



Nigeria Journal of Education, Health and Technology Research **NJEHETR**

VOLUME 9, MARCH, 2017



PUBLISHED BY
Association for the Promotion
of Education, Health, Environment
and Technology Research

ISSN: 2251-0087

ASSESSMENT OF THE FEEDING HABITS OF PREGNANT TEENAGERS IN DELTA NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

Ukpene, Chika Patience
Home Economics Department
College of Education,
Agbor, Delta State.

E-mail: ukpene@gmail.com
Tel: 07067588886

Abstract

The study was an ex-post-facto research that was intended to generate information on the feeding habits of pregnant teenagers in Delta North Senatorial district of Delta State. Data was collected from the respondents using a questionnaire designed for the purpose and analysed using percentages. It was recorded that some pregnant teenagers still depended on snacks and carbonated drinks as main meals. They equally engaged in consuming foods that were generally not nutritious for themselves and their developing foetuses. The paper recommended that parents should develop positive channels of communication with their teenage daughters through which they are taught the need to remain sexually passive until marriage. For the pregnant ones, it was further recommended that they should be made to get regular prenatal care from a health care clinic.

Key words: Teenage pregnancy, feeding habits, Delta North, Nigeria

Introduction

Teenage pregnancy is defined as a single or married teenage or under-aged girl (usually within ages 13-19) becoming pregnant. It is believed that most pregnant teenagers lack basic nutritional knowledge of proper feeding habit towards their developing foetus as it relates to their health. Some pregnant teenagers however take pleasure in snacking, skipping meals, dieting and eating away from home. Unconventional diet are common eating behaviours among adolescents which relate to their changing life styles of increased independence, busy schedules, search for self-identity, peer influence, group conformity in relation to their image.

Food habit / feeding pattern

Food habit refers to the behaviour acquired by people towards food. It comprises of the way in which individuals or group of individuals (in response to socio-cultural pressures) select, consume and make use of portions of the available food supply. Food habits include food fads, religious beliefs, food fallacies and the frequency and pattern of eating.

A food fad refers to the likeness for a particular food. This is usually temporal and may occur often in pregnant women (Food Insight, 2015). Uddoh (1988) noted that food fad is harmless in such women provided that all the necessary nutrients are obtained daily. Food fads also develop among healthy teenagers for biscuits, coke, ice cream and cakes.

Fallacies are restrictions placed on the access to some foods by women and children. For instance, it is believed that children would develop the tendency to steal if granted free access to meat and eggs. This may account for the amount of kwashiorkor cases recorded in some children. Also, some people say that a woman should not eat snails during pregnancy because her baby will be disposed to producing excess amount of saliva (Uddoh, 1988). Fallacy also occurs when people are asked to

start eating fruits and vegetables now if they want to conceive baby in a couple of months believing that the form of folic acid present in foods is more potent in preventing birth defects (Nancy-Bennet, 2012).

The frequency of eating is a habit developed from childhood. It usually varies from once a day to three times a day. Most people eat three times a day but take light refreshment in between. In this case the body is able to cope with energy demands made on it during the day. Uddoh (1988) recorded that children have a tendency to fill themselves with bread, garri in water, biscuits, cakes and sweets. The consequence of this habit is that at meal times they have little appetite for food which is more nutritious than the snacks. Kuzbicka, and Rachoni, (2013), noted that bad eating behaviour such as snacking highly processed and calorie-rich foods between meals, eating in front of the television screen, skipping breakfasts, drinking sugar sweetened beverages, eating out and emotional eating are crucial factors for the development of obesity. Furthermore, Alli (2016) cautioned that some of the most important aspect of healthy eating and portion control is cutting down on how much fat and sugar your child eats or drinks. They suggested ways to reduce fat intake among children and promote healthy living such as serving low fat or non-fat dairy products, protein without skin, whole grain breads / cereals and lean cuts of meats.

Certain religious bodies forbid their faithful from eating certain types of foods. For instance, Islam forbids Muslims from eating pork and meat from animals strangled to death. Similarly, Roman Catholics abstain from eating meat on "good Friday" (Onyebueke and Souzey (2003).

The feeding habit describes the nature of food and the frequency of food intake by people. This is usually determined by age, sex, climate, type of work done as well as physical state, that is whether somebody is pregnant or not.

