

Food acculturation challenges of non-indigenous students in a metropolitan Nigerian university: A cross-sectional study.

Toluwalope Emmanuel Eyinla* and Israel Olorunferanmi Ajise

Department of Human Nutrition & Dietetics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

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Background:

For students who move away from their home environments to attend university, the adjustment to a new setting often brings significant challenges to food acculturation. The study aimed to identify the food acculturation challenges faced by non-indigenous students at the University of Ibadan, South West Nigeria, and corresponding adaptation strategies.

Methods:

Snowball sampling was used to recruit a total of 155 undergraduate and postgraduate students who were indigenes of regions outside South West Nigeria, but were studying at the University of Ibadan. An interviewer-administered questionnaire was used to elicit data on socio-demographics, food choice-related challenges, and associated coping mechanisms of respondents. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (Version 20) to describe findings and determine statistical relationships among variables.

Results:

Findings revealed that 86.5% of students who had spent less than one year in Ibadan struggled more with dietary adaptation, compared to only 50% among those who had lived there for at least three years ($p = 0.024$). Few students also reported experiencing health issues, such as stomach aches, food allergies, and weight loss, as a result of dietary changes and adjustments in Ibadan. Students also adopted coping strategies such as meal skipping, bringing ingredients from their home state, and monotonous diets.

Conclusion:

Based on these findings, the study concludes that non-indigenous students face substantial food acculturation challenges at the University of Ibadan and

Recommendations:

Relevant institutional policies, including specialized orientation programmes that support sociocultural food integration of non-indigenes to enhance their dietary choices while studying.

Keywords: food challenges, dietary adaptation, food neophobia, Nigeria.

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Corresponding Author: Toluwalope Emmanuel Eyinla

Email: toluemma@ymail.com

Department of Human Nutrition & Dietetics, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

Introduction

Food habits have been described as an integral part of people's culture and are one of the most difficult behaviours for people to change (Reddy and Anitha, 2015; Samuel and Makhani, 2016). For students who move away from their home environments to attend university, the adjustment to a new setting often brings significant and sometimes uncomfortable changes in dietary acculturation (Tam *et al.*, 2017). As posited by Bauch *et al.* (2023), students who migrate to another region or country face peculiar challenges related to food and dietary habits, as they must

often adapt to local cuisines and food customs that differ from those in their local regions. Other constraining factors could be religious restrictions (Meyer-Rochow, 2009), reduced access to choice ingredients (Ziso *et al.*, 2022; Shi and Allman-Farinelli, 2023), and language barriers (Ali *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the meal preferences that university students have to make are highly dictated by economics (Racine *et al.*, 2022). The cost of living is on the rise globally, and most students find it hard to pay for their meals, not to mention nutritious food. When it comes to migrant students, finding ways to cover the cost of food,

tuition fees, accommodation, and other essential needs makes it even harder to cope.

However, due to these challenges, non-indigenous students adopt several strategies and food management plans to enable them to adjust to the new environment. They may embrace local diets and even learn how to prepare local foods to become an integral part of the society they have relocated to (Smith and Khawaja, 2011; Samuel et al 2021). Others may bring foodstuffs from home, though this is dependent on the cost or availability of the items being brought to school (Robertson, 2013). Another coping strategy used by students to solve the problems of financial and time constraints related to food preparation is group cooking, whereby the students split the cost and preparation of the food (Wongprawmas *et al.*, 2022).

Generally, the role of nutrition in assisting students' body conditioning towards health and academic achievements in the university has been established (Lipayon, 2019). Eating habits have been proven to influence their concentration, performance in class, and how well they cope with various pressing challenges of being in university (Reuter *et al.*, 2020). For non-indigenous university students who travel from different parts of the country to go to school in Oyo State, some of them may experience some sort of nutritional shift as they change their living environment.

University of Ibadan (UI), located in the ancient city of Ibadan, Southwestern Nigeria, is one of the largest universities in Africa and is home to a population of diverse university students from different cultural and economic statuses, thus giving it a metropolitan feel (Toyin, 2023). Although students have a wider variety of foods to consider, especially with rapid urbanization which is making "fast foods" becoming common. Dietary acculturation could still pose a problem because others are not used to and/or do not like the local foods (Li *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the diverse cuisine in the city and the peculiar tradition and diet of the Yoruba might pose some challenges to the out-of-state students, especially those from the northern or eastern part of the country who have peculiar dietary choices. Earlier work at the University of Ibadan addressed international students' experiences of unfamiliar cuisine (Samuel et al., 2020). Students arriving from other Nigerian regions represent a related population whose food access and adaptation experiences warrant examination.

