

Household Meal Management Practices of Homemakers in Ayamelum Local Government Area, Anambra State

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Abstract

The study focused on issues relating to household meal management practices of homemakers. Specifically the study determined guidelines homemakers follow in meal management; measures they adopt for enhancing their household meal management; problems they encountered in managing family meal in a recessed economy and possible solutions to the problems. The population was made up of 53,496 homemakers in Ayamelum local government of Anambra State. The study was a survey. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using means. Major findings were that the homemakers followed eight guidelines in their family meal management; 12 measures for enhancing family meal management were adopted by the homemakers. The homemakers encountered 14 problems in managing family meals in a recessed economy while all the solution proffered were accepted by the homemakers.

Key words: Family, Meal Management, Homemakers, Households, Recessed Economy.

Introduction

Economic recession is a period of general economic slowdown. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), economic recession is “a significant decline in economic activity spread across the economy, lasting more than a few months, normally visible in real gross domestic product (GDP), real income, employment, industrial production and even wholesale to retail sales” (Chike, 2016). The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders

in a specific period. In a recession, businesses cease to thrive, the GDP diminishes for two consecutive quarters, the rate of unemployment rises and housing price decline and there is a sharp increase in price of goods. This is the situation of the economy in Nigeria after the governor of Central Bank of Nigeria and the National Bureau of Statistics in May 2016, indicated that the Nigerian economy is at verge of a recession (Chike, 2016). By July 2016, the Minister of Finance, reported that the country was at the moment in a state of economic recession (Umoru and

Erunke, 2016). Apart from the gloomy performance of the oil sector which is a worldwide phenomenon, the country's weak production base left the economy without a fallback position when oil prices started tumbling. Nigeria's near-total dependency on imported manufactured goods, ranging from the simplest household consumer items to the most complex industrial inputs makes the economy more vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. Nigeria imported at least 70 percent of its refined fuel, despite pumping 1.6 million barrels of crude oil a day in June 2016 according to International Energy Agency (IEA). This lack of strong production base has resulted in imported insulation. According to Coleman (2018) recession is a slowdown or a massive contraction in economic activities. A significant fall in spending generally leads to a recession. There are lots of other indicators that tend to lead or follow a recession but GDP is the only one that counts in terms of indicating that a recession is or is not present. Other indicator includes: (1) high inflation rates; (2) decrease in sales of goods and services; (3) budget deficit in government spending; and (4) decline in the stock market

A meal is food that is prepared and eaten usually at a specific time. Management is the way that people control and organize different situations that happen in their lives or their work. Management occurs in many situations such as a business,

schools, hospitals and homes (Anyakoha, 2015). Family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bond of blood, sexual mating or legal ties (Gordon, 1998). The nutritional need of each member of the family has to be considered in the management process. There is need for budgeting and prioritizing needs to use the scarce resources to achieve greater goal. The health status and physical activities of family members must be considered. Food is scarce and many families are suffering from food insecurity in the face of economic recession there is need to apply proper meal management strategies in order to meet the nutritional need of family members, prevent malnutrition and avoid food wastage. It is imperative that available food be properly managed to enhance and maintain the nutritional need of family members. For meals to be properly managed, the home maker must learn to apply the principles of creative problem solving. This will involve proper planning, organize, implementing and evaluating the meal management process. This is important because food stands as an important need of the family and the first in the hierarchy of needs. There are some tips which can help the manager to manage family meal successfully which includes creating a corresponding grocery list to successfully execute the meal in the plan. Proper planning in everything is the first step to success. Planning of meals for families is not an

exception. Therefore meal planning is a careful thinking and application of the knowledge of nutrition and its benefit to feed the members of a family with adequate meals on daily basis (Okeke, 2009). In managing family meal one has to make sure that each family member receives the right proportion of nutrients that will enhance nutrition. In order to achieve this certain factors have to be reconsidered such as age of family member which influence meal plan, knowing full well that a family is made up of children, adolescents, adults and the aged.

