

AWARENESS AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS OF DIETARY MOTIFS OF SELECTED CHRISTIANS IN ILISHAN-REMO, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

To a large extent, the decision on what to eat at a given time results from a variety of assumptions. Christians share a diversity of parlance in relation to dietary motivation and choices all stemming from certain biblical convictions and other socio-economic factors. However, while individual Christians are free to make their daily dietary choices, these choices are not devoid of adverse implications. From an empirical viewpoint, the study examined the various assumptions that inform the dietary habits of Christians in Ilishan-Remo, their awareness of diet-related health risks, the implications of certain dietary habits to their health, and possible ways of combating such challenges for healthy living. Finally, awareness of the possibility of certain sea creatures being carriers of some infections that could adversely affect human health is a pointer to those who eat a variety of shell fish. This is imminent because although the effect of some of these infections may seem insidious, they hinder total wellbeing and could culminate into either degenerating health conditions or terminal diseases.

Keywords: *Awareness, dietary motifs, Christians, Health implications*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Christians have various assumptions that inform their dietary choices. This is not unconnected with the fact that there are basic cultural or religious norms that shape how people think or behave in a given community. Culture, economic conditions, social status, geographical location, availability of certain species, religious inclination and beliefs, personal choices, and many others are assumptions that influence the dietary habits of individuals or communities. Although such assumptions or motifs may seem light on the surface, they, with time, result into suppositions which sometimes make their subjects predisposed to certain dietary habits. While this might not be wrong in itself, the contemporary health challenges intrinsic in dietary-related habits calls for a rethink.

In the context of a religious debate, there is no doubt one's religious affiliation could inform his or her choice of food. This is imminent given the fact that the Old and New Testaments contain certain texts that prescribe what kind of food to eat (Genesis 1:29), what to add (Genesis 9:3), distinctions between the clean and unclean (Leviticus. 11, Deutronomy. 14), and apparent 'permission' to eat what seems forbidden (Acts 10, 1Corinthians 17, 1Timothy 4:1 - 5, etc.). But it is not always possible to distinguish between prohibitions which have cultural reasons. While cultural patterns are influenced by the environment and so vary from one region to another, religious patterns of behavior tend to have a much wider geographical spread and are followed by groups who have otherwise different traditions. However, religious motives may sometimes be entangled with cultural

motives. For instance, Hindus do not eat beef and this is both a religious prohibition and something rooted in their culture; Christians understanding of the dietary laws also determine whether they follow the restrictions or feel free to eat everything.

According to Onansanya (2004), Ilishan-Remo is one of the first five towns (Akarigbo, Elepe, Alalisan, Alara and Alado) that resulted from the migration from Iremo quarters in Ile-Ife between 1400 and 1438 A.D, and one of the 33 towns made up of the ethnic group called Remo in Yoruba land popularly called Remo metalelogbon. Ilishan Town is in Ikenne Local Government under Remo Division of Ogun State. It is said to be the fourth largest town among the thirty three towns in Remo land. Ilishan is situated sixty eight kilometres North West of Lagos, sixty kilometres South West of Ibadan and approximately sixty kilometres away from Abeokuta, the Ogun State Capital.

It is slightly evaded by Lagos Ibadan Express Way from Sagamu junction by eleven kilometres. The Sagamu-Benin Express way runs through the Ikenne end of the town. Previously surrounded by virgin forests, Ilishan Remo appears to be the most centrally located town in the heart of Remo land, even though politically it is part of Remo North of Remoland. Because of its shape, almost two thirds of its population congested at the center of the town. Though culturally active, the community is highly religious. Majority of its people are Christians. There are also Muslims whose origin is linked with migration from Ijebuland, and adherents of indigenous religion. It has a good number of public and private educational institutions which include a University. Small scale businesses flourish in the community and a good number of the people are farmers.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the survey design. Data were collected using questionnaire and personal interviews aimed at evaluating the knowledge, attitude and perception of Ilishan-Remo Community on the various assumptions that inform their dietary habits in the context of diet related health risks. A total of 250 copies of structured questionnaire were distributed and at the end 215, that is 86% were collected. Responses are rated on percentage using descriptive statistics. Further, 20 individuals selected from the different facets of life (occupation, experience, vocation, Religion, denomination, among others) were interviewed in relation to the different segments of the study. The interview reports are used to strengthen the data analysis where clarifications or details were required.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Information: About 54.9% of respondents were male, while 45.1% were women. This is a somewhat even representation of both sex sufficient for the required data in this study. On their age, 65.1% of the respondents comprised of people aged 16 - 30, respondents within 31 - 45 were 22.3%; those within 46 - 60 years were 12.1%, while 61 years and above constituted less than 1%. Respondents with O' Level and any other class beyond O' Level (Diploma, National Certificate in Education, Masters and so on) had the highest representation of 44.6% and 46.0% respectively, while those below O' level