This study aimed to describe perceived dietary changes, food-related challenges, and adaptation practices among undergraduate and postgraduate students from outside southwestern Nigeria at the University of Ibadan, and to explore variation by geopolitical zone of origin and duration of residence in Ibadan. The overall expectation is that the university management and other relevant stakeholders

could find significant reasons to provide overall guidance on food choices to non-indigenous students.

Methodology

Study Design

A cross-sectional questionnaire survey was conducted at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, southwestern Nigeria. The study population comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students from Nigerian regions outside the South West.

Study setting

The study was carried out at the University of Ibadan, the oldest university in Nigeria offering degree programs since 1948 and owned by the federal government. It is situated in Ibadan, southwest of Nigeria, and it's an all-encompassing institution that houses over seventeen faculties and various degree courses. The University of Ibadan attracts students from diverse geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, making it a relevant setting for examining food acculturation challenges among students from outside southwestern Nigeria.

Sampling and Sample Size Determination

A non-probability sampling approach was employed through a sampling technique of snowballing to select eligible participants in the study. No formal sample size calculation was performed because participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique. Eligible non-indigenous students were identified through existing student networks, and recruitment began. These participants then referred other eligible students to participate in the study. Recruitment continued until the pool of eligible participants identified through the referral process was depleted and no additional eligible participants were recruited. The sample size was determined based on the availability of eligible respondents, with data collection continuing until data saturation was achieved. A total of 155 respondents completed the questionnaire and were included in the analysis. To reduce information and response bias, the same structured questionnaire was used for all participants at various locations and time periods, and participants were informed that their responses would be held in confidence. Participants were also encouraged to provide honest responses without fear of segregation or judgement.

Eligibility criteria

Inclusion criteria

Male and female non-indigenous University of Ibadan students who were not primarily resident in Ibadan, Oyo State, or any other southwestern state of the country. The

country is categorized based on geopolitical zones into six zones represented in Figure 1

Exclusion criteria

1. Indigenous students in the University of Ibadan
2. Non-indigenous students who have resided for more than three years in any southwestern state
3. Students who were ill or did not consent

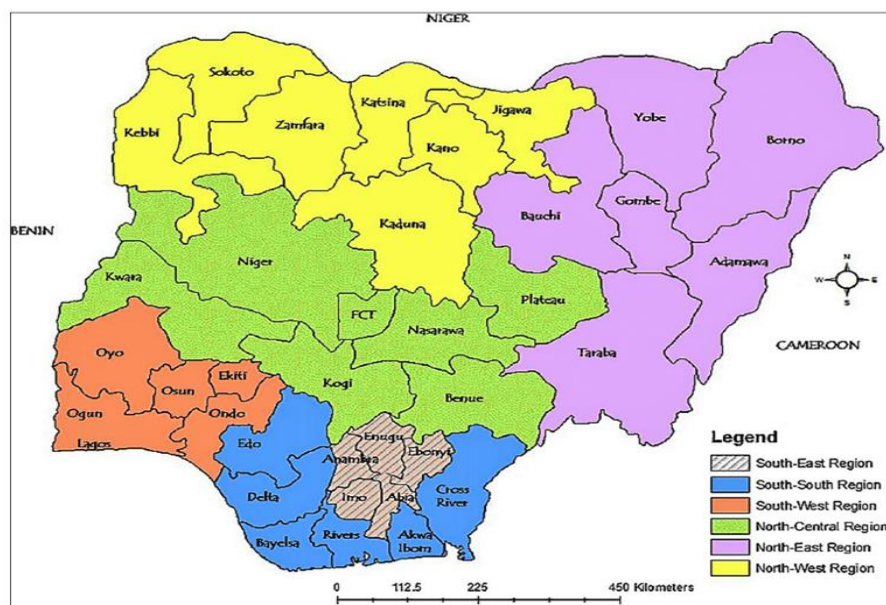


Figure 1: Geopolitical zones in Nigeria

Data collection tool

An interviewer-administered questionnaire was administered in English between Nov 2024 and Jan 31, 2025. The questionnaire underwent expert review and pilot pretesting before the main study. It covered sociodemographic characteristics; dietary habits before and after relocation; food-related challenges; and dietary adaptation practices. Sociodemographic items included age, sex, study level, geopolitical zone, living arrangements, funding source, and duration of stay in Ibadan.

