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Effect of food environment on urban dwellers’ dietary diversity in southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

Unhealthy diets and bad consumption patterns are at the root of all forms of malnutrition. There is a shift from the consumption of micronutrient-rich, less dense energy foods such as vegetables and fruits to dietary intakes of micronutrient-poor, energy-dense foods. Food environment has emerged as a powerful influence on individuals’ eating patterns, food choices, and diet quality. In the urban and peri-urban communities, the availability of retail outlets with wide variety of affordable and nutritious food and its accessibility plays a significant role in consumer dietary choices and adoption of a balanced diet. The study seeks to identify the true effect of food environment on urban dwellers’ dietary diversity in Southwest Nigeria. Primary data on consumers and retailers characteristics will be collected, given their role in the food environment, and analyzed. A linear regression model will be used to identify the relationship between dietary diversity and food environment. Other tools to be employed include: Market-level diversity score and Household dietary diversity score. The expected result will reveal a positive relationship between adequate food environment and quality of household diet. The study is expected to provide insight for both public and private sector policymakers to formulate policies that will create a healthy food environment for the populace. This will inform policies aimed at (i) increasing the availability/promotion of healthy food and drinks (i.e., nutrient-rich, fresh or minimally processed foods), (ii) decreasing the availability/promotion of unhealthy food and drinks (i.e., energy-dense nutrient-poor foods, sugar-sweetened beverages), and (iii) improving the nutritional quality of food available within the food supply chain, most especially particular processed foods and out-of-home meals.

Keywords: Dietary diversity, food environment, market-level diversity score, household dietary diversity score