Buchett and Seelay (2003) cited that when a teenager becomes pregnant, she needs all the help and support she can get for her baby. One of the most important issues that need to be addressed concerning teenage pregnancy is the importance of educating pregnant teenagers about proper eating habits. When compared to adult pregnant women, pregnant teenagers are less likely to gain an adequate amount of weight during their pregnancies. Buchett and Seelay (2003) cited that when a teenager becomes pregnant, she needs all the help and support she can get for her baby. One of the most important issues that need to be addressed concerning teenage pregnancy is the importance of educating pregnant teenagers about proper eating habits. Everett, (2009), noted that a pregnant female who does not gain weight at a steady and moderate pace during pregnancy may have a child that has a low birth weight. A baby that is born with a low birth weight is more susceptible to a host of health problems, including underdeveloped organs.

In nutrition for the teenage mother to-be, Struempfer, (1994), stated that eating enough of the right foods will help mothers feel good, look good and have enough energy. Most importantly, forming a good eating pattern will also enable a pregnant teenager to have a healthy baby- this is because she needs to be healthy to have a healthy baby. In a descriptive study on teenage and non-teenage pregnant women in South western Nigeria, Adekanle, Adeyemi and Odu (2008) noted that teenage pregnancy which occurs more commonly in Nigeria due to poor socio-economic infrastructure and poor knowledge, unavailability and low use of contraceptives accounts for about 21.9% of all pregnancies. Under the circumstance they hardly meet their daily nutritional needs hence this study intends to look at the feeding habits of pregnant teenagers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

An undisclosed number of teenagers become pregnant each year in Delta North Senatorial District. Many of these pregnant teenagers suffer from both ongoing nutrition deficiencies and the long-term

cumulative consequences of under nutrition during childhood. Poor health and nutrition are associated with repeated, closely spaced pregnancies that progressively reduce women's nutritional reserves to the point of nutritional depletion known as **maternal depletion syndrome (MDS)** which can predispose them to anaemia or pregnancy difficulties. The main negative outcome of poor prenatal health and nutrition, as well as inadequate care during pregnancy and delivery is reflected in the high cases of maternal mortality in developing countries which includes Nigeria, as well as the Delta North Senatorial District.

Purpose of Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the feeding habits on the pregnant teenagers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:-

1. Determine the feeding habit of pregnant teenagers.
2. Examine visible consequences of poor feeding habit on the health of the pregnant teenagers.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to direct the study.

1. What constitute the feeding habit of the pregnant teenagers?
2. Has poor feeding habit any health consequence on the pregnant teenagers?
3. How can the attitude of pregnant teenagers towards their feeding habit be improved?

Significance of Study

The findings of this study will improve the nutritional status of pregnant and non-pregnant teenagers, as well as lactating women and ensure that the food they eat provide them with the right proportion of nutrients. The findings will no doubt add to the body of knowledge already existing in the area of teenage pregnancy and nutrition. It would also throw light on the essence of cultivating proper feeding habits for proper growth and development of foetus, so that the right average body weight or body mass index can be attained. It will also suggest removal of food fad forbidding pregnant women from eating certain forms of foods in some societies.

Design of the Study.

The study used ex-post-facto research design to investigate the feeding habits of pregnant teenagers in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. It is an ex-post-facto research design because the subjects (pregnant teenagers) have already been assigned to their appropriate levels of the variables (feeding habits) whose effects are being investigated.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 180 was drawn from the entire population of 236 using a proportion of 0.41, 0.25 and 0.34 for Ika South LGA, Ukwani L.G.A. and Aniocha L.G.A, respectively using the proportionate stratified random sampling (Nworgu 1991). The proportion was arrived at by determining the sample size to be used, summing up the population of the pregnant teenagers in the senatorial District as follows: $96+60+80 = 236$ and using the product to divide the population of each LGA thus: $96/236 = 0.41$; $60/236 = 0.25$ and $80/236 = 0.34$.

Ika South = $180 \times 0.41 = 74$; Ukwani = $180 \times 0.25 = 45$

Aniocha = $180 \times 0.34 = 61$ summing up to 180

Instrumentation

The research instrument that was used was a questionnaire titled "Pregnant teenagers Questionnaire (PRETEQUE)". The PRETEQUE was designed for use in carrying out a nutritional

assessment of the pregnant teenagers, with respect to their habit of feeding before and during pregnancy. It was an 18-item questionnaire consisting of declarative statements to which the respondents were required to indicate "yes" or "No".

