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The Influence of Parenting and Food Consumption Patterns on the Selection and Consumption of Healthy Food in Early Childhood

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ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh gaya pengasuhan dan pola konsumsi makanan terhadap pemilihan serta kebiasaan makan makanan sehat pada anak usia dini. Pendekatan penelitian menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan desain survei korelasional. Data dikumpulkan melalui penyebaran kuesioner kepada 139 responden yang dipilih dengan teknik purposive sampling, yang terdiri atas orang tua anak usia dini di beberapa lembaga pendidikan. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan uji statistik korelasi Pearson untuk mengukur hubungan antara variabel gaya pengasuhan (otoritatif, otoriter, dan permisif) dan pola konsumsi makanan terhadap kebiasaan makan sehat anak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang signifikan antara gaya pengasuhan otoritatif dengan kebiasaan makan sehat anak. Sebaliknya, gaya pengasuhan permisif memiliki korelasi negatif dengan pemilihan makanan sehat, sementara gaya pengasuhan otoriter menunjukkan hubungan yang lemah. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya peran orang tua sebagai model perilaku dalam membentuk kebiasaan makan anak sejak dini. Oleh karena itu, intervensi pendidikan dan penyuluhan gizi bagi orang tua sangat diperlukan untuk menumbuhkan kesadaran serta praktik pengasuhan yang mendukung pola makan sehat pada anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci : Anak Usia Dini; Konsumsi Makanan; Kebiasaan Makan Sehat; Pengasuhan

ABSTRACT. This study aims to analyze the influence of parenting styles and food consumption patterns on the selection and eating habits of healthy food in early childhood. The research approach uses a quantitative method with a correlational survey design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 139 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of parents of early childhood children from various educational institutions. Data analysis was conducted using Pearson's correlation statistical tests to measure the relationship between parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive) and food consumption patterns with children's eating habits. The results indicate a significant positive relationship between authoritative parenting and healthy eating habits in children. Conversely, permissive parenting has a negative correlation with healthy food choices, while authoritarian parenting shows a weak correlation. These findings emphasize the crucial role of parents as behavioral models in shaping children's eating habits from an early age. Therefore, educational interventions and nutritional counseling for parents are necessary to raise awareness and foster parenting practices that support healthy eating habits in early childhood.

Keyword : Early Childhood; Food Consumption; Healthy Eating Habits; Parenting

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INTRODUCTION

Healthy food consumption is a crucial choice in maintaining health, especially for early childhood. Choosing healthy food reduces health risks, but personal factors influence decision-making [1]. Healthy food contains the nutrients needed for optimal growth and development in children. Therefore, the habit of consuming healthy food should be instilled from an early age to become a sustainable lifestyle. Eating habits are patterns of food consumption behavior that occur repeatedly [2]. There are two main factors that influence eating habits: extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Extrinsic factors include the natural environment, social, cultural, economic, and religious aspects. Intrinsic factors include motivation, perception, attitude, and preferences, which fall under psychological factors. Psychological factors are related to the internal processing of information within an individual that affects food selection [3]. Additionally, a person's willingness to consume food from healthy brands is also influenced by various factors, including personal preferences, nutritional literacy, as well as nutrition information and labeling, which play a crucial role in helping consumers make healthier decisions and contribute to the creation of a more nutrition-conscious society [4]. Eating habits formed from an early age are influenced by these factors, with parenting styles being one of the main aspects that determine children's food consumption patterns.

In early childhood, healthy food consumption patterns are strongly influenced by parenting styles. Parents who provide education and instill healthy eating habits from an early age will shape better food consumption patterns in their children. Conversely, parenting that pays little attention to nutritional intake may lead children to prefer unhealthy food choices. Mothers play a key role in shaping children's eating habits and food choices [5]. The mother's level of education is an important factor that serves as a basis for decision-making and taking action. The higher the mother's education level, the greater her nutritional knowledge, which influences the selection of food ingredients. A mother's knowledge of good nutrition can be reflected in her ability to provide daily meals for the family and select food for her child's consumption [3]. The level of knowledge and parenting style in providing nutritious food will determine the extent to which children become accustomed to consuming healthy food within the family environment.