were 9.3%. Christians constituted 90.7% of respondents; Islam 7.9%, and traditional religionist, 1.4%. In relation to occupation, 47% of the respondents were students. Civil servants, businessmen and women, and farmers were 18.6%, 16.3% and 14.9% respectively. Others such as technicians constituted 3.2%. About 63% of the respondents were Yoruba followed by the Igbo 23.3%; Hausa 4.2%, and others: Rivers, Edo/Delta and other tribes, 8.8%.

From the foregoing, there appears an even representation sufficient for adequate data collection for this study. First, there was an even representation of both sexes in the study. The age distribution has much concentration on people from 16 to 30 years. This group is the most active age that represents the contemporary generation. In fact this group could stand in direct opposition with the rest.

The above result is responsible for the result in relation to their educational status and occupation respectively. Further, there was an overwhelming participation of Christians. This is no doubt because the study is Bible-based. Being a Yoruba community, there was maximum representation of the host tribe. However, being a heterogeneous community, the views of other tribal members of the community were sought to enhance wholesome evaluation. This perception is also evident in the interviews.

Knowledge and Perception of the Applicability of Biblical Dietary Laws: In dealing with the knowledge and perception of the applicability of the dietary laws, as evident in the Bible, 87% of respondents acknowledged their awareness of the laws of clean and unclean animals in the Bible. 8.8% were not sure, while 4.2% disagreed with that there are such laws. Further, 67.9% accepted that the biblical dietary laws are applicable to both Jews and contemporary Christians; and 12.6% did not, while 19.5% were not sure. About 65.1% of the respondents thought the dietary laws are for them personally. On the contrary, 23.7% believed it is not for them and 11.2% were not sure. To 55.8% of the respondents, Christians are not free to eat all kinds of meat and fish God has created.

Although this appears to represent a high percentage, it is inconsistent with the affirmative responses as evident in the overwhelming knowledge of respondents on the laws of clean and unclean animals and their affirmation that biblical dietary laws are applicable to them personally. On the other hand, 32.6% agreed while 11.6% were not sure. Evidently, 88.8% said they do not eat animals like snake, toad or frog. About 7.9% said they do, while 3.3% were undecided. 86% of the respondents affirmed that lizard, cockroach, and ants are not good for food; 7.5% said they are good, while 6.5% were not sure. In relation to possible limitations, 87% of the respondents affirmed that health consciousness is a major reason for not eating everything God has created; 8.8% disagreed, while 4.2% were not sure.

A close look at the findings of this study show that Ilishan-Remo Community has high knowledge of the dietary laws as evident in the Bible. This is evident in the affirmative response of 87% of the respondents. The percentage that were either not aware or not sure could be normal of any given Community. Following such knowledge of our subject matter, the study also reveals the perceptions of respondents on the applicability of these dietary laws especially among contemporary Christians. Evidently, 67.9% agreed that

these laws are applicable to both Jews and Christians. In other words they join the poll of scholars like Moskala (2000), Hamilton (1993), and Loughran (1999) who believe the dietary laws are still applicable among contemporary Christians.

