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ASSESSMENT OF FACTORS INFLUENCING EATING HABITS OF COMMERCIAL DRIVERS IN ILORIN METROPOLIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THEIR HEALTH

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Abstract

The study examined some predisposing factors that influence eating habits among commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis and its implications on their health. The objectives are to: determine the influence of level of education, economic status and cultural background of commercial drivers on their eating habits, and the health implications of poor eating habits. A descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. The population comprised all registered commercial drivers in Ilorin Metropolis. Multi-stage sampling technique comprising purposive, simple random, proportionate and systematic sampling techniques was used to select three hundred and fifty commercial drivers from the five selected motor parks in Ilorin metropolis. Researcher 's structured questionnaire validated by three experts was used for data collection. Using split-half method, a reliability coefficient of .76 was obtained. Inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses postulated for the study at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that educational status had influence on (cal $x^2 = 144.31 > \text{crit val} = 16.92$); economic status had influence on (cal $x^2 = 265.58 > \text{crit val} = 16.92$); and cultural background had influence on (cal $x^2 = 91.38 > \text{crit val} = 16.92$) eating habits of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis, and there is significant implication of poor eating habits on (cal $x^2 = 31.01 > \text{crit val} = 16.92$) the health of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis. The researcher recommends that the media should be utilised by the government to educate the public at the motor parks on healthy eating habits, health education and promotion on nutrition should be given periodically and commercial drivers should be enlightened on how to combine healthy diet because of its implications on their health.

Keywords: Commercial drivers, eating habits, educational status, economic status and health.

Introduction

Food is any substance that is consumed to provide nutritional support for the body. Adequate food and balanced diets intake are basic necessities for healthy life and wellbeing. Nutritional behaviour, such as food selection, preparation and consumption are the products of culture, education, economic status, social strata and availability of food items (Oti, 2018). Commercial drivers often subject themselves to poor nutrition as a result of bad eating habits due to their level of education, economic status, socio-cultural background and religious belief (William, 2016). According to Marjo (2010) the potential contribution of food to drivers' alertness cannot be over emphasised. Correct timing and the right combination foods can contribute to improve fatigue management and commercial drivers' alertness.

Nutrition is the quantity and quality of food that the body receives. It refers to all the processes involved in how organisms obtain nutrients, metabolize and use them to support all of life 's processes (Ajmera, 2017). Nutrition has been one of the basic needs of every individual living on the earth. Khan, Ullakhan, Khan, Zia-ul-islam, Baber and Khan (2018) reported that the proper amount of food plays a vital role in the complete health of an individual. Correct eating habits which brings about healthy eating habits in childhood and adulthood is important for proper growth, development and productivity. Our body need a wide variety of different foods to provide the right amounts of nutrients for good health.

The term eating habits refer to how people eat, which foods they eat and number of times they eat per day. Food choices are determined by a variety of factors such as social class, food preference, cultural practices, media influences, family structure, economic status, environmental factors and religion (Vijji, 2013). These factors have impacts on the lifestyle adopted and eating habits which in turn determines diet and health status of an individual. Eating habits is an important factor to consider in public health nutrition as people eat every day and throughout the day (Ojo and Adebayo 2012). Every individual has unique likes and dislikes concerning foods. These preferences develop over time and are influenced by personal experiences such as encouragement to eat, exposure to food, family customs, environment where individual finds him/herself, advertisement and personal values (Ogechi and Olowu, 2017).

Poor eating habits such as insufficient intake or high intake of foods have adverse effects on health. These problems include obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes, and osteoporosis (Ajmera, 2017).

Several factors can determine what people eat. These range from poverty to

affluence ignorance, cooking practices, trade practices, war, disaster and politics. All these factors are interrelated. Poverty predisposes people to under nutrition or poor nutrition, while affluence and ignorance predisposes people to bad eating habits and obesity. For example, some rich people prefer to buy canned foods from the super market, while poor people prefer to buy fresh ones from the market. Commercial drivers that are low income earners prefer to buy cheap carbohydrate rich foods that satisfy their appetite than buying the costlier foods that are rich in protein, vitamins and minerals (Matemilola and Elegbede, 2017).

