

THE RELATIONSHIP OF PARENTING STYLE WITH PICKY EATER BEHAVIOR IN CHILDREN PRESCHOOL AGE

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ABSTRAK

Perilaku pilih-pilih makanan atau *picky eater* sering terjadi pada usia pra sekolah. Kondisi ini menyebabkan anak mengonsumsi makanan yang kurang bervariasi. Data awal penelitian terhadap 10 anak pra sekolah di PAUD Nurul Amien menunjukkan bahwa 60% anak adalah *picky eater*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengetahui signifikansi hubungan pola asuh orang tua dengan perilaku *picky eater* pada anak usia pra sekolah di PAUD Nurul Amien Jember. Metode menggunakan analitik observasional korelasi dengan pendekatan *cross sectional*. Populasi penelitian termasuk 52 anak di PAUD Nurul Amien Jember yang berusia 3-5 tahun. Pengambilan sampel menggunakan teknik *simple random sampling* dengan jumlah sampel 46 responden. Instrumen menggunakan kuesioner pola asuh orang tua dan kuesioner perilaku *picky eater*. Analisis data univariat menggunakan distribusi frekuensi dan analisa data bivariat menggunakan uji *chi square* dan koefisien kontingensi. Hasil penelitian didapatkan sebagian besar (54,3%) orang tua menerapkan pola asuh demokratis dan sebagian besar (54,3%) anak tidak mengalami perilaku *picky eater*. Dari analisis *chi-square* didapatkan p value (0,000) < α (0,05) maka H_0 ditolak dan nilai koefisien kontingensi sebesar 0,595 artinya hubungan sedang. Kesimpulannya terdapat hubungan sedang antara pola asuh orang tua dengan perilaku *picky eater* pada anak usia pra sekolah.

ABSTARCT

Picky eating is common amongst pre-school children. This behaviour results in children consuming a limited variety of foods. Preliminary data from a study of 10 pre-school children at the Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre (PAUD) indicated that 60 per cent of the children were picky eaters. The aim of this study was to determine the significance of the relationship between parenting styles and picky eating behaviour amongst pre-school children at the Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre (PAUD) in Jember. The method employed an observational correlational analysis using a cross-sectional approach. The study population comprised 52 children aged 3–5 years at the Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre in Jember. Sampling was conducted using simple random sampling, yielding a sample size of 46

respondents. The instruments used were a parental parenting style questionnaire and a picky eating behaviour questionnaire. Univariate data analysis utilised frequency distributions, whilst bivariate analysis employed the chi-square test and the contingency coefficient. The results indicated that the majority (54.3%) of parents practised a democratic parenting style and the majority (54.3%) of children did not exhibit picky eating behaviour. From the chi-square analysis, a p -value of 0.000 was obtained, which is less than α (0.05); therefore, H_0 was rejected. The contingency coefficient was 0.595, indicating a moderate association. In conclusion, there is a moderate association between parenting styles and picky eating behaviour in pre-school children.

Introduction

Children aged 3–6 years belong to the pre-school age group. This is a period during which children are going through a stage of development and growth known as the ‘golden age’ (1). A child’s emotional, social, moral, linguistic and physical development takes place during this period (2).

A ‘picky eater’ is a term used to describe a child who consumes certain foods whether familiar or unfamiliar to them but refuses to eat them in sufficient quantities. However, they still consume at least one type of food from each food group, such as carbohydrates, protein, vegetables, fruit and dairy (3). There are two causes of children becoming fussy eaters: Firstly, external factors (parental behaviour), which include aspects such as the mother’s employment status, parenting styles, the number of children, the parents’ mealtime routines, delays in introducing new foods, and a history of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary

feeding. Secondly, internal factors (the child’s behaviour), such as the child’s habit of using gadgets, ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), food allergies, sensory sensitivities, and eating disorders (4).

In Indonesia, the prevalence of children who are fussy eaters is 82.2 per cent (5). In East Java Province, 58 per cent of pre-school children in Surabaya are fussy eaters (6). The prevalence of fussy eaters in Jember Regency is 58.1 per cent (7). Preliminary data from a study of 10 pre-school children at the Nurul Amien Early Years Centre in Jember showed that 60 per cent of the children were fussy eaters.

Picky eating in children has negative consequences as it can reduce nutritional intake in pre-school children. Incorrect parenting practices are one of the factors contributing to children becoming picky eaters (8). There is no correlation between picky eating behaviour in children and



negative health or social consequences. However, if not managed appropriately, excessive picky eating can lead to stunted growth. Physical growth is also affected by children who are fussy eaters. This is characterised by a decrease in height and weight or difficulty in gaining weight (9).

A child's feeding habits are linked to their parents' parenting style. Therefore, parents or carers play a vital role in a child's feeding process. The recommended feeding frequency is three times a day (morning, afternoon and evening), along with small but regular snacks. As part of the process of learning about eating, parents must teach their children proper eating habits and good feeding practices so that they can understand and apply them effectively (10).

Method

This study employed a correlational design using a cross-sectional approach. The research was conducted on 24 February 2024 at Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre. Data collection took place on a single day. The study population comprised 52 children aged 3–5 years at Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre in Jember. The sample for this study comprised 46 parents or guardians of children aged 3–5 years at Nurul Amien

Early Childhood Education Centre. Simple random sampling was used. The research instruments were a questionnaire on parenting styles and a 'picky eater' questionnaire, both of which were validated and reliable. This study received ethical approval under number: 58/KEPK/UDS/I/2024. Data collection was carried out through direct observation of the respondents; the researcher explained information regarding the study as well as how to complete the informed consent form and the questionnaires correctly. Once the data had been collected, the researcher analysed the data using SPSS version 22. Statistical analyses included univariate and bivariate analyses. Univariate analysis was used to identify the characteristics of the respondents, whilst bivariate analysis was used to determine the correlation between parental rearing styles and picky eating behaviour using the chi-square test. The basis for decision-making was that if the research hypothesis was accepted—i.e., a relationship was found—the test would proceed to calculate the contingency coefficient.

