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PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTH, NUTRITION AND DISEASE AMONG FEMALE SCIENCE STUDENTS OF ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY IGBARIAM, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

by

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Abstract

This study investigated the perception and attitude of one hundred and ninety three female science students of Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam , Anambra State towards health, nutrition and diseases. In line with the objectives of the study, three research questions and two null hypotheses were postulated adopted. The survey research design was adopted. The accessible population for the study consisted of 193 students in Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam, Anambra State. Structured questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Reliability of the instrument was done using split-half techniques and it yielded reliability co-efficient of .82. The data collected were analyzed using mean score and chi-square statistics. The result among others is that there were significant differences in the attitude to health of female science students based on their area of discipline (0.033<0.05). However, the students perception and attitudes towards health, nutrition and diseases did not vary based on their academic level and teaching experiences. Based on the findings and conclusion, recommendations are made pertinent among which is female science students should be exposed to nutrition education at all level of Nigeria education and in all discipline of study.

Key words: Perception, Attitude, Health, Nutrition and Diseases.

Introduction

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and emotional well being of individual and not merely the absence of diseases or infirmity (WHO, 1984). Nutrition is the substances taken into the body as food and way that they influence the health. It is also the study of the nutrients each organism must obtain from the environment to maintain life

and health to reproduce. Diseases are illness of people, animals, plants etc. caused by infections or a failure of health rather than by an accident (MC Graw-Hill Encyclopedia 2002).

These three terms are very relevant to humans and are very germane to the female gender that forms about 70% of the global population. Concerns raised by Nigeria maternal mortality rate of 800 per 100,000. 36% of under five children malnourished and 44% female illiteracy rate as at the year 2000 are strong indices of the need for rapid emphasis on health and nutrition education. United Nations Children Education, (UNICEF, 2004). United Nations Organization, (2002) and World Guide (2005).

The Fourth Republic in Nigeria accorded more political placements to the female more than they had previously enjoyed. However, female could have benefited more if her nutrition and consequently health enjoyed comparably attention. The need for health literacy could not be over emphasized because of the multiple relationships among nutrition, health and disease active learning capacities future productivity and life expectancies. The Nigerian women which constitute a major sector of the family income earner need to be more conscious about maintaining good health (World Guide 2004).

Mishra (2008), advocacies for health and nutrition literacy, identified family size social status, income, birth-order, hunger-level aptitude, learning receptiveness and prior-learning and psycho-social supports as major interacting factors determining the active learning capacities of learners. Manipulating these factors would enhance health and nutrition and could minimize incidences of diseases among school children. With a very balanced nutrition head-start such children favoured to become more healthy and nutrition literates.

To this end the study investigated the perception and attitude towards health, nutrition and disease among female science students of Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam, Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posited to guide the study.

1. Will students' attitude toward health vary based on their area of discipline teaching experience or academic level?
2. Will students' perception toward nutrition vary based on their area of discipline teaching experience or academic level?
3. Will students' attitude towards diseases vary based on their area of discipline teaching experience or academic level?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant effect of students' area of discipline, teaching experience or academic level on their attitude to health.
2. There is no significant effect of students' area of discipline teaching experience or academic level on their attitudes to nutrition and diseases.

Methods

Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This design was considered appropriate for the study because it involved a fraction of the population that has the same characteristic. The appropriateness of this research design could be abducted from the use in similar study by previous researcher including Alline & Johnson (2002).

The accessible population for the study consisted of all the one hundred and ninety three (193) female students studying science education in Odumegwu Ojukwu University,

Igbariam Anambra State. There was no sample and sampling technique because the population was small and within the reach of the researcher.

The main instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was self-developed by the researcher following review of related literature. The questionnaire was in two sections. Section A contained two questions on background information of the respondents while section B contained twenty questions on their attitudes towards their health, nutrition and diseases. The instrument was submitted to health experts in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka and two medical doctors at UNTH Nnewi for validation. All their corrections were adequately effected in restructuring the instrument.

Reliability of the instrument was established by exposing the structured questionnaire twice for reliability using test-retest method. Ten non-participating students from the department of Nursery and Primary Education were used for test-retest. After fourteen days, a retest with the same but fresh copies of the instrument were made. The split-half reliability co-efficient of the questionnaire was calculated to be 0.9752.

One hundred and ninety three (193) copies of the questionnaire administered were returned and use for data analysis. The responses to the structured questionnaire were subjected to the chi-squares tests statistics at the 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Results of the data analysis are shown in table 1 & II

Table 1

Chi-square analysis on attitude to health based on area of discipline

Items	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	25.164[a]	14	.033
Likelihood Ratio	25.943	14	.026
Linear-by-linear Association	.188	1	.664
N of Valid Cases	.193		

When subjected to chi-square (x^2) analysis to test the hypothesis X^2, it indicates that the area of discipline of students have significant effects on their attitude to health (0.033<0.05).

Table 2

Chi-square analysis on attitude to nutrition based on area of discipline

Items	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.964[a]	14	.833
Likelihood Ratio	11.023	14	.684
Linear-by-linear Association	.077	1	.782
N of Valid Cases	193		

When subjected to chi-square (x^2) analysis to test the hypothesis (x^2). It indicate that the area of discipline of students did not have significant effects on their attitude to nutrition (0.833>0.05).

Table 3
Chi-square analysis on attitude to Diseases based on area of discipline

Items	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.238[a]	21	.900
Likelihood Ratio	13.371	21	.895
Linear-by-linear Association	.077	1	.782
N of Valid Cases	193		

When subjected to chi-square (x^2) analysis to test the hypothesis (x^2). It indicate that the area of discipline of students did not have significant effects on their attitude to disease (0.900>0.05).

Discussion

The finding of this study indicated that the respondents had fair knowledge about health, nutrition and diseases and their attitudes towards health varied significantly based on their area of subject discipline. Those in the health studies had better attitude towards their health. Since health is paramount to life achievement, every human should display sound attitude toward health.

In line with Mishra (2008), this study posits that the propensity and ability to interact with and take optimal advantage of resources offered by any formal or informal learning environment tagged as active learning capacity is enhanced when learners hunger level, nutrition/health status and psychosocial factors are favoured.

Conclusion

All spheres of educational studies should emphasize the health implications and relevance of their studies as Health is a state of complete physical, mental, social and emotional well being of individual. The need for health literacy could not be over emphasized because of the multiple relationships among nutrition, health and disease active learning capacities future productivity and life expectancies. The Nigerian women which constitute a major sector of the family income earner need to be more conscious about maintaining good health.

Recommendations

The study recommends health/nutrition education to female science students irrespective of their field of study. This education would enhance the females with the capacity to obtain interpret, understand and use information to promote and maintain health.

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