These factors mentioned above interact in such a way that is complex. For example, while the interaction of supply and demand generally determines which food products are available and the price of those products; consumer demand is heavily influenced by personal preference, which itself is influenced by individual behaviour and socio-economic factors. Hence, in a low-income area where there exists not only lack of nutritious foods but also lack of education about healthy food choices, residents may unknowingly choose unhealthy foods, thereby maintaining the demand for those food products and perpetuating their availability (Cheng, & Chang, 2015). Individual's awareness of factors that influence eating habits can help them to make better eating choices. For most people, it is easy to find something to eat, especially unhealthy options, but for others who have knowledge of nutrition and are willing to eat wisely, it is not easy to get healthy or hygienic foods outside the homes. Unhealthy foods may look colourful, tasty and easy to get, but they are usually not fruits, vegetables or other nutritious foods. They usually have a lot of salt, sugar and fats (Ogechi and Olowu, 2017). A times money, values and consumers' skills can affect what a person purchases.

Another aspect of eating habits is eating etiquette. Etiquette refers to acceptable behaviour. People eat according to learned behaviours regarding etiquette, meal and snack patterns, acceptable foods and food combinations and sizes. An example of poor etiquette is eating on the street or while driving, which is found among commercial drivers in Ilorin. Furthermore, eating habits have to do with how often one eats. Taylor and Francis (2011) defined a meal as the consumption of two or more foods in a structured setting at a set time.

One of the factors that influence eating habit is education. The more educated people are, the more attention they pay to their diets. Income and occupation too have potential to influence people's choice of foods. Kazim, (2017) reported that people in high-ranked position pay more attention to their food and can also afford to eat in better places with better hygienic foods. These set of people are more

socially involved, they drink alcohol more often and in higher quantities. Another factor is convenience and environment. Taylor and Francis (2011) affirmed that, availability and convenience of fast foods encourage people to eat more food on-the-go if they can afford it. For instance, some commercial drivers will eat the cheaper finger foods than to enter canteen to eat. Taylor and Francis (2011) further explained that, financial status also influences eating habits. The affluent tend to consume more vegetables, fruits, lean meats, fish, poultry, cheese and high fat foods.

The eating habits of people can also be controlled by their health status. Individuals with diabetes, for example, must follow certain regimented diets regarding sugar, whereas people with heart problems need to avoid salt. Specific recommendations for a healthy diet include: eating more fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts and grains, cutting down on salt, sugar and fats. It is also advisable to choose unsaturated fats instead of saturated fats towards the elimination of trans-fatty-acids (Marjo, 2013). Kittler, Pamela and Sucher (2010) highlight some bad habits that commercial drivers are battling with, and five out of these list are bad habits that are related to food. These include meal choice, skipping meals, smoking, improper hygiene and drinking alcohol. Commercial drivers often subject themselves to poor nutrition as a result of bad eating habits. This is pathetic because poor feeding can lead to poor health status.

Health was defined by World Health Organization (WHO) (1948), as a state of complete physical, mental, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Mental health is an integral aspect of individual total wellbeing and being mentally healthy is very pertinent for commercial drivers who interact with people from all walks of life on daily bases. Oti, (2018) affirmed that food consumption play important roles in the wellbeing of people. The importance of food in the healthy growth, development and protection against diseases in an individual cannot be over emphasised. Nutritional theorists affirmed that food plays an important role in enhancing quality of life, particularly in the prevention and management of some chronic diseases. WHO (2014) stated that mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. All these aspects of health affect how we think, feel or act and react to things that happen around us. Our mental wellbeing determines how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices. Having good mental health or being mentally healthy is more than just absence of mental illness, instead, it is an overall wellbeing. Positive mental health allows people to realise their full potential, cope with people, work productively and make meaningful contributions to their communities (WHO, 2018).

Poor eating habits such as insufficient intake or high intake of food nutrients have implications on health. These problems include obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, heart disease and stroke, type-2 diabetes mellitus and osteoporosis.

Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood to adolescence through to adulthood. Commercial drivers within the metropolis require high level of mental wellbeing to be able to cope with the rigor of driving and stopping intermittently, interacting with people from all walks of life and different cultural background.

A cultural group provides guidelines regarding acceptable foods and food combinations, eating patterns and eating behaviours. Compliance with these guidelines creates a sense of identity and belonging for individuals within the cultural groups, though they are considered as part of the larger group. The major factors that can predispose commercial drivers to bad eating habits are money and time. Klimis-Zakas and Dorothy (2011) asserted that a common eating pattern is three meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) per day, with snacks in between meals if affordable. The components of a meals vary across cultures. In each culture, there are acceptable foods. Although, this is not determined by whether or not something is edible. Money, values and consumer skills all affect what food a person purchases. The price of a food however, is not an indicator of its nutritional value. Cost is a complex combination of a good's availability, status and demand.

Statement of the problem

Adequate food is an integral part of daily life. Being aware of the factors that influence what and how much food an individual eats can help make better eating choices. Also, knowledge of correct food choices can help individual to make better food choices. Unhealthy diet is one of the major risk factors for a range of chronic diseases. The researcher observed that many of the commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis do not know the right kind of food they suppose to eat daily and hence the impact of good nutrition on their work. Many of the commercial drivers, because of their low educational status, are unaware of diets containing adequate amount of energy and nutrients which are essential for their daily living. A visit to many motor parks in Ilorin metropolis revealed that about seventy-five percent of commercial drivers do not eat from homes because they live their homes very early in the morning. This make them eat the same type of food on daily bases. These diets are mostly excessive carbon hydrates or excessive animal protein. This, the researcher observed may be due to limited knowledge about nutrition. Many of these

commercial drivers suffer all kinds of health problems which are related to poor diet and inadequate nutritional status. An interaction with some of these drivers revealed that many of them are addicted to the available carbohydrate foods which are available at the motor parks. Therefore, the study examined predisposing factors influencing eating habits of commercial drivers and its implications on their mental health in Ilorin metropolis.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. Educational status of commercial drivers will not have significant influence on their eating habits in Ilorin metropolis.
2. Economic status of commercial drivers will not have significant influence on their eating habits in Ilorin metropolis.
3. Cultural background of commercial drivers will not have significant influence on their eating habits in Ilorin metropolis.
4. There is no significant implication of poor eating habits on the health of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

1. ascertain whether educational status have significant influence on the eating habit of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.
2. determine whether economic status have significant influence on the eating habit of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.
3. investigate whether cultural background have significant influence on the eating habit of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.
4. Investigate whether poor eating habit have significant implications on the health of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.

Methodology

A descriptive research design of the survey type was used for the study. The population for the study consists of all registered commercial drivers in Ilorin Metropolis totalling four thousand, seven hundred and seventy-four drivers(4774). Multi-stage sampling technique consisting of purposive, simple random, proportionate and systematic sampling techniques were used for sample selection. Simple random sampling technique of fish bowl method was used to select two

motor parks from each of the three Local Government Areas within Ilorin metropolis namely, Maraba, Ife-Irewa, Unity, offa-garage, Oja tuntun and sawmill-garage, while purposeful sampling method was used to select four other ones from highly populated parks in Ilorin metropolis. These are Amilegbe, Oja-Oba, Shao garage and Oloje Motor Parks. Systematic random sampling technique was used to select thirty-five respondents from each of the ten parks selected totalling three hundred and fifty (350) respondents. A researchers' structured questionnaire validated by three experts in related field was used for data collection. Split-half method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument using Spearman-Brown Rank Order Correlation which yielded a coefficient of .76. Inferential statistics of Chi-square was used to test the postulated null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level.

Results

Hypothesis 1: Educational status of commercial drivers will have no significant influence on their eating habits in Ilorin metropolis.