For the purpose of clarity and even classification such assumption is henceforth referred to as the Dietary Law Concept. About 12.6% of the respondents disagreed arguing that the dietary laws were for the Old Testament (OT) times as required of the ancient Israelites. This view is based perhaps on some Christian understanding that the dietary laws have been abrogated by Christ as implied in New Testament (NT) texts in the teachings of Christ (Mark 7:15; Acts 10:9-16) and in the teachings of Apostle Paul (Romans 14:1-33; I Timothy 4:1-5) among others. This group therefore carries the assumption classified as the Freedom Concept and scholars like Harris (1987), Jordan (1992), and Morrison (2007) hold this view. The rest, 19.5%, appeared undecided probably due to ignorance.

However, the progression seems to convey a contradiction because while 67.9% affirmed that the dietary laws may be applicable to both Jews and Christians, only 65.1% personalized such affirmation. About 2.8% may have changed their mind while about 8.3% of the group that appeared doubtful in seems to have joined the Freedom Concept. Such perceived adjustments may not be unconnected with the human perception that tries to avoid certain levels of commitment. A further test of the respondents' commitment to these assumptions shows another variation as evident in the fact that only 55.8% affirmed that Christians are free to eat all kinds of meat and fish as opposed to the previous 67.9% and 65.1% who accepted the applicability of the dietary laws to both Jews and Christians and personalized as seen earlier. On the other hand, adherents of the Freedom Concept rose to 32.6% with respondents affirming the Christians' belief that everything God created is good for food.

By implication, the 32.6% follow a literal understanding of Genesis 9:3 and I Timothy 4:1 - 5 which seems to suggest that Christians are free to eat everything. However, the quick reverse in the respondents' viewpoints where 88.8% affirmed they do not eat animals like snake, toad or frog, and in another occasion where 86% disagreed with the view that creeping things like lizard, cockroach, and ants are good for food, seems ironical if not oxymoronic. It appears incomprehensible and thoughtless to think anyone can eat everything that moves. One of the respondents argues that everything is good for food that she can even eat vulture. But when confronted with the choice of cockroach as food she reverted her decision.

Similarly, there is an overwhelming proof that one major reason why the Freedom Concept is not tenable is that of health risk. Health is wealth. Some animals are poisonous and therefore not good for food. The foregoing suffices to conclude that the phrase 'every moving thing that lives shall be food for you' in Genesis 9:3 must be understood not in the context of all that God created which the Hebrew text rendered very good (Genesis 1:31); the freedom to eat all moving things after the flood without restrictions, or in the context of freedom as obtained by Jesus Christ through His death on the Cross, but rather within the context of what God has provided for food as evident in the instruction to Noah in Genesis

7:2. There are various reasons why people in Ilishan-Remo cannot eat every moving thing. And these reasons although sometimes denied ensue from the fact that naturally no one can practicably eat of every moving thing that lives without exceptions.

Personal Motivation on Dietary Choices: The study further explores the frequency and personal motivations of respondents' dietary choices. First, 62.3% of the respondents affirmed that they did not eat meat every day; 33.5% ate every day, while 4.2% were not sure. About 59.5% did not eat fish every day; 34.4% ate every day, while 6.1% were not sure. Also 63.7% said they do not eat meat once in a week. By inference it is either they ate more than once a week but not every day or they ate sparingly. About 21.4% ate every day, while 14.9% were undecided. Again, 76.3% said they buy meat anytime they wanted it. This may not be unconnected with its availability and/or affordability.

Such is not the case with 12.6% that disagreed and the 11.1% that were not sure. About 87.9% of the respondents said they understand that fish and meat are rich in protein; 7.9% disagreed, while 2.8% were not sure. Further, 51.6% believed the absence of meat or fish in their food is discouraging. It seems the presence of such nutrients is a motivation during meal time. About 42.3% thought otherwise, while 6.1% remained undecided. Relating personal ego to diet, 61% believed the absence of fish or meat in their food is not an insult. Conversely, 31.6% said no while 7.4% were not sure.