Parents play the most important role in determining the healthy food their children consume. They are responsible for providing nutritious food and shaping good eating habits. By setting an example of healthy food consumption, parents can serve as role models for their children in making the right food choices. Research [6] shows that parental food parenting practices, such as increasing portions of vegetables and fruits, limiting access to unhealthy food, and serving as role models for healthy eating, have a significant impact on children's eating patterns. A study by [7] found that healthy eating habits within the family, including shared mealtimes, play a major role in shaping children's eating behavior and helping them develop sustainable healthy eating habits. Research by [8] indicates that parents, especially mothers, have a significant influence on children's food preferences, as they determine food availability and often serve as the primary role models in children's eating patterns. Similarly, a study by [9] highlights

that parents act as primary socialization agents who influence children's food choices through education, the availability of healthy food, and serving as role models in food consumption patterns. Although parents play a crucial role in shaping children's healthy eating habits, modern challenges such as busy schedules and the easy availability of instant food often impact food choices within families.

However, in this modern era, many parents prefer instant foods such as frozen food and instant noodles because they are quicker and easier to prepare. This habit arises due to parents' busy schedules, prioritizing efficiency in daily meal preparation. Unfortunately, excessive consumption of instant food can have negative effects on children's health. Overconsumption of instant food can lead to addiction and adverse health impacts, making it necessary to impose limitations. Restricting instant food consumption supports brain development, intelligence, and overall health [10]. Research by [11] indicates that early consumption of ultra-processed foods contributes to an increase in abdominal obesity among children, highlighting the need for effective strategies to prevent excessive intake of these foods. Similarly, a study by [12] found that a high intake of processed foods is associated with insufficient micronutrient intake, which can negatively impact children's growth.

Moreover, for working parents, food choices are often based on availability and ease of preparation. They tend to prioritize convenient and fast food options to accommodate their limited time. This can lead to children consuming food that is less nutritious and high in additives more frequently. Research by [13] indicates that economic factors and the availability of food in markets or stores significantly influence parents' food choices for their children, especially in low-income families. A study by [14] found that social and environmental factors, including the accessibility of healthy food stores, also affect family food consumption patterns in daily meal selection. Furthermore, a study by [15] suggests that parents from low- and middle-income families often face time and financial constraints when selecting healthy food, making them more likely to choose practical and affordable options.

Unhealthy food consumption in early childhood can lead to various negative health effects. Children who frequently consume instant and low-nutrient foods are at risk of experiencing growth problems, obesity, and other health disorders. Additionally, a lack of essential nutrients can also impact cognitive development and immune system strength. Research by [16] shows that providing healthy food has a significant effect on the nutritional status and growth of young children, emphasizing the importance of ensuring balanced nutrition from an early age. Nutritional problems among children remain a major issue in Indonesia, such as stunting and anemia, which can affect their productivity and quality of life in the future.

To strengthen the foundation and rationale of this study, it is important to present a review of relevant research that examines the relationship between parenting styles and healthy food consumption patterns in early childhood, both at national and international levels. For instance, Larsen et al. investigated the influence of parental dietary behavior on children's eating patterns, while Spahiu et al. explored the family's role in shaping healthy eating habits among school-aged children. Compared to these

studies, the present research offers a distinctive contribution through its integrative approach, which not only examines parenting styles and eating habits but also links them to healthy food consumption and selection in early childhood, while incorporating external factors such as media influence and school nutrition policies. This comprehensive framework addresses a gap in the literature, as few studies have simultaneously examined these interconnected dimensions within the early childhood context. The analysis is further reinforced by preliminary data obtained through brief interviews with five parents and initial observations in two early childhood education institutions, which revealed that most children preferred fast food over fresh fruits or vegetables. Organizing the literature into thematic categories such as “nutritional knowledge” and “food availability” provides a clearer narrative flow, while selecting only the most relevant references ensures a concise and persuasive argument that supports the objectives of this study.

Therefore, parents should be more mindful when selecting and providing healthy food for young children. They need to ensure that children receive a balanced and nutritious diet that meets their growth and developmental needs. With proper education and strong commitment, parents can establish healthy eating patterns that will positively impact their children's long-term health. Moreover, parents should serve as role models in adopting healthy eating habits, so children can follow these positive behaviors. Avoiding processed foods that are high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats is a crucial step in fostering healthy eating habits from an early age. By creating an environment that supports healthy eating practices, children will be more likely to develop a preference for nutritious foods.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using a correlational method to analyze the relationships between the examined variables. According to Sugiyono in [17], quantitative correlational research aims to determine the extent of the relationship between two or more variables based on numerical data obtained through objective measurement techniques. In this study, the relationship between parenting and food consumption patterns is analyzed using statistical correlation techniques. This approach was chosen because it systematically measures the strength and direction of the relationships between variables. Therefore, the study results are expected to provide a clear understanding of the connection between parenting styles and children's eating habits.

