European Journal of Educational and Development Psychology

Vol.6, No.3, pp.33-39, June 2018

Published by European Centre for Research Training and Development UK (www.eajournals.org)

KNOWLEDGE AND COMPLIANCE OF PARENTS WITH PLANNED MEAL AS AN INFLUENCE ON PUPILS PERFORMANCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, ADO- EKITI

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the knowledge and compliance of parents with planned meal as an indicator of pupils' performance. It investigated knowledge of parents on planned meal and compliance of parents on the planned meal. The study is a descriptive research that employed a case study design. The research instrument was titled Knowledge and Compliance with Planned Meal (KCPM). The face and content validity was ascertained by Nutritionist and Tests and Measurement experts. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained using split half method. The population for the study comprised of all parents of children attending Early Childhood Development Education Centre, Ado Ekiti. The sample comprised all the parents of pupils attending the primary school. One hypothesis was generated and tested using Pearson, Product Moment analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that parents demonstrated a good knowledge of quality diet of which majority of parents always complies with. It also revealed that quality diet had positive impacts on the performance of the milestone task by the child as all the children can perform expected milestone task appropriate for their age. It was recommended that Policies should be put in place that encourage or as appropriate mandate that all governments owned primary schools to have planned menu table for the pupils. Also, Varieties of home based nutritious and affordable meal should be included in the menu time table.*

KEYWORDS: Pupils Performance, Planned Meal, Compliance, Knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The early childhood period is considered to be most important development phase throughout the lifespan. Healthy early child development which include the physical, social, emotional and language/cognitive domains of development, each equally important, strongly influences well-being, obesity/stunting, mental health, heart disease, competence in literature and numeracy, criminality and economic participation throughout life. Therefore what happens to the child in the early years is a critical for the child's developmental trajectory and life course (Ross,2010).

Diet quality is strongly related to the physical and cognitive development of children, and thus a proper diet with adequate nutrition is of the utmost importance during critical developmental stages .In an educational world filled with failing schools and apathetic students, boards of education have searched for answers on how to increase test scores and create school systems where all students receive the best education possible. Amongst the plethora of possible solutions, is the nutritional substance of what the school-aged children are eating each day as they struggle through a day of learning (Ross 2010). The author however affirmed that there is a correlation between nutrition and cognition as well as psychosocial behaviour of the children

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

Eating habits have changed over time and currently, the problem is quite the opposite; the nutritional transition has led to increased exposure of low nutrient, energy dense foods including nutritionally unbalanced snacks, convenience and fast foods resulting in high calorie, but nutrient poor diets. This nutrition transition is also being experienced by many developing nations, and is a major health concern as it has led to an increase in so-called 'diseases of affluence' (Adamo & Brett,2013).

A major problem contributing to the failure of children to meet the minimum recommended servings for healthy eating is the consumption of food items that fall under the 'other' category of the food guide, such as soft drinks, salad dressings, sugars/sweets/preserves, fruit drinks and oils/fats. Consumption of 'other' foods accounts for almost a quarter of the total calorie intake in children especially during the school's hour (Garriguet, 2007).

In the case of children, parents/guardians have been universally accepted to be primarily responsible for food procurement, choices and meal preparation. Parents can be a strong positive influence (e.g. encouraging high quality, healthful choices), or conversely, a powerful negative influence (e.g. making easy and less healthy choices, inappropriate snacking, or heavy restriction) on diet quality. Early establishment of healthy eating behaviours is essential for children, as experts posit that attitudes towards food choice develop during childhood and play an important role in the maintenance of eating habits which influence health across the lifespan . Therefore, an unhealthy or sub-optimal diet must be identified early in childhood, in order for the proper changes to be made to improve the child's diet and prevent future disease risk. An underlying problem with this approach is the dependence on parental perception, and thus a parent must first be able to recognize when a child's diet is poor, and know how to make the necessary changes.

Many factors contribute to diet quality and it should therefore not be surprising that a parent's perception of a child's eating behaviour and diet quality may not be reflective of the true situation. Other work showed that there exists a lack of awareness and thus inaccurate perception for various health-related concepts

The eating habits and physical activity behaviours demonstrated by children are heavily influenced by their parents, who are the main "gatekeepers" of household nutrition (Wansink, 2006). Parents act as role models of food choices and food consumption, and as such, have the capacity to significantly effect change in a child's diet and food choice (Tucker et al, 2006). Therefore, to improve nutritional knowledge, intake and access to healthy foods of children, parents require access to sound nutrition information, need to adopt positive attitudes to nutrition and increase their self-efficacy to provide a healthy diet (Decker, 2012).