Without doubt, people have a diversity of dietary motivations. This segment examines the consumption frequency of fish and animal food in relation to its place as motivation for daily food choices. On the one hand, it serves to evaluate the relevance of animal products in the daily diet of Ilishan Community which will serve as a benchmark for measuring the degree of its corresponding health risks. As evident in the data analysis, 33.5% of the respondents ate meat on daily basis while 34.4% ate fish every day. About 21.4% ate meat once a week. The affirmative response of respondents who said they buy meat anytime they wanted constituted those who ate either occasionally or sparingly. From the foregoing, it is evident that only about one-third of the respondents ate meat and fish on daily and weekly basis. Those who ate sparingly or as occasion demands constituted two-third of the respondents.

Although the percentage that ate meat appears lower, yet, in the early years meat was not a regular feature in the dietary choices of the Community. It was not easy to even find meat to buy and people depended much on plant-based food which they knew has high medicinal value. Hunters were the people who had a somewhat regular access to meat. But today, fish and meat are available for people to buy whenever they needed it. There is no doubt that western dietary habits have greatly influenced the Community. For instance, A respondent observes that cooking native food in the house amounts to wastage because the children are only interested in Fast food, Indomie, Spaghetti, bottled drinks and biscuits.

On the other hand, the fact that 76.3% ate either sparingly or occasionally implies that they can actually survive without it. One respondent hinted that they cook meat sometimes just to please their guests. Having attended series of health seminars, he concludes that indeed animal food has diverse health consequences on human health. One of it is that

experts informed them that fast food lowers body defense system exposing it to various attacks. Health researchers Willis (2001) and PamplonaRamplona (2002) submit that as developing countries shift toward the western model of a meat-based diet egged on by television and global marketing, chronic diseases (Nutr, 1996), that are lifestyle oriented are replacing infectious diseases as leading killers. Okoli reports that over 300 Nigerians die of cardiovascular diseases daily.

This is a serious threat to human life and a major issue of concern. By extension therefore, the percentage that eats on daily or weekly basis already stands serious health risk. Those who eat sparingly are not excluded because it is not about the quantity consumed but rather the disease potentiality evident in the fish or meat on the table. The latter is imminent because such dietary habits could result in certain common diseases that shorten the lifespan of humanity. Further, a tour of the Community especially on major market days show the unhealthy manners at which meat and fish which people eat for food are displayed and handled. Many a time, these meat and fish are exposed to flies which having bathed on dirt, perch on them. They contaminated the meat or fish, making them susceptible to diseases which the buyers take home. And most a times these animal products are not well cooked before consumption.

Apart from that, the dirty condition of the slaughter house around the community could be responsible for food contamination. The unsteady nature of light in the Community also puts a strong question mark on how meat is preserved. Whereas the meat sellers are not willing to dispose spoilt remains, they often turn them to suya meat. Such meat is not cooked but rather heavily smoked; and people eat uncooked meat that is perhaps contaminated or infected which eventually results in some health risks either immediately or insidiously. A respondent affirms that one of the reasons he stopped eating red meat is because of the unhygienic manner with which it is being handled at the market, making it susceptible to contaminations and by extension disease potential.

Similarly, another respondent observes that because of poor preservation, some of the dry fish sold in the market are rotten inside with very bad odour. Even after much cooking or boiling, the odour still remains. This result from decay and people ate just for appetite. Further, the study reveals respondents' overwhelming awareness that fish and meat are good sources of protein. Since the discovery of protein as a nutrient class in 1838, human appreciation of protein has grown with time. For many years nutritionists believed that meat, poultry, and fish were the essential sources of protein. Proteins are complex molecules that are made up of molecular building blocks called "amino acids". There are twenty amino acids and nine of them are considered essential, so it is important that we eat foods that contain them.

Fish and meat are rich in protein but they are not the only source of protein. And since their intake could constitute health risks such motivation becomes dangerous and requires a rethink. This caution extends to those who see the absence of meat in their food as both discouraging and an insult respectively. This is expedient because social status could only be sustained as long as one is healthy. Moreover eating one's way to the grave to maintain personal ego is not reasonable. Willis (2001) further affirmed that our eating

habits are more important than we might think, as food also plays a role in causing or relieving conditions which have social implications.