Food-related items addressed perceived dietary change, difficulty accessing familiar ingredients, reduced food intake when home foods were unavailable, perceived affordability compared with home, difficulties observing religious or cultural dietary restrictions, fast-food consumption attributed to financial or time constraints, and self-reported health problems following dietary change. Adaptation items assessed incorporation of local foods, comfort preparing and consuming local dishes, perceived dietary diversity, eating with friends from other cultures, bringing foodstuffs from home, and food-related homesickness.

The reported comparisons with diets before relocation were retrospective self-reports collected at a single survey

encounter. Perceived increases in dietary diversity were responses to a questionnaire item and were not equivalent to a dietary diversity score. Health complaints were participant reports and were not treated as clinically confirmed diagnoses or evidence of causation.

Data analysis

Data collected were coded and cleaned using both Microsoft Excel version 19 and SPSS, with descriptive statistics summarized through frequencies and percentages. Inferential statistical tests, such as the chi-square test in this study, were used to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between categorical variables. Percentages for specific health complaints used the 31 students reporting health problems as their denominator; percentages for the affordability item used its 95 tabulated responses. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Study variables

The main independent variables examined in the inferential analyses were geopolitical zone of origin and duration of stay in Ibadan. Geopolitical zone was categorised as North Central, North East, North West, South East, and South

South, while duration of stay was categorised as less than one year, one year, two years, and three years.

The primary outcome was change in dietary habits following relocation to Ibadan, assessed as a binary variable (Yes/No). Other food-related outcomes included difficulty accessing familiar ingredients, reduced food intake due to the unavailability of home foods, perceived food affordability in Ibadan compared with the home state, frequency of fast-food consumption due to financial or time constraints, health issues associated with dietary changes, and difficulty adhering to religious or cultural dietary restrictions.

Secondary outcomes relating to dietary adaptation included attempts to incorporate local Yoruba foods, comfort with preparing and consuming local dishes, perceived changes in dietary diversity, eating with friends from different cultural backgrounds, bringing foodstuffs from home, and food-related homesickness.

Categorical variables were measured using predefined response categories and summarised using frequencies and percentages. Associations between geopolitical zone or

duration of stay and selected food-related outcomes were assessed using the chi-square test.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

A total of 161 students were measured for eligibility; 155 students met the inclusion criteria and were confirmed eligible for this study. Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. This result shows that a significant number of students in this sample hail from regions located in the southern part of Nigeria. Specifically, the South-East district and South-South district had the largest numbers, with (31.2%) and (31.8%), respectively, followed by North Central (21.3%), North West (11.0%), and North East (5.2%) of the respondents. Among the surveyed respondents, (47.1%) fall within the 21-25 age range, alongside (43.2%) who are under 20 years old and (9.7%) who are aged 26 years and above.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of non-indigenous students in the University of Ibadan

Variables (N=155)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Geopolitical Zones		
North Central	33	21.3
North East	8	5.2
North West	17	11.0
South East	48	31.2
South South	49	31.8
Age (in years)		
< 20	67	43.2
21-25	73	47.1
≥26	15	9.7
Gender (Sex)		
Male	70	45.2
Female	85	54.8
Place of Residence		
On-Campus	120	77.4
Off-Campus	35	22.6
Study Duration		
Less than one year	52	33.5
One year	51	32.9
Two years	44	28.4
Three years	8	5.2

Study Level

100	52	33.5
200	31	20.0
300	44	28.4
400	8	5.2
700	20	12.9

Studentship Mode

Parent funded	112	72.3
Self-sponsored	32	20.6
Study Grant/Loan	11	7.1

Food challenges

Table 2, (83.9%) of respondents revealed that their dietary patterns changed significantly after Ibadan relocation, while (16.1%) kept their regular dietary habits intact. Among the surveyed students, (61.3%) struggle to locate the same food items they used to consume in their home state, while (41%)

have no trouble finding familiar items in their new environment. Reported experience of health issues was also highlighted with food allergies at (22.6%) along with weight loss at (22.6%), while stomach aches affect (19.4%) and food poisoning affects (16.1%) of the students. Among students surveyed both constipation and diarrhea affected (9.7%) of respondents.