Consequently, food price is one of the most significant problems facing families in Nigeria today. The present economic crises and inflation in Nigeria have hiked the cost of food despite all assurance that Nigeria will soon be self-sufficient in rice production (Trade Economics, 2017). This increase in price has affected all available staple food in the country and has thrown many families into hunger, poverty and malnutrition. The purchasing powers of many families have been affected including homemakers in Ayamelum local government area of Anambra State as the most important determinant of food consumption is the family income. According to Oguntola, (2001), due to increase in salary, many Nigerians can afford to buy food like meat which is looked at as "food for the wealthy". However, this is not the situation in Ayamelum L.G.A who is predominantly farmers and depends

on the proceeds from their farm products to meet their food need.

Currently, as prices of food continues to increase due to economic recession and natural disaster such as flooding and pest that continue to ravage Ayamelum local government area of Anambra state living the local government more recessed economically. It is important that families in Ayamelum local government area manage their scarce resources well in order to meet their family food need as proper food management ebbs some nutritional deficiencies such as marasmus and kwashiorkor (Nwamara and Uwaegbute, 2007). Many families are challenged with family meal management due to lack of skills, knowledge, preparation method, and facilities and even time. This exposes the families to risk of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to explore some issues household meal management practices of homemakers in Ayamelum local government area (LGA) of Anambra State.

Specifically the study determined:

1. guidelines homemakers follow in meal management.
2. measures homemakers adopt for enhancing their household meal management practices.
3. problems encountered by homemakers in managing family meals in a recessed economy.

4. solutions to the problems encountered by mother in managing family meals in a recessed economy.

Methodology

Area and Design of the Study: The study was carried out in Ayamelum Local Government Area (LGA) of Anambra State. The LGA is located in south-central zone of Anambra state. It is made up of eight towns. Each town is made up of communities. The study adopted a survey research design.

Population for the Study: The population for the study comprised 53,496 homemakers in Ayamelum local government area of Anambra State (National Population Census, 2006). The homemakers were literate and illiterate women. They were predominantly farmers and few civil servants.

Sample for the study: The sample for the study comprised of 240 homemakers drawn from the 53,496 homemakers in Ayamelum local government area. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted. First two towns and three communities from each of the towns were purposively sampled. This gave a total of six communities. Then one-woman group from each of the communities were sampled given a total of six women groups. Finally, 40 homemakers from each of the six

groups were randomly sampled which totaled 24000 homemakers.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was in four sections covering the specific purposes of the study. It was developed based on the specific purposes of the study and literature review. It was validated by three Home Economics experts.

Data Collection and Analysis

Technique: Two hundred and forty (240) copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents by hand during the meetings. The questionnaire also served as interview schedule for the illiterate respondents as items in the questionnaire were explained to them in vernacular. The researcher with the assistance of four research assistants was there to explain the items in the questionnaire as requested by the respondents. The 240 copies of questionnaire administered by hand. Data collected were analyzed using mean. Mean rating of 2.50 and above were considered as agreed item while mean rating of 2.49 and below were considered as "disagree" item.

Results

The following findings were made:

Table 1: Mean Responses on Guidelines for Meal Management Practices of Homemakers

S/No	Meal Management Practices	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1.	Take inventory of family food needs	3.25	Agree
2.	Plan to provide adequate meal household	1.55	Disagree
3.	Consider family members food likes and dislikes	3.40	Agree
4.	Develop meal plan for household	1.55	Disagree
5.	Consider grocery budget (money on hand)	3.25	Agree
6.	Prepare grocery list	1.42	Disagree
7.	Pick time to shop for food items/ proper timing	2.55	Agree
8.	Consider where to buy fresh, and cheap ingredients	3.20	Agree
9.	Compare food prices and quality before making purchase	2.15	Disagree
10.	Consider food in season	2.50	Agree
11.	Prepare meals that are in your plan	2.52	Agree
12.	Consider equipment and utensils available for preparing meals	1.65	Disagree
13.	Consider the time available for cooking	3.15	Agree
14.	Consider health conditions of family members	1.85	Disagree