Knowledge of the Essence and benefits of Plant-based Diet in Ilishan-Remo:

Given the perceived danger intrinsic in animal products, the study made further attempt by investigating respondents' knowledge and awareness of plant-based food. The study revealed an overwhelming knowledge of God's original diet for humanity as demonstrated by 83.2% of respondents. While 9.8% were not aware, 7% were not sure. About 53.5% of the respondents affirmed that it was not God's original intention that humanity feed on animals, 29.3% said no, while 17.2% seemed not sure. Further, respondents showed an overwhelming knowledge that plant-based food promotes good health; 6.1% were doubtful, while 5.1% disagreed.

Similarly, 75.8% said they understand that beans and soya milk are rich in protein; 16.3% were not affirmative, while 7.9% were doubtful. About 56.7% of the respondents agreed that food without fish and meat can save humanity from animal and fish-related diseases; about 26.1% held a contrary view, while 17.2% seemed undecided. From a humanitarian perspective, 61.9% affirmed that food without fish and meat will save the lives of millions of animals and fish killed yearly for human consumption; about 22.8% disagreed, while 15.3% were not sure. Again, 41.4% of respondents believed the use of human food to feed animals cannot affect food supply for humanity. On the contrary, about 37.7% thought it is possible, while 20.9% were doubtful.

A review of the findings shows an overwhelming knowledge of God's original diet for humanity as evident by 83.2%. Such knowledge is advantageous in that a rethink of personal diet will not be a strange concept. However, only 53.5% were aware that it was not God's original plan for humanity to kill and eat animal food; 29.3% were not aware while 17.2% were doubtful. Such level of unawareness could result from the effect of an age-long dietary habit (as rooted in the Freedom Concept) which has become a way of life. As evident in the study, respondents in Ilishan Community know God's original food for humanity promotes good health and also has high protein benefits. Bueno (2001) correlates the aforementioned thus:

These foods are nutrient-rich in all the necessary vitamins and minerals. They supply all the protein, carbohydrates, and fatty acids necessary for vibrant health. Because of the high water content of fruits and vegetables, they are 70 to 80 percent water.

The latter by implication serves to meet the protein need of those who depend on meat for such nutrient. Similarly, such positive step will save humanity from animal and fish related diseases as affirmed by 56.7%. The 26.1% that disagreed and the 17.2% that were undecided need enough education on the devastating effect of meat and fish-based diet. For instance, Nutr (1996) hints that the economic burden of chronic disease threatens to overwhelm health services that are already under financial strain. In the United States (US) alone, diet-related diseases, including heart disease, cancer and stroke cost nearly \$180 billion a year in medical expenses and lost productivity. To those who might think Nigeria is safe from this menace, Okoli's (2009) report as earlier mentioned is a serious

issue of concern. Further, Okoye (2009) reports that Nigeria records 9,000 cases of cancer annually. She regrets that 80 percent of the cases are detected late, at which point rapid deterioration had set in and in most cases death occurs as the body finds it difficult to respond positively to treatment; and part of its causes is dietary habits

The intermittent resurgence of animal epidemic is also another area of concern. Such epidemic breaks out perhaps from animal or livestock farms and quickly spreads to others including human beings thereby constituting environmental hazard. In some cases, non consumers could also be affected. In the United States for instance, where technological advancements are obvious, Woolsey (1974) observes that veterinarians face major limitations in animal treatment since they cannot conduct laboratory examinations on each bird, fish or animal before they are slaughtered. This seems to suggest that although with much advancement in technology, especially in meat and poultry inspection, the hazard of infection remains a bane of veterinarians. And no doubt many unidentified animal diseases abound especially in Nigeria where maintenance culture and thoroughness seems to have waned.

Even when the veterinarians do their best those heavy drugs given to animals could adversely affect human health. Evidently, 61.9% consented to the view that the choice of plant-based food will save the lives of millions of animals and fish slaughtered yearly for human food. Those who disagreed, about 22.8%, are perhaps either ignorant of the cruelty that is sometimes involved in the slaughter of these animals or the inhumane attitude towards aquatic life just to feed humanity. At the wake of personal, family, church, societal, or government celebrations such as weddings, burials, Christmas and New Year, the animal kingdom catches cold as thousands of them experience untimely death so that humanity can feel good. Its inhumanness is rooted in the fact that not everyone who eats animal flesh can afford to participate in the slaughtering which definitely involves the taking of life. And as Africans we understand that blood is life (Mbiti, 1991).