Table 2. Food challenges of non-indigenous students in the University of Ibadan

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Diet changes since move to University of Ibadan		
Yes	130	83.9
No	25	16.1
Difficulty in accessing familiar ingredients		
Yes	95	61.3
No	60	38.7
Reduced food intake because 'home' foods were unavailable		
Yes		
No	86	55.5
	69	45.5
Health issues since changing your diet in Ibadan		
Yes	31	20.0
No	124	80.0
Difficulty in following your religious/cultural dietary restrictions in Ibadan		
Yes	54	34.8
No	101	65.2
Food affordability in Ibadan compared to home		
Cheaper	18	18.9
About the same	26	27.4
More expensive	51	53.7
Recent experience of health issues		
Food allergies	7	22.6
Constipation	3	9.7
Diarrhoea	3	9.7
Food poisoning	5	16.1
Stomach ache	6	19.4
Loss of weight	7	22.6

Associations with food challenges experienced by students across geopolitical zones

The dietary changes among non-indigenous students in Ibadan vary significantly based on geopolitical zones (Table 3). There was a statistically significant relation between the changes in dietary habits with the geopolitical zone ($p < 0.01$) ranging from 64.6% in the South East to 100.0% in the North East. Difficulty accessing familiar ingredients ($p = 0.029$), perceived food affordability ($p = 0.001$), and having time constraints ($p = 0.035$) to consume fast-food were also significantly associated with geopolitical zone. Students from the North East (100%), North West (94.1%), North Central (90.9%), and South South (91.8%) reported higher

rates of dietary change, indicating a major shift in their food consumption patterns after relocating. In contrast, South East students had the lowest rate of dietary change (64.6%).

Associations between food challenges experienced by students and length of stay

Table 4 shows results of associating duration of stay in the University of Ibadan and food-related challenges show that students who have spent less time in Ibadan struggle more with dietary adaptation, as (86.5%) of those who had been in Ibadan for less than a year reported dietary changes, compared to only (50%) of those who had lived there for three years (p -value = 0.024).

Table 3. Association between geopolitical zones and food challenges

Geopolitical zones	North Central (n=33)	North East (n = 8)	North West (n=17)	South East (n=48)	South South (n=49)	p-value
Changes in dietary habits since relocating to University of Ibadan						
No	9.1	0.0	5.9	35.4	8.2	<0.01
Yes	90.9	100.0	94.1	64.6	91.8	
Difficulty in accessing familiar ingredients in Ibadan						
No	42.4%	50.0	11.8	52.1	30.6	0.029
Yes	57.6%	50.0	88.2	47.9	69.4	
Rate of food affordability in Ibadan vs home						
Cheaper	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.6	8.2	0.001
About same	43.5	0.0	29.4	33.3	44.5	
More Expensive	56.5	100.0	70.6	52.1	47.3	
How often students eat fast food due to financial or time constraints						
Always	3.0	12.5	11.8	33.3	20.4	0.035
Never	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3	4.1	
Rarely	39.4	12.5	35.3	18.8	16.3	
Sometimes	57.6	75.0	52.9	41.7	59.2	
Reduced food intake due to lack of home foods						
No	30.3	37.5	29.4	47.9	49.0	0.145
Yes	69.7	62.5	70.6	52.1	51.0	
Health issues experienced due to diet changes in Ibadan						
No	87.9	50.0	82.4	85.4	73.5	0.091
Yes	12.1	50.0	17.6	14.6	26.5	
Difficulty in adherence to religious or cultural dietary restrictions in Ibadan						
No	40.1	9.1	17.6	85.4	87.8	0.681
Yes	59.9	90.9	82.4	14.6	12.2	

Table 4. Duration of stay associations with food challenges experienced by non-indigenous students