Validity of the Instrument.

The Pregnant Teenagers Questionnaire (PRETEQUE) was properly scrutinized, corrected and modified by a professor and two other experts from Vocational and Technical Education Department to ensure that the instrument will measure what it is intended to measure as well as to improve the face validity, content validity and construct validity respectively.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was obtained through test re-test method. For this purpose, a pilot study was carried out with 40 pregnant teenagers in Ika North East Local Government Area, Delta State, outside the study population, twice within two weeks. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the reliability index. The reliability index obtained was 0.75 which confirmed that the instrument was reliable.

Administration of Instrument

The researcher earmarked two weeks to distribute copies of the questionnaire to the respondents in their settlements. To facilitate this process the services of two assistants were engaged.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to the pregnant teenagers on their clinic days in each locality for completion. The services of two assistants were engaged to complement the researcher's effort in this regard. Two visits were made to each locality for this purpose.

Method of Data Analysis.

The responses to the questionnaire items were expressed in percentages.

Results

From Table 1, 94.44 % of the pregnant teenagers do not plan their meals when pregnant, but eat whatever comes to their mind. On the whole, 53.89 % claim to eat 3 times a day. Although a significant number of them representing 93.89 % eat in-between meals, 94.44 % like eating peppery and spiced foods. In addition, 80.56 % take plenty carbonated drinks and snacks. The respondents responded to eating at least 5 servings of these foods a day as follows – milk and cheese (0.00%) meat and poultry (8.33%), enriched or whole grain bread and cereals(66.67%), vitamin A source (97.22%) and vitamin C source (95.00%). On the whole only 35.00 % agreed they ate fruits regularly. From Table 2, the study reveals that 75 % of the pregnant teenagers eat snacks most of the time during pregnancy. In addition, 45.56 % disagreed to eating "biscuit bones" or cartilage bones. Only 2.75 % of the respondents agreed that their culture forbids pregnant women from eating snails and eggs. It is noted that few pregnant teenagers (31.67%) skip meals to keep their shape, while 41.67 % take vitamin supplements to maintain good health. It is also observed that 51.67 % of the respondents over-eat during pregnancy. The pregnant teenagers affirmed that they consume various drinks to relax as follows: alcohol (5.56%), soft drinks (50.00%) palm wine (38.89%) and none of the above (56.56%). On the type of foods eaten more often during pregnancy, the pregnant teenagers responded thus: eba (16.67%), 'fufu/akpu' (22.22%), beans (18.89%), rice (20.00%) and snacks (22.22%). It means that the respondents prefer snacks, fufu, rice, beans and eba in that order. About 5.56 % of them however, opined that they smoke most of the time.

Table 1: Feeding pattern of pregnant teenagers

	Questions	Ukwani		Aniocha		Ika South		Total	
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1	I plan my meals when pregnant %	2 4.44	43 95.56	5 8.20	56 91.80	3 4.05	71 95.95	10 5.56	170 94.44
2	I eat whatever comes to my mind	43 95.56	2 4.44	56 91.80	5 8.20	71 95.95	3 4.05	170 94.44	10 5.56
3	I eat a complete meal:								
	i) Once a day	5	40	5	56	5	69	15	165
	%	11.11	88.89	8.20	91.80	6.76	93.24	8.33	91.67
	ii) Twice a day	18	27	20	41	30	44	68	112
%	40.00	60.00	32.79	67.21	40.54	59.46	37.78	62.22	
iii) Three times a day	22	23	36	25	39	35	97	83	
%	48.89	51.11	59.02	40.98	52.70	47.30	53.89	46.11	
4	I eat in-between meals. %	40 88.89	5 11.11	58 95.08	3 4.92	71 95.95	3 4.05	169 93.89	11 6.11
5	I like eating peppery and spiced foods. %	43 95.56	2 4.44	58 95.08	3 4.92	69 93.24	5 6.76	170 94.44	10 5.56
6	I take plenty carbonated drinks and snacks	41 91.11	4 8.89	50 81.97	11 18.03	54 72.97	20 27.03	145 80.56	35 19.44
7	I eat at least 5 servings of these meals daily								
	i) Milk and Cheese	-	45	-	61	-	74	-	180
	%	00.0	100	-	-	-	-	0.00	-
	ii) Meat, Poultry	4	41		100		100		100
	%	8.89	9.11	6	55	5	69	15	15
	iii) Enriched or whole grain bread and cereals	35	10	9.84	90.16	6.76	93.24	165	8.33
	%	7.78	22.22	40	21	45	29	120	60
	i) Vitamin A Source	44	1	65.57	34.43	60.81	39.19	120	60
%	97.78	2.22	58	3	73	1	66.67	33.33	
ii) Vitamin C Source.	40	5	95.08	4.92	98.65	1.35	175	05	
%	88.89	11.11	59	2	72	2	05	05	
				96.72	3.28	97.30	2.70	97.22	2.78
								171	09
								95.00	5.00
8	I eat fruits regularly. %	15 33.33	30 66.67	22 36.07	39 63.93	26 35.13	48 64.87	63 35.00	117 65.00