Psychologically it appears those who involve in slaughtering these animals with time develop certain sense of disregard even for fellow humans threatening to take life at the wake of little offence. Woolsey (Mbiti, 1991) correlates this view noting that the continuous slaughtering and consumption of animals may have something to do with temper, lust, and other personality problems in human beings. Calvin Dence adds that while a complete vegetarian appears emotionally calm, one who uses animal products gets angry quickly (Dence, 1996). This may not be unconnected with the understanding that most animals are killed in a state of fear. Such state leads to the pouring of adrenaline and other hormones into their systems. Adrenaline is a powerful stimulating agent that raises the blood pressure - it is used by the body to prepare for an emergency. It has been said that if a person could remain really angry long enough, the individual's adrenaline would kill him or her.

Perhaps here is one reason a meat diet has the effect of animalizing the nature of the eater - this could happen consciously or unconsciously over time (Dence, 1996). And if one's field of study, religion, or environment has the capabilities of influencing his or her behaviour, there is no doubt what we eat could also affect how we behave. Hence the

saying "you are what you eat". Knudson (1995) reports that overfishing aided by greed, corruption, poverty and lawlessness has led to untold destruction of marine life. Marine life is slaughtered for markets in the US and Asia, and for foreign exchange and sometimes for little more than gas money. Further, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome estimates that worldwide more than 57 billion pounds of sea life are caught unintentionally and wasted every year. That is more than 200 pounds of dead, discarded marine life for every man, woman, and child in the US.

This is just one-quarter of all annual marine catches on earth and more than double the entire commercial marine catch of the world's largest fishing nation, China (Knudson, 1995). Rice (2009) observes that such cruelty is a resultant of the sweeping technological advances such as radar, sonar, satellite positioning systems, longlines and 40-mile-long driftnets. Through these mechanisms 335-foot freezer trawlers can catch 500,000 pounds of fish in one tow of the net. This she concludes has done a great injustice to individual fish species which struggle with extinction. There are fish cold rooms in Ilishan-Remo where people visit daily for food. And people buy everyday perhaps without adequate understanding of the adverse implications of such habits to the aquatic life. And because of sewage runoff, toxins, among others, fish consumption poses considerable health risk (Rcie, 2009).

Whereas we seem to be careful and committed in the upkeep of local breed birds, goats, ram, cow among others, protecting them from perceived danger and death in the hand of wild animals; whereas we flay up and get infuriated when vehicles or neighbours kill our livestock, probably because we cherish them, we suddenly break such relationship by taking the lives of these creatures ourselves only for the purpose of food and human satisfaction. Such act seems anti-relational and against moral ethics, which must be discouraged. As seen earlier, 78.1% of respondents affirmed that the use of human food to feed animal could lead to shortage of food. Press observes that an increasing percentage of the food we raise is fed to animals rather than directly to people (Alex Press 2000). According to him, in the US, 70% of grain goes to livestock. Worldwide such impact is 36%. In the developing countries like Nigeria, meat consumption is rising as the elite grow richer and emulate western ways.

There are poultry farms in Ilishan-Remo and an unplanned visit to such sites show that these animals like pigs, and birds feed on livestock feed made of grains. Salako, one of the respondents observes that since people do not like local pigs because of their dirtiness, farmers have decided to grow them and this involves much expenditure. These animals are in turn sold at very high prices. Except the grain supply keeps up with both population growth and increasing demand for meat, basic food commodities could necessarily become expensive, and therefore even less accessible to the poor than they are now. And if not for the need for meat in our food, animal domestication which adversely affects grain supply would have been a common practice, especially for commercial purposes.