Table 1 reveals that the homemakers consider eight guidelines out of 14 in the Table in their meal planning practices. This is because the eight items had mean scores of 2.50 and above while the other six items were not considered guidelines hence they obtained mean responses lower than 2.50.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Homemakers on Measures Taken to Enhance Household Meal Management Practices

S/No	Measures for Enhancing Meal Management Practices	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1.	Buying food items in bulk	3.08	Disagree
2.	Raising vegetable gardens from where to pick stuff for meals	3.08	Agree
3.	Using low cost proteins to replace expensive proteins	2.50	Agree
4.	Preservation of foods in season by sun drying, freezing and smoking eg beans, tomatoes and fish.	2.80	Agree
5.	Storing food adequately to avoid decay.	1.25	Disagree
6.	Use plant protein to replace animal protein	2.51	Agree
7.	Make grocery list always.	2.08	Disagree
8.	Choose markets where cheap and fresh foods are sold	2.56	Agree
9.	Prepare most food eaten at home	2.66	Agree
10.	Shopping of food items personally without assistance	2.21	Disagree
11.	Vary method of meal preparation	2.55	Agree
12.	Embarking on full or part time farming/ home gardening to reduce food cost	2.65	Agree
13.	Buying cheap cuts of meat instead of costly cut	2.50	Agree

	(e.g biscuit bone)		
14.	Processing foods such as garri, fufu or corn meal for home use.	2.52	Agree
15.	Preserving left-over foods to avoid wastage	2.54	Agree
16.	Store left-over foods in the freezers to avoid spoilage	1.54	Disagree
17.	Smoke meat and fish for preservation	2.55	Agree
18.	Use frozen fish instead of fresh fish	1.65	Disagree

Table 2 reveals that the homemakers consider 12 out of 18 in the table as measures taken by homemakers to enhance household meal management practices. This is because twelve items had mean scores of 2.50 and above

while the other six items were not considered measures for enhancing meal management practices by homemakers hence they obtained mean responses lower than 2.50.

Table 3: Mean Responses of Homemakers on Problems Encountered in Meals Management Practices.

S/No	Problems Encountered by Home makers in Managing Meals in a Recessed Economy.	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1.	Funds for purchasing food items are limited	3.20	Agree
2.	Food preferences or choice of family members is a problem	3.00	Agree
3.	Time constrain in purchasing, preparation and consumption of meals.	2.63	Agree
4.	Lack of skills and equipments for meal preparations	2.53	Agree
5.	Large family size	2.52	Agree
6.	High cost of some food storage facilities such as freezers	3.52	Agree
7.	Poor knowledge of food preservation methods	3.00	Agree
8.	Lack of some meal preparation method is a problem	2.50	Agree
9.	Poor knowledge of nutrition is a challenge in managing family meals	2.52	Agree
10.	Transportation problems in going to cheap markets	2.52	Agree
11.	Lack of space around the home for gardening	2.54	Agree
12.	Health problems of family members are considered	2.15	Disagree
13.	Superstitious belief associated with the consumption of some foods are considered	3.22	Agree
14.	Price fluctuation in food purchasing is a challenge	3.30	Agree
15.	Poor knowledge of food processing method is a challenge	2.55	Agree

Table 3 reveals that the homemakers consider 14 out of 15 items in the table as problems encountered by homemakers in managing family meal. This is because fourteen items had mean score of 2.50 and above

while only one item was not considered as problem encountered by homemakers in managing meals in a recessed economy hence it obtained mean response lower than 2.50.