Table 2: Attitude of pregnant teenagers towards feeding during pregnancy.

	Questions	Ukwani		Aniocha		Ika South		Total	
		YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
1	I eat snacks most of the time. %	35 77.78	10 22.22	48 78.69	13 21.31	52 70.27	22 29.73	135 75.00	45 25.00
2	I eat biscuit bones because they are good for my baby. %	30 66.67	15 33.33	40 65.57	21 34.43	28 37.84	46 62.16	98 54.44	82

										45.56
3	My culture forbids pregnant women from eating snail and eggs. %	1 44 2.22 97.78	2 59 3.28 96.72	2 72 2.70 97.30	05 175 2.75 97.22					
4	I skip meals to keep my shape %	25 20 56.56 44.44	18 43 29.51 70.49	14 60 18.92 81.08	57 123 31.67 68.33					
5	I take vitamin supplements %	15 30 33.33 66.67	25 36 40.98 59.02	35 39 47.30 52.70	75 105 41.67 58.33					
6	I eat whole vegetable soup regularly. %	10 35 22.22 77.78	20 41 32.79 67.21	30 44 40.54 59.46	120 60 66.67 33.37					
7	I over-eat during pregnancy %	23 22 51.11 48.89	32 29 52.46 47.54	38 36 51.35 48.65	93 87 51.67 48.33					
8	To relax I drink:									
	i) Alcohol %	2 43 4.44 95.56	4 57 6.56 93.44	4 70 5.40 94.60	10 170 5.56 94.44					
	ii) Soft drinks %	23 22 51.11 48.89	33 28 54.10 45.90	34 40 45.95 54.05	90 90 50.00					
	iii) Palm wine %	15 30 33.33 66.67	25 36 40.98 59.02	30 44 40.54 59.46	50.00 70 110 38.89					
	iv) None of the above	3 42 6.67 93.33	4 57 6.56 93.44	3 71 4.05 95.95	61.11 10 170 5.56 94.44					
9	When pregnant, I eat more of:									
	i) Eba %	8 37 17.78 82.22	10 51 16.39 83.61	12 62 16.22 83.78	30 150 16.67					
	Fufu/ 'Akpu' %	10 35 22.22 77.78	12 49 19.67 80.33	18 56 24.32 75.68	83.33 40 140					
	Beans %	14 31 31.11 68.89	10 51 16.39 83.61	10 64 13.51 86.49	22.22 77.78					
	Rice %	10 35 22.22 77.78	18 56 13.11 86.89	18 56 24.32 75.68	18.89 81.11					
	v) Snacks %	8 37 17.78 82.22	16 45 26.23 73.77	16 58 21.62 78.38	22.22 36 44 20.00 80.00 40 140 22.22 77.78					
10	I smoke most of the time %	0 45 0.00 100	2 59 3.28 96.72	8 66 10.81 89.19	10 170 5.56 94.44					