Table 1: Chi-square analysis on educational status and its Influence on the eating habits of commercial drivers in Ilorin Metropolis

S / N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Row Total	D f	Cal χ^2	Crit Val	De c.
1	Educated commercial drivers in Ilorin do not skip meals.	66 (18.9%)	214 (61.1%)	31 (8.9%)	39 (11.1%)	350	9	144.31	16.92	Ho Rej
2	Low level of education contributed to poor selection of food by commercial	82 (23.3%)	105 (30.0%)	132 (37.8%)	31 (8.9%)	350				
3	Poor knowledge of balanced diet or nutrition influence eating habits among commercial drivers	82 (23.3%)	237 (67.8%)	4 (1.1%)	27 (7.8%)	350				
4	Educated commercial drivers consider balanced diet when selecting the food to	218 (62.2%)	62 (17.8%)	39 (11.1%)	31 (8.9%)	350				
	Column	448	618	206	128	1400				

$P \leq 0.05$

Table 1 above shows that the Cal χ^2 of 144.31 is greater than the table value of 16.92 with degree of freedom (df) 9 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that educational level of commercial drivers had significant negative influence. That is, low level of education makes them to skip meals, make poor selection of foods and have poor knowledge of balanced diet.

Hypothesis 2: Economic status of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis will not have significant influence on their eating habits.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis on economic status and its influence on the eating habits of commercial drivers in Ilorin Metropolis

S / N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Row Total	D f	Cal χ^2	Crit val.	De c.
5	Commercial drivers who are financially comfortable do not skip meals	288 (82.2%)	8(2.2%)	31 (8.9%)	23 (6.7%)	350	9	265.58	16.92	Ho Rej
6	Commercial drivers with low income can't afford good food even if they have the knowledge	82 (23.3%)	167 (47.8%)	74 (21.1%)	27 (7.8%)	350				
7	Commercial drivers with low income eat cheaper snacks more than meals	43 (12.2%)	78 (22.2%)	58 (16.7%)	171 (48.9%)	350				
8	Only commercial drivers with low income eat behind the steering	43 (12.2%)	78 (22.2%)	113 (32.2%)	116 (33.3%)	350				
	Column total	456	331	276	337	1400				

$P \leq 0.05$

Table 2 above shows that the Cal- χ^2 of 265.58 is greater than the table value

of 16.92 with degree of freedom (df) 9 at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that, economic status of commercial drivers had significant negative influence. This makes them to constantly eat regimented, cheap, carbohydrate dominated foods which are readily available at the motor parks.

Hypothesis 3: Cultural background of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis will not have significant influence on their eating habits

Table 3: Chi-square analysis on cultural background and its influence on the eating habits of commercial drivers in Ilorin Metropolis

S / N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Row Total	D f	Cal χ^2	Crit val.	Dec
9	Eating habits of commercial drivers depends on what individual eats at home	43 (12.2 %)	163 (46.7 %)	132 (37.8 %)	12 (3.3%)	350	9	91.38	16.92	Ho Rej.
10	Eating habits of commercial drivers depend on the type of food individual is used to in their community	58 (16.7 %)	129 (36.7 %)	23 (6.7%)	140 (40.0 %)	350				
11	Eating habits of commercial drivers depend on their social group	50 (14.4 %)	202 (57.8 %)	39 (11.1 %)	59 (16.7 %)	350				
12	Commercial drivers' cultural background influence their choice of food	50 (14.4 %)	163 (46.7 %)	105 (30.0 %)	32 (8.9%)	350				
	Column total	201	657	299	243	1400				

$P \leq 0.05$

Table 3 above shows that the Cal- χ^2 of 91.38 is greater than the table value of 16.92 with degree of freedom (df) 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that, cultural background of

commercial drivers had significant negative influence. Many of these drivers constantly eat the foods which are common in their cultures which they are used to without minding the implications of such regimented diet to their health.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant implication of poor eating habits on the health of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis

Table 4: Chi-square analysis on Implication of poor eating habits of commercial drivers on their health.