Table 4: Mean Responses of Homemakers on Perceived Solutions to Problems Encountered in Household Meal Management

S/ No	Possible Solutions to Family Meal Management Problems	Mean (\bar{x})	Remarks
1.	perishable food items should not be bought in bulk	3.06	Agree
2.	Use local methods of food preservation to preserve foods e.g. Sun drying and smoking.	3.00	Agree
3.	Storage containers should be used store to dry foods or hang at kitchen chummy eg corn.	2.55	Agree
4.	Foods like onions and yams should be stored in a cool dry place to avoid spoilage	2.80	Agree
5.	Foods should be stored in freezers if available.	2.55	Agree
6.	Space at the back of compound should be used as garden.	2.90	Agree
7.	Hire land for cultivation of food items	3.05	Agree
8.	Use organic manure instead of artificial manure.	3.04	Agree
9.	Process garri, fufu or corn flour if possible at home to save cost.	2.56	Agree
10.	Family likes-and; dislikes should be considered by homemaker	3.07	Agree
11.	Use locally available foods or food in season to prepare variety of dishes to avoid monotony.	2.56	agree
12.	Pre-prepare some ingredients to save time during meal preparation.	2.55	Agree
13.	Join a co-operative group that will buy food items in bulk and share to save cost.	3.00	Agree
14.	Home Economists should carryout enlightenment programmes on food nutrient, their sources and food preservation methods though their extension services.	3.25	Agree

Table 4 reveals that the homemakers perceived 14 solutions to the problems they encounter in household meal management. This is because each of the 14 items had mean scores of 2.50 and above.

Discussion

Table 1 shows that eight items out of fourteen items were considered to be meal planning practices of homemakers in Ayamelum local government area of Anambra State. Those items they considered are taken inventory of family food need, consider grocery budget, prepare

grocery list, consider food in season, and consider where to buy cheap and fresh food ingredients and ability to prepare meals that are in the plan. These items obtained mean scores above 2.50 which is the cutoff point and is in line with the findings of Dinkins, who suggested that the use of grocery list, planning meals, and comparing prices using coupons and stocking up on sale items were meal planning practices (Dinkins, 1997). However, a decreased household budget can negatively affect nutrition status of family (Kempson, Palmer, Sadaru, Ridlen and Scotto, 2002).

Balance diet was not rated high as it had a mean score of 1.55 and this is in line with the finding of Comber, Hoonhout, Halteren, Moynihan and Olivier (2013) who reported that health and balanced eating were not primary concerns for most households, with issues such as time, finances, taste, weight management and food waste being more prominent. In their report the cost of healthy eating was noted by several participants and their concerns about diet were offset by the perception of being physically active. Equally, health condition of family members did not rate high and is below the cutoff point of 2.50. However, this is not in line with the study conducted by Hersey, Anliker, Miller, Mullis, Daugherty, Das, Bray, Dennee, Sigmen and Thomas (2001) which examined food shopping practices and diet quality in low-income households. They suggested that thinking about healthy options was shown to increase the odds of meeting household RDAs for vitamin C, A, B₆ and iron (Hersey, *et al* 2001).

The findings of the study in table two revealed that the homemakers adopted twelve out of the eighteen items in measures for enhancing meal management practices of homemakers. Item number 2 of Table 2 had the highest mean rating of 3.08 which agree that raising vegetable gardens is one of the measures for enhancing meal management practices by homemakers in Ayamelum local government area. This is in line with

the findings of Anozie, (2013) and Prakash (2003). Prakash (2003) agrees that women play an indispensable role in farming and in improving the quality of life in rural areas. Studies show that the most economical and desirable method of improving nutrition when money resources is limited is by raising foods in the home garden (Prakash, 2003). Propare preservation of foods in season had a mean score of 2.80 while storing food adequately to avoid decay had mean score of 1.25 respectively. Homemakers agreed that foods in season should be preserved properly but storing food adequately to avoid decay was below cutoff point. This shows that the homemakers were not aware of different method of food preservation but may not be properly acquitted with the storage methods. This is in line with the report of Cesarani, Klinton and Foskett (1995) who reported that lack of storage facilities can easily lead to food poisoning and is also in line with study of Anozie (2013) who reported that poor storage facilities and poor preservation facilities may lead to improper feeding of family members.