Results

Table 1. General Information

Characteristics	f	%
Child's age		
3 years	8	17,4
4 years	18	39,1
5 years	20	43,5
Total	46	100
Mother's Work		
private-sector workers	9	19,6
state official	2	4,3
housewife	35	76,1
Total	46	100
Mother's Last Education		
elementary school		
junior high school	7	15,2
senior high school	12	26,1
university	20	43,5
	7	15,2
Total	46	100

Table 2. Specific Data

Category	f	%
Parenting Styles		
Authoritarian	10	21,7
Democratic	25	54,3
Permissive	11	23,9
Total	46	100
Picky Eater Behaviour		
Picky eater		
Not picky eater	21	45,7
	25	54,3
Total	46	100

Table 3. Cross-tabulation of the relationship between parenting styles and picky eating behaviour in preschool-aged children at Nurul Amien PAUD, Jember

Parenting Styles	Picky Eater Behaviour		Total
	Picky eater	Not picky eater	
Authoritarian	8	2	10
Democratic	3	22	25
Permissive	10	1	11
	21	25	46

<i>Chi square test</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. = .000</i>
<i>Symmetric Measures</i>	<i>Contingency Coefficient = .595</i>

It was found that almost all (80%) of the 10 respondents with an authoritarian parenting style exhibited picky eating behaviour, and almost all (90.9%) of the 11 respondents with a permissive parenting style exhibited picky eating behaviour. Of the 25 respondents with a democratic parenting style, almost all (88%) did not exhibit picky eating behaviour, whilst 12% did.

The results of the chi-square test showed a p-value ($0.000 < \alpha (0.05)$); therefore, H_0 was rejected, meaning there is a relationship between parenting styles and picky eating behaviour in pre-school children. This was followed by a calculation of the contingency coefficient, which was found to be 0.595, indicating a moderate association between parenting styles and picky eating behaviour in pre-school children.

Discussion

Parents' educational background is the reason why the majority of parents at Nurul Amien Early Years Centre adopt a democratic parenting style. It is known that the majority of parents are upper secondary school graduates. Parents' educational level



is another factor that can influence their parenting style. Education influences parents' knowledge and ability to understand and meet their children's age-appropriate needs. When it comes to bringing up their children, the majority of parents adopt a democratic parenting style. The researcher suggests that parents lack a proper understanding of their children's age-appropriate needs because the parenting style they employ is not suited to the children's age. It is noted that the majority of children at Nurul Amien Early Childhood Education Centre are aged 5 years. According to child development researchers, the age of 5 is a stage where children are not yet psychologically mature; they are unable to determine their own rights and responsibilities, and remain heavily dependent on their parents or those around them. At this age, parents should adopt an authoritarian and a permissive parenting style. Children need a permissive approach because they are constantly curious about their surroundings; therefore, parents need to give them the freedom to explore their curiosity. However, there are times when parents need to adopt an authoritarian approach so that children can learn discipline and obey the rules.

A child who is not a fussy eater is one

who accepts the food served by their parents and enjoys a varied diet every day. The fact that a child is not a fussy eater is due to appropriate feeding practices, which are closely linked to parenting styles. Parents provide them with nutritious and varied food, such as carbohydrates, protein, vegetables and fruit, whilst setting limits on their consumption of fast food or unhealthy snacks. Furthermore, a child's age can also be a factor in why the majority of children are not fussy eaters. It is known that the majority of children are aged 5 years. The age group most commonly affected by fussy eating is 1–3 years. By the age of 5, children have passed the food exploration phase, so at this age only a small number of children are fussy eaters. Another factor contributing to a child not being a fussy eater is if they have no difficulty swallowing, sucking or chewing food.

Parents who adopt an authoritarian parenting style may force their children to eat certain foods, causing the child to feel pressured or compelled to accept what is offered by their carer or parents; this can lead the child to refuse food and choose foods they have not yet encountered or are already familiar with. In contrast, children raised under a permissive parenting style are given excessive freedom without clear

boundaries.

The lack of boundaries in this permissive parenting style can lead to irregular eating habits and a tendency to eat only foods they like, without regard for variety or a balanced diet. Even under a democratic parenting style, some children still become fussy eaters. This is because parents are overly tolerant of their children, leading the children to feel that their every whim is indulged, which in turn reduces their discipline and obedience towards their parents. The parenting styles adopted by the majority of parents are still considered inappropriate. Some appropriate times for parents to adopt a permissive parenting style are when children are aged 3–5 years, as at this age they are not yet able to understand clear rules. At this age, children are also in a phase where they want to try new things, so parents need to give them the freedom to explore their surroundings. However, there are times when parents must adopt an authoritarian parenting style. This does not mean that parents should be harsh or restrictive towards their children. Rather, an authoritarian parenting style in this context involves a firm approach that instils good discipline in children, particularly when it comes to mealtimes.

Conclusion

1. The research findings indicate that the majority of parents practise a democratic parenting style.
2. The research findings indicate that the majority of children are not fussy eaters.
3. There is a moderate correlation between parenting styles and fussy eating behaviour in pre-school children.

Recommendations from this study:

1. Future researchers should investigate other factors that influence picky eating, such as parents' mealtime routines, the number of children in the family, and gadget usage habits.
2. Parents or guardians should pay closer attention to their children's dietary needs to prevent any adverse effects on their health.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study received a letter of ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee (KEPK) of dr. Soebandi University.

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