Establishing a Breakfast Club in the University

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Abstract

Considered as the most important meal of the day, breakfast when taken daily improves the health, mood and productivity of individuals. This quantitative descriptive study assessed the needs of students for breakfast with the aim of establishing a breakfast club in the university.

This study was conducted among 475 students of the University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines. The study employed the descriptive, quantitative approach. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data. Data collection was done from January 2016 to December 2016. Treatment of data used were simple percentage, weighted mean, and sum of ranks.

Majority of the respondents were female (55.2%), college level (76.2%), and residents of Lapu-Lapu City (54.5%). the students do not take breakfast before going to school (63.6%). If food is available at home, they prefer to take their breakfast from 6:00 AM to 7:00 AM (21.9%). Only 4 items are moderately preferred. This includes: one glass of water; one piece of egg

(boiled, scrambled or sunny side up); one glass of milk or hot chocolate drink; and one piece of banana or any kind of fruit equivalent to 60 grams. On the 5th spot is 1 cup of rice or its equivalent (less preferred).

Based on the findings of the study, there is a need to establish a breakfast club in the university. This program shall support the nutritional requirements of students to help them excel in class. Food preferences and breakfast time shall be considered in the implementation of the program.

Keywords: Breakfast; Club; Poverty; Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines

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Introduction

Breakfast is a must for all. It is the most important meal of the day. Eating in the morning is just a matter of habit. Taking ten minutes to make and eat some healthy foods in the morning can be simple. Fresh fruits, oatmeal, whole grain breads with low-fat cheese or hard-boiled eggs are just some of the quick and healthy breakfast options which will not take much of time, however can make a great difference in health, moods and look (10Tipsforhealth.com).

Breakfast also restores glucose levels, an essential carbohydrate that is needed for the brain to function. Many studies have shown how eating breakfast can improve memory and concentration levels and it can also make us happier as it can improve attainment, behavior and has been linked to improve

grades. Just like any other organ in the body, the brain needs energy to work at its best.

Breakfast is an excellent occasion to eat together as a family when possible. Establishing good breakfast habits in childhood and maintaining them throughout adolescence may be an important factor in reducing the prevalence of breakfast skipping and developing good eating habits that lasts a lifetime. So, breakfast really is the most important meal of the day (Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board, 2016).

School lunch programs play an important role in providing nutritionally balanced, low-cost meals. Some schools also have breakfast programs and snack programs. These programs usually are available free or at a reduced cost for needy children. In addition to providing a substantial part of the daily nutrition needs for children, these programs make a valuable contribution in terms of nutrition education and development of good nutrition habits (Craven & Hirnle, 2003).

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, the federal government established several food assistance programs to ensure adequate nutrition for poor families. The nutritional needs of older children are addressed through the School Meals Program. School lunches, provided at most schools, must meet certain nutritional standards, including offering a meat or meat alternative, fruit and/or vegetables, bread, and milk. Children from households with incomes at or below 185 percent of the poverty level receive the lunches free or at reduced prices. Children from families with higher incomes pay more. A more limited number of children receive free or reduced price school breakfasts, and some schools offer after school snacks. There is also a Summer Food Service Program, which provides meals during school vacation periods (Schneider, 2011).

Understanding the factors that may influence nutrition is essential in eliciting client and family cooperation in providing optimal nutritional care. From ages 1 to 6 years, nutritional intake varies in relation to growth rate, making the child's eating habits erratic. The child will usually select foods based on developmental nutritional needs in accord with: (1) high kilocalorie intake to maintain energy requirements; (2) adequate levels of protein, vitamin D, calcium, and phosphate to complement teeth eruption and an increase in muscle mass and bone density (Delaune & Ladner, 2002).

School-age children, 6 to 12 years old, grow at a slower and steadier rate, with a gradual decline in energy requirements per unit of body weight. Despite better appetites and more varied food intake, school-age children's diets should be carefully assessed for adequate protein and vitamins A and C. School-age children frequently fail to eat a proper breakfast and have unsupervised intake at school. High fat, sugar, and salt can result from too liberal intake of snack foods. Kennedy-Caldwell notes that children are spending more time away from home, as do parents, further compounding this modern-day problem. Over the last 3 years there has been a consistent increase in sedentary activity level and increase in childhood obesity (Potter & Perry, 2005).

Adolescence, a period of rapid growth and sexual maturation, requires guidance in dietary choices. Hormonal changes associated with menstruation make girls prone to fluid imbalance. Teenagers eat many of their meals away from home, for example, in fast-food restaurants. Peer groups influence a teenager's choices, such as what, when, and where to eat. At the same time, body image is of critical importance for teenagers. The social pressures and other emotional stressors of adolescence may have a negative effect on eating habits, leading to obesity, use of fad diets, and eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia (Daniels, Wilkins & Grendel, 2010).

One of the institutional goals of the University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue is to develop social awareness, responsibility and accountability among stakeholders anchored on instruction, research and production (Amparado, 2013). Guided by this institutional goal and one of the university's research agenda which is nutritional studies, the researchers would like to ascertain the feasibility of establishing a breakfast club which will address the nutritional needs of students who are not able to take this important meal.