Table 2 also revealed that homemakers rating in making of grocery list and choosing of markets where cheap and fresh foods are sold were high as the rating was above the cutoff point. This is in line with the study by Lewis, (2013) who reported from the result of her models that using a grocery list and thinking about healthy foods when planning what to

feed the family were the only two variables that were shown to improve diet outcomes in both models. She suggests that these food management practices are effective in improving diet outcomes among low-income participants regardless of race, education level, and income level and population density. Item 1 of Table 2 buying food items in bulk also had a mean rating that is below the cutoff point (2.08). this goes to suggest that these homemakers do not buy in bulk which may be as a result of ignorance or lack of fund and is not in consonance with the suggestion of Okeke (2009) who suggested that consumer cooperative society could be formed by the homemakers with the cum of buying goods (food) in bulk or whole and sell to the members of the society. This will help to save the cost of items in the family and at the same time help the homemakers to plan ahead of time.

The finding in Table 3 revealed the mean scores of the responses of homemakers in Ayamelum on the problems encountered in managing family meals. The table revealed that 14 items out of 15 items were above the cutoff point of 2.50 and only one item was below the cutoff point. This result is not in consonance with the suggestion of Anyakoha (2015) who identified that one of the factors that influence meal planning should be health condition of family members. She explains that certain foods are not suitable for certain health conditions. The result is however in line with the

finding of Comber *et al* (2013) who reported that healthy and balanced eating were not primary concerns for most households, with issues such as time, finances, taste, weight management and food waste being more prominent. In their study they noted that for a number of households, concerns about diet were offset by the perception of being physically active. All the other items such as food preferences or choice of family members, time constrain in purchasing, preparation and consumption, preparation knowledge and equipments and family size had a mean cutoff point of 3.08, 2.63, 3.00 and 2.52 respectively were in agreement with the report of Comber *et al* (2013) who pointed out all these items as problems encountered in family meal management. Transport also rated high with a cutoff point of 2.52 and is in line with the study that reported that class-related impediments to the ease and stability to access healthy food includes economically constrained food budgets and disadvantaged residential location that lacks adequate public transportation and food supply system (Beagan, Slijepeceric and Chapman 2010).

Table 4 shows that the rating on the perceived solution to the problem encountered by homemakers on family meal management practices were all the items meet the cutoff point of 2.50 and above. The table revealed that all the items were perceived solutions to the problems

encountered by homemakers in managing family meals such as not buying perishable foods in bulk, use of local methods of food preservation, use of storage facilities to store dry food or hang at kitchen chummy, store food in freezers with cutoff point of 3.06, 3.00, 2.55 and 2.55 respectively. This is in line with the study of Otilia, Eduardo & Albert (2018) and is also in line with the general factors to consider when buying food (Anyakoha, 2015). It was identified that perishable foods should not be bought in bulk and there is need for proper storage and preservation of food (Anyakoha, 2015). She also encourage buying food in open markets as this is cheaper and considering family needs for food such as likes and dislike and this is in line with the present study.

Conclusion

The study observed that homemakers in Ayamelum adopted different meal management practices to meet their family food needs. These practices ranges from raising vegetables gardens to buying from local markets where cheaper food stuff can be sourced. There are different traditional methods of food preservation and food storage to safeguard their food to avoid spoilage. Poverty and ignorance was the major problems of they encounter in meeting their family food. Home Economic extension services that will enlighten homemakers on food nutrient and

their source, preservation and storage were rated highly by the homemakers.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that:

- ❖ Vegetable gardens should be reused by homemakers in order to reduce family meal cost and improve nutrition of family members.
- ❖ Meal should be planned in advance for easy management of family resources.
- ❖ Consumer cooperative societies should be formed by the women with the sole aim of contributing money in order to buy food in bulk.

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