Duration	Less than one year (n = 52)	One year (n=51)	Two years (n=44)	Three years (n=8)	p-value
Changes in dietary habits since relocating to Ibadan					
No (%)	13.5	19.6	18.2	50.0	0.024
Yes (%)	86.5	80.4	81.8	50.0	
Difficulty in accessing familiar ingredients in Ibadan					
No (%)	38.5	49.0	36.4	50.0	0.502
Yes (%)	61.5	51.0	63.6	50.0	
Rate of food affordability in Ibadan vs. home					
Cheaper (%)	28.2	29.4	25	37.5	0.119
About the same (%)	23.0	23.5	38.6	25	
More expensive (%)	48.8	47.1	36.4	37.5	
How often students eat fast food due to financial or time constraints					
Always (%)	25.0	15.7	15.9	12.5	0.388
Never (%)	3.8	3.9	0.0	0.0	
Rarely (%)	17.3	33.3	34.1	37.5	
Sometimes (%)	53.8	47.1	48.4	50.0	
Reduced food intake due to lack of home foods					
No (%)	48.1	45.1	31.8	62.5	0.087
Yes (%)	51.9	54.9	68.2	37.5	
Health issues experienced due to diet changes in Ibadan					
No (%)	78.8	74.5	86.4	87.5	0.662
Yes (%)	21.2	25.5	13.6	12.5	
Difficulty in adherence to religious or cultural dietary restrictions in Ibadan					
No (%)	21.2	25.5	86.4	87.5	0.209
Yes (%)	78.8	74.5	13.6	12.5	

Dietary adaptation

In Table 5, a large proportion (78.7%) of respondents have sought to include local dishes in their diets, but (21.3%) have not attempted this modification. The majority of participants (41.9%) said they are now somewhat comfortable with preparing local dishes, while (32.9%) demonstrated higher

comfort. The results show that (12.3%) of student respondents feel uncomfortable, while (12.9%) do not cook any local food at all. In the study, (54.8%) of respondents noted no significant dietary changes since relocating to Ibadan, while the remaining (45.2%) witnessed increased dietary diversity.

Table 5. Dietary adaptation of non-indigenous students in the University of Ibadan

Variables (N=155)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Have you tried adapting the local foods into your diet?		
Yes		
No	122	78.7
	33	21.3
How comfortable are you with preparing and consuming local dishes?		
Very comfortable	51	32.9
Somewhat comfortable	65	41.9
Not comfortable	19	12.3
I don't prepare local dishes	20	12.9
Has your diet become diverse in Ibadan?		
Yes	70	45.2
No	85	54.8
Do you eat with friends from different cultures?		
Always	41	26.5
Never	17	11.0
Rarely	43	27.7
Sometimes	54	34.8
Do you bring local foodstuffs from home?		
Yes	102	65.8
No	53	34.2
Do you experience homesickness related to food?		
Yes	96	61.9
No	59	38.1

Discussion

This study evaluated the dietary acculturation of non-indigenous students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, seeking to understand the relevance of the impact of their food environment, financial constraints, and cultural background on their eating habits. Students who moved to Ibadan encountered major changes in their dietary patterns as they found it difficult to access familiar food items, while their eating patterns changed and their food varieties decreased. Some students experienced food neophobia as they refused to taste the local dishes because they were worried about unfamiliar tastes, safety, and cultural differences. These findings align with Almoraie *et al.* (2024), who discovered that university students undergo major dietary shifts following their move to higher institutions. Similarly, Wright *et al.* (2021) reported that students

studying abroad alter their food choices due to the inaccessibility of their cultural foods.

Relocation changes the setting in which food decisions are made. Students may need to identify acceptable vendors, learn where ingredients are sold, and fit food preparation around academic schedules. Research in Oslo identified price, variety, and the social context of eating as barriers to maintaining preferred diets (Bauch *et al.*, 2023). This broader perspective is relevant to Nigerian discussions of mobility, including “japa”, which refers to international outmigration (Okunade and Awosusi, 2023). The present study concerns relocation within Nigeria, however, and cannot establish the experiences of Nigerians studying abroad. Its relevance lies in showing that food adjustment may also arise across regions within one country. This is similar to the findings of Papadaki and Scott (2002), whose research observed that Greek students in Glasgow decreased

their intake of fresh fruits, vegetables, and protein-rich foods, but increased their alcohol, snacks, and soft drink consumption.