Discussion

The study noted that teenage pregnancy occurred in Delta North Senatorial zone of Delta State. A high proportion of the teenage mothers-to-be subscribed to the consumption of snacks most of the time and often skipped meals to keep body shape, in agreement with the reports of Kuzbicka and Rachori, (2013). Also, intake of vitamins and vitamin supplements was mild among the pregnant teenagers. For example, they were divided on the nutritional value of 'biscuit bones' or cartilage bones in their meals. In addition, a notable proportion represented by 66.67% failed to appreciate the nutritional relevance of consuming whole vegetable soup to both mother and baby. Their calorie intake was mainly accomplished through eating much of fufu/akpu, eba, soft drinks and snacks. Their major source of protein was beans which was incidentally, consumed by a low percentage of 18.89. Consumption of carbonated drinks for refreshment and other junk foods as well as eating in-between meals was high among the pregnant teenagers which might dispose them and their children to obesity, chronic illness and low esteem, as observed by STGate (undated). Few indulged in the consumption of palm wine while the consumption of alcohol was mild. There was no food-fad reported in communities of the pregnant teenagers, however, 51.67% of them agreed to over-eat during pregnancy. Over-eating which is sometimes normal for both mother and baby usually accounts for the usual weight gained towards the latter stages of pregnancy as suggested by Everett (2009). Unfortunately the respondents who over-eat in this study failed to do so with the right food mix. Comparatively speaking therefore, the feeding habits of some pregnant teenagers in Delta North Senatorial District can be said to be poor and influenced greatly by their socio-economic status.

Summary

The study noted that unconventional diets was common eating behaviours among adolescents which related to their changing life styles of increased independence, busy schedules, and search for self-identity, peer influence, and group conformity in relation to their image. Consequently, adolescents took pleasure in snacking, skipping meals, dieting and eating away from home. The pregnant adolescents investigated, in addition to snacking, consumed mainly carbohydrates with mild intake of vitamins and vitamin supplements, even though over-eating was generally common among most of them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worthy to note that pregnant teenagers neither planned their meals, nor followed the meal guide of antenatal clinic counsellors. Rather most of them consumed whatsoever came their way, ate in-between meals, skipped meals where possible and consumed refined, processed foods and carbonated drinks which may have attendant consequences on their health and that of their unborn babies.

Recommendations

Teenage pregnancy is unwanted in most climes. However, when it occurs as it sometimes does, the pregnant teenager should not be stigmatized. Rather she should be given all the necessary support needed to carry the pregnancy to term. The following recommendations are therefore suggested for the wellbeing of the pregnant teenager.

1. It is very important that mothers give to their teenage daughters the basic guide to life so that they can remain sexually undefiled until the ripe age for marriage.
2. Teenagers should be taught about sexual pressure and what to do if they are being pressured into sexual relationships. Teenagers should be helped in their communication skills so that if they find themselves in an uncomfortable sexual situation will have the skills not to oblige.

If after all the efforts of the parents, the teenager becomes involved in teenage pregnancy, parents should do everything within their power to help guide the teenager in every stage of the problem.

The teenagers' healthy wellbeing should be the number one priority of the parents, so that the former's chances of having healthy babies can be improved. The pregnant teenager should be made to get early and regular prenatal care from a health care clinic.

References

- Adekanle, D.A, Adeyemi, A.S., & Odu, O.O. (2008). Teenage and non-Teenage pregnant women in Southwestern Nigeria: A descriptive Study. *Calicut Medical Journal*, 6(3). E5. Retrieved August 8, 2010.
- Alli, R.A. (2016). Healthy eating habits for your child. Retrieved from www.webmd.com.
- Burchett, H., & Seeley, A. (2003). Health and Teen Pregnancy. Excerpts from excellent April 2003 report of the Maternity Alliance and the Food Commission.
- Everett, D. (2009). The Facts on Teen Pregnancy. Articles Snatch.Com. Retrieved April 17 2010 from <http://www.articlesnatch.com>.
- Food Insight (2015). Food fads through the ages. Retrieved from www.foodinsight.org/diet-fads-through.
- Kuzbicka, K. and Rachori, D. (2013). Bad eating as the main cause of obesity among children. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/2711116>.
- Nancy-Bennet, M.S. (2012). Nutrition Facts and Fallacies. Retrieved from www.spineuniverse.com on 15/11/16.
- Onyebueke, D.O., & Souzey, J.A (2003). Nutrition for the Tropics. Warri. Solig Limited 10 p.
- SFGate (Undated). How junk food affect children. Retrieved from healthyeating.sfgate.com on 16/11/16.
- Struempfer, B (1994). Nutrition for the Teenage mother-to-be. Alabama Co-cooperative extension system.
- Uddoh, C.K. (1988). Nutrition. London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.