The data in this study were collected using a survey method with a questionnaire distributed to 139 respondents. According to Creswell in [18], the survey method is a data collection technique used to efficiently gather information from a large number of respondents. The questionnaire used in this study consists of a series of closed-ended questions measuring aspects of parenting and food consumption patterns. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, in which respondents were selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This ensures that the collected

data accurately represent the studied population and support correlational analysis effectively.

Data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation statistical tests to determine the relationship between parenting and food consumption patterns. Pearson correlation was chosen because the collected data are numerical and meet the assumption of normal distribution [19]. Before conducting correlation analysis, validity and reliability tests were performed on the questionnaire to ensure that the research instrument had good measurement quality. The data were analyzed using statistical software to compute correlation values and their significance. The results of this analysis will serve as the basis for drawing conclusions about the relationship between parenting styles and children's eating habits.

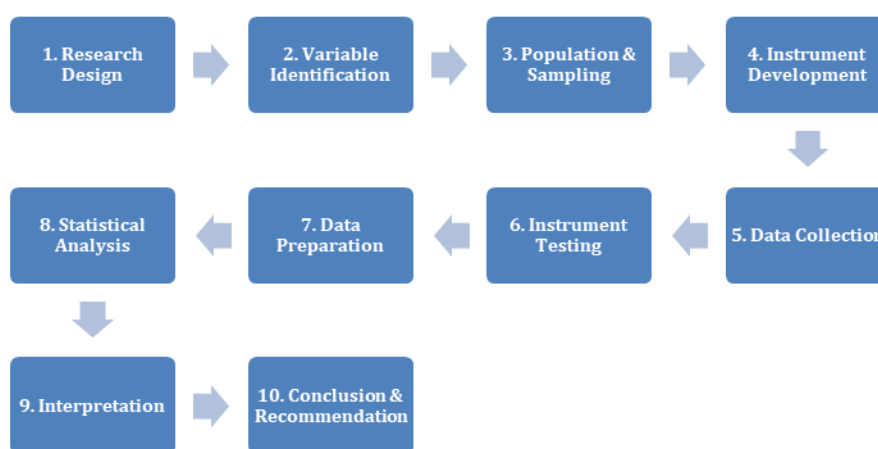


Figure 1. Chart of the stages of this research

This study established the inclusion criteria for respondents as follows: (1) parents with early childhood children (aged 3–6 years) living together in the same household, (2) willingness to participate as respondents and complete the questionnaire in full, and (3) residence in the study area for at least the past year. The exclusion criteria included: (1) respondents who did not complete the questionnaire in full, (2) parents not directly involved in childcare and food provision for their children, and (3) respondents with specific conditions that significantly affect the child's eating patterns, such as chronic illnesses. To ensure the quality of the instrument, validity and reliability tests were conducted, with the calculation results showing a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.876, indicating high reliability. All data analyses, including validity tests, reliability tests, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, and Pearson correlation tests, were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25 software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Nonparametric Test Using SPSS

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of Parenting is normal with mean 23.108 and standard deviation 6.28.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.200 ²	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Pola makan sehat is normal with mean 23.173 and standard deviation 6.28.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.200 ²	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Pemilihan makanan sehat is normal with mean 23.137 and standard deviation 6.59.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.200 ²	Retain the null hypothesis.
The distribution of Konsumsi makanan sehat is normal with mean 22.942 and standard deviation 6.50.	One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	.200 ²	Retain the null hypothesis.

Notes:

1. Lilliefors Corrected
2. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

Table 1, which presents the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov nonparametric test using SPSS, is now included to provide a clear visual representation of the normality testing for all variables. The figure shows that the significance value for each variable parenting, healthy eating patterns, healthy food selection, and healthy food consumption is 0.200, which is greater than the 0.05 significance threshold. This indicates that all variables follow a normal distribution, as the null hypothesis is retained in each case. Including this figure in the publication ensures transparency in the data analysis process and allows readers to directly verify the statistical evidence supporting the use of parametric tests in subsequent analyses.