Related Studies

Various studies have been conducted on nutrition and breakfast. A 1981 survey of 3,309 students in grades 3-12 enrolled in 135 Louisiana schools was used to determine their meal and snacking patterns. The data were analyzed according to three grade divisions: elementary, 3-6; junior high, 7-8; and senior high, 9-12. An analysis of variance was computed with grade division as the independent variable. Students' responses to questions concerning the consumption of meals, snacks and vitamin supplements, and tasting new, unfamiliar or disliked food were the dependent variables.

A majority of students consumed three meals daily; however, breakfast was frequently skipped. Breakfast was usually eaten at home; 15% ate the school breakfast. Most students consumed the school lunch; many reported tasting new, unfamiliar or disliked food as part of these meals. Students snacked, most doing so in the afternoon. Students in grades 9-12 consumed significantly more snacks than their counterparts. Many snacks were purchased at school, primarily from a concession stand. Almost 50% took a vitamin supplement (Singleton & Rhoads, 1982).

While the large disparity between the participation rates in school breakfast and lunch programs suggests the possibility for improvement, a decade of efforts to increase participation in the school breakfast program by child nutrition advocates have resulted in only moderate gains and the lack of larger increases has remained a puzzle. The stigma of having to ask for free meals has frequently been hypothesized to be a major barrier, and providing universally free meals has been proposed as a way of increasing participation by removing this stigma by having all children eat for free (Murphy, Pagano, Nachmani, Sperling, Kane, & Kleinman, 1998).

Other studies also mention some of the challenges faced by families on nutrition. Ocariza & Amparado (2016) who studied the knowledge and practices of mothers on nutrition revealed that there were challenges on nutrition practices in terms of food selection, preparation, and feeding. To overcome nutrition problems in rural areas, nutrition education for mothers should include knowledge and practices that focus on low cost, flavorful, nutritious foods, and ample water supply.

Objectives

This quantitative descriptive study assessed the needs of students for breakfast with the aim of establishing a breakfast club in the university.

Methods

This study was conducted among 475 students of the University of Cebu Lapu-Lapu and Mandaue, Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines. The study employed the descriptive, quantitative approach. A researcher-made questionnaire was used to gather data. Data collection was done from January 2016 to December

2016. Treatment of data used were simple percentage, weighted mean, and sum of ranks.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study. Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were female (55.2%), college level (76.2%), and residents of Lapu-Lapu City (54.5%).

Based on table 2, the students do not take breakfast before going to school (63.6%). If food is available at home, they prefer to take their breakfast from 6:00 AM to 7:00 AM (21.9%).

Table 4 presents the food items and beverages which they prefer for breakfast. Only 4 items are moderately preferred. This includes: one glass of water; one piece of egg (boiled, scrambled or sunny side up); one glass of milk or hot chocolate drink; and one piece of banana or any kind of fruit equivalent to 60 grams. On the 5th spot is 1 cup of rice or its equivalent (less preferred).

Table 1

Profile	F	%
Gender		
Male	213	44.8
Female	262	55.2
Total	475	100
Level		
College	362	76.2
Senior High School	108	22.7
Basic Education	5	1.0
Total	475	100
Location		

Cebu City	9	1.9
Mandaue City	115	24.2
Lapu-Lapu City	259	54.5
Cordova	38	8.0
Consolacion	39	8.2
Liloan	12	2.5
Danao	3	0.6
Total	475	100

Table 2

Do you take breakfast before going to school?	F	%
Yes	302	63.6
No	173	36.4
Total	475	100

Table 3

Preferred breakfast time	F	%
5:00-6:00 AM	60	12.6
6:00-7:00 AM	277	58.3
7:00-8:00 AM	76	16.0
8:00-9:00 AM	62	13.0
Total	475	100

Based on the comments and suggestions of the respondents, students would like the breakfast club to be implemented at least two to three times a week. Some students believe that the free breakfast will provide them energy and will improve their health

status. Others shared that the free breakfast will help them in their classes to be more attentive to lectures and discussions.

Table 4

Food Items and Beverages	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1 cup of oatmeal or its equivalent	2.29	Less Preferred
1 cup of rice or its equivalent	2.47	Less Preferred
1 bowl of congee	2.28	Less Preferred
Small piece of red and yellow vegetables equivalent to 60 grams	2.43	Less Preferred
Green leafy vegetables equivalent to 50 grams	2.35	Less Preferred
One piece of banana or any kind of fruit equivalent to 60 grams	2.52	Moderately Preferred
One piece of egg (boiled, scrambled or sunny side up)	2.53	Moderately Preferred
One piece of hotdog or sausage	2.40	Less Preferred
Small slice of fish equivalent to 100 grams	2.39	Less Preferred
Small cut of pork, chicken or beef equivalent to 100 grams	2.44	Less Preferred
One glass of milk or hot chocolate drink	2.53	Moderately Preferred
One glass of fresh fruit juice	2.43	Less Preferred

One glass of water	2.59	Moderately Preferred
One glass of fermented juices	2.29	Less Preferred

Legend:

3.25-4.00	Highly Preferred
2.50-3.24	Moderately Preferred
1.75-2.49	Less Preferred
1.00-1.74	Not Preferred

Respondents also shared some of the challenges that they encounter related to breakfast. Some respondents claimed that the daily allowance given by their parents is enough for transportation and one to two meals (lunch and/or dinner). There were also instances when they are forced to use their allowance to buy for school supplies and other school-related expenditures such as class projects and laboratory activities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, there is a need to establish a breakfast club in the university. This program shall support the nutritional requirements of students to help them excel in class. Food preferences and breakfast time shall be considered in the implementation of the program.

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