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Row Total	D f	Cal χ^2	Crit val.	De c
13	Many of the commercial drivers feel dizziness as a result of poor regimented food intake.	150 (42.9%)	98 (28.0%)	92 (26.3%)	10 (2.8%)	350	9	31.01	16.92	Ho Rej
14	Dysentery is a common disorder among commercial drivers.	167 (47.7%)	147 (42.0%)	29 (8.3%)	7 (2.0%)	350				
15	Many of the commercial drivers are suffering from peptic ulcer as a result of skipping meals	116 (33.1%)	118 (33.7%)	98 (28.0%)	18 (5.2%)	350				
16	Constipation and obesity are common health problems among commercial drivers	134 (38.3%)	117 (33.4%)	90 (25.7%)	9 (2.6%)	350				
	Column Total	567	480	309	44	1400				

Table 4 above shows that the Cal- χ^2 of 31.01 is greater than the table value of 16.92 with degree of freedom (df) 9 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected which means that, poor eating habits have significant implications on the health of commercial drivers. High percentage of these commercial drivers are suffering from nutrition related health problem or another.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the tested hypothesis one shows that educational status of commercial drivers had influence on their eating habits. Commercial drivers with lower level of education eat any food they like and can afford not minding the effects of such food on their body. The finding is in agreement with European Food Information Council (2014) which stated that, people with lower level of education and income have less healthy dietary habits partly because of their higher priority for price and familiarity.

The tested hypothesis two revealed that economic status of commercial drivers had significant influence on their eating habits. Many of these drivers acknowledged that they consider prices of food rather than the content. Many of the commercial drivers, however said they also considered the cleanliness of the food apart from price. This result corroborates Taylor and Francis (2011) that a low socio-economic status is related to unhealthy dietary habits. Less educated people with a low income tend to consume more energy-dense foods. Also, poor families will prefer to buy cheap carbohydrate rich foods that satisfy their hunger and appetite than buying the costlier foods that are rich in protein, vitamins and minerals (Ojo, and Adebayo 2012).

In hypothesis three cultural background of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis had significant influence on their eating habits. Many of the commercial drivers eat culturally regimented. This justified the assertion of Ogechi and Olowu, (2017) that, culture provides guidelines regarding acceptable foods, food combinations and eating habits. This means that, what an individual eats at one time or the other can be controlled by his/her cultural background.

The tested hypothesis four revealed that poor eating habits have significant implications on the health of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis. Many of the commercial drivers acknowledge having one nutritional health problem or another. This situation corroborates the report of Marjo (2010), which says the potential contribution of food to drivers' alertness cannot be over emphasised. Correct timing and the right combination of foods can contribute to improved fatigue management and commercial drivers' alertness. Matemilola and Elegbede, (2017) also affirmed that poor eating habits such as insufficient intake or high intake of foods have adverse effects on health. These problems include obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes, and osteoporosis.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

- i. Educational level of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis influences their eating habits. This is because majority of these drivers have low level of education and so they have little or no knowledge of nutrition and balanced diet.
- ii. Economic status of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis had influence on their eating habits. Many of these drivers acknowledge the fact that they eat what they can afford not minding the nutritive value of the food.
- iii. Cultural background of commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis had significant influence on their eating habits.
- iv. Higher percentage of the commercial drivers are having nutrition related health problems. This shows that poor eating habits have implications on the health of the commercial drivers in Ilorin metropolis.

Recommendations

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

1. The government should encourage the media houses to air programmes that will educate the public on the importance and benefits of healthy diet and eating habits. This can be done through sponsoring programmes for that purpose. Health sectors too should educate commercial drivers on the importance of eating balanced diet through the use of billboards at motor parks.
2. Health education should be given to commercial driver on how to spend the little money they want to spend at a time to take foods that are nutritious and healthy. This can be done through the various media via jingles, playlets and educative programmes.
3. Those who are culturally bias about food should also be educated based on the foods that are common to their culture. Government should also organise periodic seminars on nutrition during the monthly meetings of all the commercial drivers.
4. Commercial drivers should be forced to do periodic medical check-up before their licences are renewed, this will expose them to standard medical attention when health problem is detected.

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