Knowledge, Attitude, and Prospect on Dietary Choices and Health Implications:
The last segment of the study investigated respondents' knowledge, attitude, and prospect

on dietary choices and health implications. The study revealed that 78.1% of the respondents had the knowledge that certain chemicals are used for both fishing and production of animal food which could be dangerous to human health. About 14.9% disagreed, while 7% were not sure. About 56.7% of respondents accepted being aware that certain diseases which affect humanity result from eating meat or fish; 34.9% claimed ignorance, while 8.4% were undecided. Further, 64.2% were aware of the presence of cancer of the intestine on some of the cows killed for human food. About 18.6% appeared to be unaware, while 17.2% were not sure. Also, 55.8% of respondents affirmed their knowledge that some sea foods like Crayfish are carriers of infectious diseases dangerous to human health. Conversely, 26.5% had no knowledge, while 17.7% were not sure. About 53.5% of respondents said they are aware that shell fish like crayfish feed on marine creatures which could be dangerous to human health; 27.4% claimed ignorance, while 19.1% were doubtful. Further, 54.4% of respondents affirmed they have not been advised by either a doctor or someone else on the dangers of eating fish and/or meat.

On the other hand, 38.6% were affirmative of having been advised, while 7% were undecided. Finally, 53.5% of respondents were of the opinion that knowledge of the dangers of meat and fish to their health is no reason for them to discontinue in the habit; 22.3% were willing to stop, while 24.2% were not sure. From the above data 78.1% of respondents were aware that certain chemicals used for fishing and production of animal food could be dangerous to human health; 14.9% disagreed, while 7% were not sure. Nedley presents the destructive power of prions (Nedley, 1990). Prions are infectious substances found in animal products used for animal feed. They cause several types of transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Diseases (SED) in humans and animals. These diseases are fatal, with no cure. Prions are unlike bacteria or viruses; and they consist of protein only. Incidentally, the immune system does not attack them and their infectious power is not destroyed by sterilizing fluids, freezing, drying, or high temperatures of sterilization.

The shape of the prion protein is slightly different from a normal protein and they produce a chain reaction that causes normal proteins to change shape. The subtle differences allow these proteins to combine into abnormal aggregates that are responsible for the brain changes produced by the malady called Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease (CJD) and other related diseases. CJD is not only found in Britain, but also in Africa. The greatest difficulty in containing the disease, according to Nedley, resides in its long incubation period with physical manifestation occurring at the final stages of the disease. This has indeed become a bane of world health. More to it is that no such study (which will involve the process of dissecting) could ethically be done in humans. This furthers the risk.

On the other hand it has become a common practice for commercial fishing experts to use certain chemicals to enhance mass and rapid catch. Gamalin-20 among others serves to intercept the life of these innocent marine lives for commercial purposes. These chemical substances are dangerous to human health. In the data also, 56.7% were aware of diseases resulting from eating meat or fish while 34.9% and 8.4% were ignorant and doubtful respectively. Gisanrin (2009) and Nwobi (2009), agree that certain animals like

pigs are disease carriers which could be dangerous to human health. To Olaore (2009) the poor health situation of certain animals is a serious pointer that those who eat meat stand certain health risks. Pamplona-Ramplona (2002) submits that red meat contains as much benzopyrene - a cancer producing agent, as 600 cigarettes. And consumption of well-done meat by barbecuing or grilling has been associated with an increase risk of colon, stomach and esophageal cancer (Pamplona-Ramplona, 2002).

As earlier mentioned, chronic diseases like cardiovascular diseases, obesity, heart failure and diabetes have become the bane of the modern world especially as developing countries shift toward western model of a meat-based diet. The data also reflected respondents' substantial knowledge of the dangerous effect of even clean animals like cow, and the disease-prone nature of shell fish. It therefore implies that even those who uphold the Dietary Law Concept also stand a great health risk. Pamplona-Roger holds that often cattle found in slaughter houses, when cut apart reveal some kind of tumours, whether benign or cancerous. Although removed, it is certain that some cancerous cells remain in the lymphatic glands, in the blood or in the other organs.