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov nonparametric test indicate that the distribution of all four variables (parenting, healthy eating patterns, healthy food selection, and healthy food consumption) follows a normal distribution. This is evident from the decision to retain the null hypothesis in each test, meaning there is no significant evidence that the data distribution deviates from normality. Therefore, the use of parametric analysis approaches, such as linear regression applied in this study, can be considered valid since the normality assumption is met.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	
				R Square	F Change	df1		df2
1	.987 ^a	.974	1.021	.974	1692.865	3	135	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Healthy food consumption, Healthy food choices, Healthy eating habits

Based on the "Model Summary" table in the regression analysis, the obtained R value is 0.987, indicating a very strong correlation between the independent variables (healthy eating patterns, healthy food selection, and healthy food consumption) and the dependent variable (parenting). The R Square value of 0.974 suggests that 97.4% of the variation in parenting can be explained by these three independent variables, while the remaining 2.6% is influenced by other factors outside the model. Additionally, the F-test in the ANOVA analysis yields a significance value of 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05,

confirming that the regression model as a whole is significant in predicting parenting based on healthy eating variables.

Parenting Style and Children's Eating Patterns, The study results indicate that parenting style has a significant influence on children's eating habits. Parents who adopt an authoritative parenting style tend to have children with healthier eating habits compared to those with authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. This is due to the combination of reasonable control and emotional support in shaping children's eating behaviors.

Furthermore, children raised under an authoritative parenting style are more likely to develop an awareness of the importance of healthy food. They tend to have regular eating habits, consume more fruits and vegetables, and eat fewer processed foods. The consistency of setting healthy eating rules by parents helps children understand the benefits of nutritious food.

On the other hand, parents with an authoritarian parenting style often impose excessive restrictions on their children's food choices without providing sufficient understanding. This can lead to children feeling pressured and compensating by consuming unhealthy food when outside parental supervision. Meanwhile, a permissive parenting style, which allows children to choose food freely without control, also poses the risk of increasing unhealthy food consumption.

Nutritional Intake and Family Food Consumption Habits, Data shows that families with regular family meals and healthy food choices tend to have children with more balanced nutritional intake. Children from families that frequently consume fast food are more likely to develop unhealthy eating habits, which can lead to long-term health issues such as obesity and deficiencies in certain nutrients.

Family meals are not just social moments but also opportunities to educate children about the importance of a balanced diet. Children who regularly see their parents consuming healthy food are more likely to adopt similar habits. Additionally, interaction during family meals can strengthen emotional bonds within the family and reduce the likelihood of children developing eating disorders.

Conversely, families with irregular eating patterns often struggle to maintain their children's nutritional balance. Irregular meal times and the consumption of less nutritious food can lead children to develop poor eating habits. In the long run, this pattern may contribute to various health problems, such as type 2 diabetes and other metabolic disorders.

External Influences on Children's Eating Behavior, Besides family factors, external influences such as social media and the school environment also play a role in shaping children's eating patterns. Advertisements for high-sugar and high-fat foods tend to increase children's preference for unhealthy food. Meanwhile, school interventions that provide nutritious meals and nutrition education contribute to the development of healthier eating habits.

Social media often showcases unhealthy food trends, such as excessive eating challenges or fast-food promotions with appealing visuals. Children exposed to this content without sufficient guidance from their parents may easily adopt poor eating

habits. Therefore, it is crucial for parents to accompany their children in accessing information about food and provide them with the correct understanding of nutrition.

On the other hand, a school environment that supports healthy eating can be a positive factor in shaping children's eating habits. Schools that offer healthy cafeterias, nutrition education programs, and policies restricting unhealthy foods help children understand the importance of good nutrition intake. Thus, a combination of education at home and school can create healthier eating patterns in children.

Statistical Analysis and Correlation Findings, Statistical analysis shows a positive correlation between authoritative parenting style and healthy food consumption in children ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$). Conversely, permissive parenting is negatively correlated with balanced nutrient intake ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.05$). These findings reinforce previous research stating that parenting styles play a crucial role in shaping children's eating habits.

The statistical data also indicate that children raised with an authoritative parenting style are more likely to develop healthy eating habits into adulthood. This is because they are accustomed to structured eating patterns and have a better understanding of the benefits of nutritious food. Meanwhile, children from families with a permissive parenting style are more vulnerable to uncontrolled eating habits.

This study aligns with various previous studies that emphasize the importance of parental influence in shaping children's eating habits from an early age. With strong statistical evidence, it is essential for parents to be more aware of implementing parenting styles that support healthy eating patterns. Public health policies can also be directed toward educating parents about the long-term impact of parenting styles on children's health.

