein	0	2	2	1.9%
Carbohydrate and protein	39	32	71	68.9%
Carbohydrate and vitamins	10	9	19	18.4%
Fat & oil	0	1	1	1.1%
Total	56	47	103	100%

IV. Discussion

From the food frequency questionnaire issued out to participants to assess their dietary patterns revealed in breakfast table that meals consumed are basically the combination of carbohydrate and protein representing 41 respondents (37.6%) where 32 of them are Nigerians and 9 are non-Nigerians, while the least class of food consumed by the respondents as breakfast is protein only consisting of 2 respondents (1.8%).

It also shows from the lunch table that the class of food consumed by the respondents are basically the combination of carbohydrate and protein representing 52 respondents (61.9%) where 45 of them are Nigerians and 7 are non-Nigerians, while the least class of food consumed by the respondents as breakfast is fat & oil only consisting of 2 respondents (2.4%).

The table for supper shows that the class of food consumed by the respondents are basically the combination of carbohydrate and protein representing 71 respondents (68.9%) where 39 of them are Nigerians and 32 are non-Nigerians, while the least class of food consumed by the respondents as breakfast is fat & oil only consisting of 2 respondents (1.1%).

SKIPPED MEALS

Lunch is the most skipped meal of the day for all the all the respondents consisting of 43 respondents (66.2%) where 10 of them are Nigerians and 33 are non-Nigerians. Also, Nigerians skips breakfast and supper than the non-Nigerians.

BREAKFAST

Bread consumption was common as breakfast meal by both groups. 52% non-Nigerian Children consumed it for breakfast, while 38.6% Nigerian children consumed bread with either margarine, Tea or stew.

LUNCH

Rice was often accompanied with beans or stew or vegetables. Noodles and pasta was also common as Nigerian Children's meals mostly because of its little preparation time of than 10 minutes. The study also revealed that all participants consumed rice with soup four times a week. 85% consumed tea with bread for breakfast. Less than one third of the participants consumed these foods. All the participants take drinks/sweetened

Eating habits: Most of the respondents (59%) do not always spread margarine on their bread while 16% always add margarine, 4% never use margarine and the remaining 21% never add any spread to their bread. Major reasons given for not using spread were attributed to money. Margarine can be a good source of vitamin A, however trans fatty acids formed during production gives rise to concern. These trans fatty acids increase LDL (harmful cholesterol) whilst reducing HDL the beneficial cholesterol. This increases the risk of arteriosclerosis and coronary heart disease (George Pamplona, 2006).

It is therefore encouraging to know that most of the respondents do not always use margarine. Other spreads mentioned included groundnut paste and jam.

V. Conclusion

Conclusion: Based on the findings of the survey and the discussion being made, the following conclusion could be drawn:

Variability in diet was lacking for most participants.

Consumption of animal protein was low among participants There could be high risk of pernicious anemia among participants due to lack of vitamin B12 in their diets Seasonality of fruits determined the kinds of fruits that were consumed Skipping meals was common among all.

Family size was less likely to influence nutritional status of respondents

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