Duration of stay and specific food-related challenges (e.g., difficulty accessing familiar ingredients, reduced food intake, adherence to religious dietary restrictions, and health issues due to diet changes) were associated, which suggests that students gradually adapt over time, either by incorporating the local *Yoruba* foods into their diet, or finding alternative food sources, or learning to cook their indigenous meals. Overall, newer students in this study faced food challenges, while those with longer exposure to the town's food environment tended to adjust better, reducing the impact of dietary change on their nutrition and well-being. This study's findings about students avoiding new food align with the results recorded by Olabi *et al.* (2009), who found that Asian students studying at English institutions showed stronger food-neophobic behaviors than European students, while their food avoidance increased as they spent more time in England. This highlights the importance of cultural food integration programs to help students transition more smoothly into their new food environment.

The lower reported frequency of dietary change among students in the three-year category could reflect greater familiarity with local foods, access to established suppliers, or changes in how students recall their earlier diets. It should not be interpreted as proof that food-related difficulties resolve with time. The three-year subgroup included only eight students, the duration groups comprised different individuals, and difficulty finding familiar ingredients did not decrease consistently across categories. Cohort differences, financial resources, and previous exposure to Southwestern foods could also influence these patterns.

The state of origin defined by the geopolitical zones showed an association with acculturation, thus highlighting a differing impact on students from certain regions, particularly the far North, who faced greater dietary adjustments due to the availability of unfamiliar foods, cultural preferences, and food neophobia. Regional variation may partly reflect differences between foods commonly encountered before and after relocation. National household data identify frequent cereal consumption in the North East and North West and differences in root, tuber and plantain consumption across zones, while also showing considerable dietary overlap (NBS 2023). Agroecological conditions and food supply may contribute to such differences, but their effects on these students were not measured. Differences in the flavour, texture, or seasoning of particular dishes are plausible influences on acceptance and deserve direct investigation. However, the national survey records spice and condiment consumption across all

zones; it does not measure pungency or individual tolerance of strongly seasoned dishes (NBS 2023).

Some of the health challenges faced by the out-of-state students include food allergies, constipation, diarrhoea, food poisoning, stomach ache, and weight loss. Health problems were reported by 31 students, representing 20.0% of the sample. Reports of allergy, food poisoning, gastrointestinal symptoms and weight loss warrant attention, but they cannot be attributed to acculturation on the basis of this design. Clinical confirmation, timing, duration, prior illness and measured weight change were not established in the reported results. Multiple explanations remain possible; the findings do not identify a particular dish, ingredient or regional cuisine as harmful. Food-related homesickness, reported by 61.9%, adds a social dimension to the findings. Familiar meals can carry associations with family routines, belonging and comfort. Brown *et al.* (2010) found that home-country food held emotional and social meaning for international students. In Ibadan, homesickness may help explain continued demand for foods from home even among students willing to try local dishes. It should not be interpreted as a psychiatric diagnosis, nor should maintaining familiar meals be treated as evidence that a student has failed to adapt.

The research participants in the present study noted that their preference for local soups and sauces consumption and tuber intake declined while they shifted to instant noodle options or bread and rice-based food items that are conveniently available in Ibadan. The available results do not quantify intake of fruit, vegetables, protein-rich foods, or total energy. They therefore cannot support a conclusion that these food groups declined after relocation. Relevant international evidence illustrates possible, but non-uniform, dietary responses. Papadaki and Scott (2002) reported lower fruit and vegetable consumption and greater consumption of several snack and beverage items among Greek students after moving to Glasgow. In contrast, Shi *et al.* (2024) described increased access to dairy and animal-protein foods alongside difficulties obtaining vegetables and traditional foods among students in Australia. These comparisons suggest that the nutritional direction of adaptation depends on the foods and resources available. Repeated dietary assessment would be needed to determine which changes occurred in Ibadan and whether they improved or reduced diet quality.

Additionally, economic constraints proved to be an essential factor when deciding what to eat. Many students usually selected unhealthful, affordable meals instead of adequate nutrition. According to None *et al.* (2024), financial difficulties and time constraints caused students to opt for convenient food choices instead of nutritious ones when selecting their meals.