Schools also have the potential to play a vital role in preparing and sustaining our students' potential learning abilities and benefitting their social behaviours by supplying nutritious breakfasts and lunches during school days. Schools and educational institutions provide a key environmental setting which facilitate actions that promote healthy' choices as the norm. No matter how well teachers are prepared to teach, no matter what accountability measures are put in place, no matter what governing structures are established for schools, educational progress will be profoundly limited if students are not motivated and able to learn

Towards the realization of the objectives of the Universal Basic Education programme and the central role of nutrition, the Federal Ministry of Education launched the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme in 2005. The overall goal of the School Feeding Programme

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

in Nigeria is to reduce hunger and malnutrition among school children and enhance the achievement of Universal Basic Education. However, this programme has not been fully implemented, therefore the school under study have diet plan for the pupils in the school.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined the knowledge and compliance of parents with planned meal as an indicator of performance of Early Childhood Development Education Centre pupils. Also, it examined knowledge, compliance of the parents with planned.

Research Hypothesis

This null hypothesis were tested at 0.05 level of significance

i. There is no significant relationship between the parental knowledge and compliance of planned meal.

METHOD

The study is a descriptive research of case study as it focused on the only Early Childhood Development Education Centre in Ekiti state. It is also the only Government owned primary School that has a planned meal for the pupil. The population consisted of parents of children attending early childhood development education centre, Ado Ekiti. Samples of 54 parents were selected using purposive sampling technique.

A self-constructed research instrument titled "knowledge and compliance with planned meal" was used for data collection. The face and content validity was ascertained by Nutritionist and Tests, Measurement and evaluation experts. A reliability co-efficient of 0.85 was obtained using split half method. Data collected were analysed with simple statistical tools such as the frequency count, mean and inferential statistics. The hypothesis generated was tested using Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Question 1: What are parents' current knowledge related to the provision of a planned diet for children in the early childhood development education centre?

Table 1 Knowledge of Menu Table

Types of food/ Days	Monday F (%)	Tuesday F(%)	Wednesday F(%)	Thursday F(%)	Friday F(%)
Meal	54(100)	49(90.7)	49(90.7)	49(90.7)	49(90.7)
Fruit	37(68.5)	35(64.8)	35(64.8)	40(74.1)	40(74.1)
Snacks	54 (100)	49(90.7)	45(83.3)	49(90.7)	44(81.5)

The result showed the knowledge of the menu time table by the respondents. Majority of the respondents are knowledgeable of the food on the menu table as the least percentage on food is 90.7%. The respondents demonstrated a good knowledge of the snacks for each of the day;

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

however the knowledge level on snacks is not as good as that of food as the least percentage on snacks is 81.5%. The least knowledge demonstrated is that of fruits as the lowest percentage is 64.8%.

Question 2: How often does parent comply with menu time table?

Table 2: Compliance with Menu Time Table

S/N	Frequency of compliance with menu time table	F (%)
1	Often comply	48(26)
2	Always comply	52(28)

The table revealed that just above average of the respondents (52%) always comply with the menu time table and just below the average (48%) claimed that they often comply with the menu time table.

Question 3: What are the milestone tasks that can be performed by Early Childhood Development Education Centre pupils?

Table 3: Performance of Milestones tasks by the pupils

S/N	VARIABLES	YES F (%)	NO F (%)
1.	Child Struggles to get objects that are out of reach at 5-7momths	49(90.7)	5 (9.3)
2.	Explores objects in many different ways (shaking, banging, throwing, dropping) at 8-10 month	44(81.5)	10(18.5)
3.	Finds objects even when hidden under 2 or 3 covers at 20-24 months	49(90.7)	5 (9.3)
4.	Begins to sort shapes and colours at 20-24 months	45(83.3)	9 (16.7)
5.	Completes puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces at 24-36 months	45(83.3)	9(16.7)
6.	Correctly names some colours at 3-4 years	50(92.6)	4 (7.4)
7.	Understands the concept of counting and may know a few numbers at 3-4 years	50 (92.6)	4 (7.4)
8.	Begins to have a clearer sense of time at 3-4 years	54(100)	0(0)
9.	Follows three-part commands at 3-4 years	50(92.6)	4 (7.4)
10.	Recalls parts of a story at 3-4 years	45(83.3)	9(16.7)
11.	Shows more independence at 4-5 years	49(90.7)	5(9.3)
12.	Likes to sing, dance, and act at 4-5 years	54 (100)	0 (0)
13.	Correctly names at least 5 colours at 4-5 years	49(90.7)	5(9.3)
14.	Better understands the concept of time at 4-5 years	49(90.7)	5(9.3)
15.	Knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, etc.) at 4-5 years	49(90.7)	5(9.3)

Table 3 described the milestone tasks that can be performed by the pupil at a specified age. At age 5-7momths 90.7% of the respondents claimed that the child struggles to get objects that are out of reach while 81.5% of the respondents reveal that the child can explores objects in many different ways (shaking, banging, throwing, and dropping) at 8-10 month. Also, 90.7%