Many a time some local breeds are only killed or sold the moment it is noticed they are no longer strong. Because the owners do not want to run a loss they sell the affected animal(s) at a low rate and such killer diseases are transferred to human beings who buy for food. Gisanrin (2004) affirms that certain land and sea animals are scavengers and could therefore be dangerous to health. Such awareness is also evident in this study. Shell fish transmit the hepatitis A virus, the "Cholerae vibrio", a microorganism which causes cholera, and other pathogenic microorganisms; and Pamplona-Roger affirms that one out of four cases of toxic infections result from the eating of clams and other small sea creatures. Besides the ecological functions of these sea creatures they contain abundant cholesterol, produce uric acid and are hard to digest (Gisanrin 2004).

Again, 54.4% of respondents said they have not been advised by either a doctor or someone else on the dangers of meat or fish to their health. This implies a high sense of ignorance on the part of the adherents of both the Dietary Law and the Freedom Concepts. This is imminent in the face of the adverse effects of meat and fish consumption as evident in this study. The 38.6% who said they have been counseled suffice to affirm the reality of how conscientious and intentional we needed to be in relation to our dietary choices, especially when such choices could adversely affect our total wellbeing. However, the unwillingness of at least 38.6% to refrain from such dietary habits even in the face of perceived danger is shocking. Only 22.3% were willing to stop eating meat or fish realizing its adverse effects on their body. On the contrary, 53.5% maintained that such awareness is not sufficient for a change in their dietary choice, while 24.2% remained undecided.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By way of conclusion, the paper draws the implications of contemporary dietary habits and their related health risks on Ilishan-Remo. Timely recommendations were also made towards enhancing informed dietary habits and healthy living. Firstly, it is evident that the Dietary Law and Freedom Concepts constitute the assumptions of many in Ilishan-Remo.

Although with certain areas of divergence, these concepts all believe in the inclusion of fish and meat in daily diets. And since there are certified health risks intrinsic therein, it seems plausible to infer that a continuous indulgence could disrupt the desire for healthy living in Ilishan-Remo. Consequently, a plant-based diet is recommended. Addition of egg and dairy products could be considered as an option. Secondly, the fact that 33.5% of the respondents ate meat daily as evident in the study suffices the potentiality of either of the chronic dietary related diseases mentioned in the study. This is heightened by the submission of 31.6 % who believed the absence of meat in their food is unacceptable to their social status. Such inclination to personal ego which tries to sustain societal status could be detrimental. As earlier observed, what we eat could have adverse social implications. It takes one whose health condition does not constitute societal nuisances to fit into the society and among peers. On the other hand, eating sparingly could also result in the same situation because the disease potentiality does not necessarily depend on quantity but rather on the condition of the meat or fish. Hence to eat one's way to the grave seems unreasonable.

Thirdly, in relation to the manner with which meat or fish is handled in the markets coupled with the poor preservation methods occasioned by inconsistent electricity supply, the percentage that eat meat daily and/or sparingly seem to stand some health risk. Therefore the risk involved in such unhygienic conditions could be avoided by depending on plant-based diet. Fourthly, the overwhelming knowledge of respondents on the fact that (1) Plant-based foods promote good health (2) The rich protein content of plant-based diet, in the context of rich vegetation, is an advantage. Therefore, rather than continue in such dietary habits with adverse health implications, intentional effort could be made towards making good use of the rich vegetation in the community.

Fifthly, the daily consumption of meat and fish is made possible through the daily slaughter of fish and animals. Therefore from a humanitarian viewpoint, Ilishan-Remo community could join the host of others in protecting the lives of these creatures. The fact that the taking of life is involved in such fish and meat-based diet remains an issue of concern to humanitarians. Christmas, New Year, Birthday, Burial, and other ceremonies could be celebrated without necessarily taking the lives of these creatures. Sixth, Nigeria is one of the developing countries challenged with poverty. People do not have enough food to eat. Therefore the use of human food to feed animals contributes to food shortage.

Hence, those who have animal poultry in Ilishan community could have a rethink since by implication, their activities seem to sever the poverty condition in the society. Finally, awareness of the possibility of certain sea creatures being carriers of some infections that could adversely affect human health is a pointer to those who eat a variety of shell fish. This is imminent because although the effect of some of these infections may seem insidious, they hinder total wellbeing and could culminate into either degenerating health conditions or terminal diseases.

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