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Unlocking nutritional frontiers: Analysing household diet quality and health outcomes in Nigeria

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Abstract

Diet quality has been identified as an immediate cause of malnutrition and a significant contributor to the global burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Thus, understanding the composition of diet quality and the extent to which it aligns with standard food-based dietary guidelines is crucial in promoting the health and overall wellbeing of households. This study examines the impact of household diet quality on health outcomes in Nigeria, utilising 2018/2019 General Household Survey data. Employing various techniques, including Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women (MDDW), Food Group Diversity Score (FGDS), Global Dietary Recommendation (GDR) score and the Probit model, the research assesses diet composition and its alignment with dietary guidelines.

Findings indicate prevalent consumption of grains, plantains, roots, tubers, meat, fish, poultry, other vegetables, and pulses, while dark green leafy vegetables and eggs are less consumed. The average GDR score is 10.5, reflecting halfway adherence to WHO recommendations. Urban households exhibit a slightly higher GDR score (10.66) than rural counterparts (10.50). Urban diets, rich in health-protective foods, also feature elements that contribute to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Key drivers of diet quality include sex, marital status, education, total expenditure, and social class. The study shows that improved diet quality, estimated using the GDR score, significantly reduces the risk of NCDs in adults and lowers the prevalence of stunting among under-five children. These findings emphasise the need for policies and interventions to promote household diet quality in Nigeria. Targeted interventions and campaigns should be designed to promote healthier dietary choices and reduce the consumption of less healthy foods, especially in urban areas with a higher prevalence.

Keywords: Diet quality, dietary guidelines, GDR score, NCDs, stunting