The present study demonstrated that some students resort to bulk purchasing combined with bringing ingredients from home, which was similarly reported by Samuel *et al.* (2020). Affordability offers another explanation for food-related adjustment. Just over half of the 95 respondents represented in the affordability item regarded food in Ibadan as more expensive than at home. This comparison indicates perceived cost pressure; it does not show how prices relate to each student's available budget. In a separate study conducted in 2019 among University of Ibadan medical students, Oladipo *et al.* (2025) reported 64.9% food insecurity and an association with low monthly allowance. That study supports examining financial resources alongside cultural preferences, although its prevalence estimate cannot be transferred to this sample because the populations and measures differ.

Bringing foodstuffs from home may help students retain preferred meals or reduce dependence on unfamiliar local supplies. It may also require money for transport, family support, storage and cooking facilities, so its benefits are unlikely to be equally available to all students. The coexistence of this practice with trying local foods is consistent with selective adaptation rather than complete replacement of home food practices. Brown *et al.* (2010) similarly described students' attachment to familiar meals alongside exploration of new foods and social eating.

Fast-food use may represent a practical response to time pressure, cost, or convenience, but the survey item combined financial and time constraints and cannot distinguish their contributions. The study responses also do not establish an increase from pre-relocation consumption. Substitution with quick meals could either preserve regular eating or reduce diet quality, depending on food composition, portions, and the foods displaced. The results of the findings can be applied to populations with characteristics similar to the study participants, particularly non-indigenous university students in culturally diverse university settings. Although participants were recruited from various geopolitical regions of the country, the study was carried out with students of a particular university and may not necessarily represent the entire food experiences of the non-indigenous students of other Universities or geographical locations in Nigeria. Food environments, socioeconomic status, culture, and familiar foods can vary and affect students' food acculturation experiences. Therefore, caution should be used when generalizing these results to other students.

A strength of the study is its attention to food adjustment among students relocating within Nigeria, including access to familiar ingredients, dietary restrictions, and connection to state of origin. A strength of this paper is its geolocation disaggregation of the findings, which provides a case for

revising orientation policies of metropolitan Universities like UI. Some notable limitations include unequal subgroup sizes, particularly the eight North East students and eight students in the three-year duration category, which restrict the precision of comparisons. The cross-sectional design, retrospective comparison with home diets, and interviewer-administered self-reports also introduce recall and social-desirability bias and prevent causal inference. Another limitation is that, although this study examined cultural and economic influences on diet, it did not extensively explore psychological determinants such as stress, or emotional eating, which have been shown to influence dietary transitions among university students (Shi *et al.*, 2023; Almoraie *et al.*, 2024). Future research employing larger, multi-institutional samples and mixed-method approaches may provide deeper insight into the mechanisms underlying dietary adaptation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that non-indigenous students experience substantial food acculturation in UI, leading to modifications in their eating habits and food consumption patterns. Indigenous students initially struggle but gradually adjust well in their dietary choices, but some students encountered difficulties with food neophobia and monotonous eating patterns. Based on the findings of this study, university bodies, especially those overseeing student welfare, should develop solutions to improve out-of-state student adaptation through better available food options that are familiar and nutritious (Li *et al.*, 2022; Tam *et al.*, 2017). The understanding of individual food preferences, along with accessibility and affordability issues of students by food providers, including suppliers, restaurants, manufacturers, retailers, and supermarkets, can produce advantages across all groups. With this acquired information, the management of the University of Ibadan and other Universities that attract non-indigenes can develop strategies for better food options, as well as structured nutrition education and orientation programmes, which make the food environment more accessible for new students from other regions.

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List of abbreviations

CGPA - Cumulative Grade Point Average

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UI - University of Ibadan

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Author contribution

Clearly describe each author's role.

Toluwalope Emmanuel Eyinla –Conceptualization, investigation, writing of first draft, review and editing
Israel Olorunferanmi Ajise - Conceptualization, methodology, writing of the first draft, writing and revision of the manuscript.

Author biography

Toluwalope Emmanuel Eyinla –Lecturer, Human Nutrition and Dietetics, University of Ibadan.

Israel Olorunferanmi Ajise – Masters student, Human Nutrition and Dietetics, University of Ibadan.

Data availability

Data are available on request from the authors.

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