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

of the respondents reveal that the child can finds objects even when hidden under 2 or 3 covers at 20-24 months while 83.3% of the population claimed that the child at 20-24 months begins to sort shapes and colours. Majority of the respondents (83.3%) of the respondents reveal that the child can completes puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces at 24-36 months; almost all the respondents (92.6%) of the respondents claimed that the child can correctly names some colours at 3-4 years; also 92.6% of the respondents reveal that the child understands the concept of counting and may know a few numbers at 3-4 years; all the respondents (100%) claimed that the child begins to have a clearer sense of time at 3-4 years; 92.6% of the respondents reveals that the child can follow three-part commands at 3-4 years while 83.3% revealed that the child can recall parts of a story at 3-4 years. At 4-5 years, 90.7% of the respondents claimed that the child shows more independence; all the respondents reveal the child likes to sing, dance, and act; 90.7% of the respondents revealed that the child can correctly names at least 5 colours; 90.7% of the respondents also claimed that the child understands the concept of time better at 4-5 years and 90.7% revealed that the child knows about things used every day in the home (money, food, etc.) at 4-5 years.

Testing of Hypothesis

i. There is no significant relationship between the parental knowledge and compliance of planned meal.

Table 4: Relationship between parental knowledge and compliance of planned meal.

Variables	X mean	SD	N	Df	r-cal	p-value
Compliance	2.52	0.50	54	52	0.19	0.17
Parental knowledge	2.74	0.44				

The table shows that there is a very low and positive correlation between knowledge and compliance. As the knowledge is increasing so also is the compliance. The P-value is 0.17 which is greater than 0.05, therefore the null hypothesis is not accepted. There is a relationship between parental knowledge and compliance with planned meal.

DISCUSSION

Majority of the respondents are knowledgeable of the food on the menu table as well as of the snacks for each of the day; however the knowledge level on snacks is not as good as that of food however the least knowledge demonstrated is on the fruits. None of the respondents demonstrated a poor knowledge of the menu table and diets given to the children, an excellent number of the respondents have a good knowledge of the menu table while just few demonstrated a fair knowledge of the menu table. This level of knowledge demonstrated can be due to the fact that the school made the menu table for all the pupils which the parents must have a copy.

A few above an average number of respondents (52%) always comply with the menu table which may be due to the compulsion attached by the school on compliance with menu table. Just below an average (48%) of the respondents claimed that they often comply with the menu

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

time table which may be as a result of some barriers or difficulty encountered by the parents in complying with the menu table. These agree with the small Australian study, Zarnoweicki et al, (2012), tested the nutritional knowledge of parents and found parental nutritional knowledge was a predictor of the quality of nutrition of children; Parents with high nutritional knowledge were more likely to provide access to fruit and vegetables, to implement rules around eating and to model healthy nutritional behaviours which eventually improve pupils performance.

Majority of the respondents claimed that the child struggles to get objects that are out of reach At age 5-7months, and that the child can explores objects in many different ways (shaking, banging, throwing, and dropping) at 8-10 months of age. Also, majority of the respondents reveal that the child can finds objects even when hidden under 2 or 3 covers at 20-24 months and that the child at 20-24 months begins to sort shapes and colours.

Majority of the respondents reveal that the child can completes puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces at 24-36 months and that the child can correctly names some colours at 3-4 years; also majority revealed that the child understands the concept of counting and may know a few numbers at 3-4 years; all the respondents claimed that the child begins to have a clearer sense of time at 3-4 years; majority of the respondents revealed that the child can follow three-part commands at 3-4 years and that the child can recall parts of a story at 3-4 years.

At 4-5 years, majority of the respondents claimed that the child shows more independence; all the respondents reveal the child likes to sing, dance, and act and that the child can correctly names at least 5 colours; majority of the respondents also claimed that the child understands the concept of time better at 4-5 years and majority revealed that the child knows about things used every day in the home (money, food and so on) at 4-5 years. These are in line with the milestone task set by Centres for Disease Control and prevention

There is a relationship between parental knowledge and compliance with planned meal and a slight positive correlation between knowledge and compliance. As the knowledge is increasing so also is the compliance. This can be due to comprehensive education given to the parents by the school authority in order to increase the compliance on the side of the parents.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents demonstrated a good knowledge of quality diet of which majority of parents always complies with. On the basis of these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Parents should maintain and improve on knowledge of menu time table to maintain good health and improve pupils' performance.
2. Parents should improve in the compliance with menu table
3. There should be an intense public health campaign conducted on regular basis: providing importance of school feeding programme.

ISSN 2055-0170(Print), SSN 2055-0189(Online)

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