The results of this study reinforce the theory proposed by Baumrind on parenting styles, in which the authoritative parenting style has been proven to be the most effective in shaping healthy eating habits in children [20]. Parents with this style provide a balance between clear rules and warm emotional support, making it easier for children to understand the importance of healthy eating. This finding aligns with the research by [21], which emphasizes that communication within parenting plays a crucial role in influencing children's behavior, including food choices, as positive parent-child interactions help shape healthier and more diverse eating habits. Children raised with an authoritative parenting style tend to have more structured eating patterns and consume more nutritious foods. On the other hand, parents who adopt a permissive parenting style often allow children to choose food without restrictions, which can lead to a higher consumption of unhealthy foods. This result is supported by the study of [22], which found that children of permissive parents consume fast food more frequently compared to those raised with authoritative parenting.

In addition to parenting styles, family eating habits also significantly influence children's dietary patterns. According to [23], children learn by imitating the behavior of those around them, including food choices. If parents regularly consume healthy foods, children are more likely to adopt the same habits. Research by [3] Iso shows that children who frequently eat meals with their families tend to have a more balanced diet

compared to those who rarely eat together. This finding aligns with previous studies on the influence of parenting and eating patterns on children's choices and consumption of healthy foods at an early age. This highlights that both parenting and family eating habits play a crucial role in shaping children's food preferences and healthy eating behaviors from an early stage. Family mealtimes are not just social habits but also opportunities for parents to set an example and teach children the importance of nutritious food. Conversely, families that frequently consume fast food or rarely eat together are at higher risk of having children with unhealthy eating patterns.

In addition to family factors, media influence and the school environment also play a significant role in shaping children's eating habits. Gerbner's Cultivation Theory explains that continuous exposure to media can shape a person's mindset, including food preferences [24]. Children who frequently see advertisements for fast food, especially those presented with attractive visuals, tend to be more interested in consuming such foods. This aligns with research by Boyland dan Halford, which found that advertisements for high-sugar and high-fat foods influence children's preferences for unhealthy foods. Conversely, schools that provide nutritious meals and implement nutrition education programs can help children develop better eating habits. A study by [25] highlights that school policies promoting healthy food consumption not only play a role in increasing students' intake of fruits and vegetables but are also influenced by parenting styles and household eating habits. Together, these factors shape young children's preferences and habits for healthy eating.

Statistical analysis in this study also supports the relationship between parenting styles and children's eating habits. The results show that children raised with an authoritative parenting style are more likely to have healthy eating habits ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.05$). This finding aligns with the study by Ventura and Birch, which found that children who receive balanced parental guidance regarding food choices tend to develop better eating patterns [26]. Conversely, permissive parenting negatively correlates with balanced nutritional intake ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that children without clear dietary boundaries are more likely to consume less nutritious foods. This result confirms the study by Hughes et al., which states that a lack of regulation in food provision can lead children to choose food based on personal preference rather than nutritional needs [27].

Findings related to family eating habits also support Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that the surrounding environment significantly influences child development [28]. In this context, family eating habits become a crucial factor in shaping children's long-term food consumption patterns. Studies by [29], [30] sound that families who regularly eat together tend to have children with healthier eating patterns, particularly in terms of increased vegetable and fiber intake. This suggests that beyond nutrition, the social and emotional aspects of shared meals also contribute to the development of healthy eating habits in children. On the other hand, irregular family eating patterns may increase the risk of obesity and other health issues in children.

In broadening the scope of analysis, these findings are also consistent with international research conducted outside the Southeast Asian context, which further reinforces their validity and applicability. For example, a study in the United States by [31] demonstrated that authoritative parenting is associated with higher fruit and vegetable intake and lower consumption of sugary drinks among children, aligning with this study's results on the positive influence of balanced parental guidance. Similarly, research in the United Kingdom by [32] found that family meal frequency strongly predicts healthier dietary patterns, echoing the importance of shared mealtimes identified here. In Australia, [33] reported that school-based nutrition programs, when supported by consistent parental practices at home, significantly improved children's long-term healthy eating behaviors paralleling the combined role of school policies and parental influence observed in this study. Comparisons with these diverse contexts suggest that while cultural factors may shape specific dietary habits, the core relationship between parenting style, family eating environment, and external influences appears to be universal. This cross-cultural alignment strengthens the argument that effective interventions to promote healthy eating in early childhood should integrate family, school, and community-based strategies regardless of regional differences.

Based on all these findings, it can be concluded that parenting styles, family eating habits, and external factors such as media and the school environment are closely related in shaping children's eating patterns. These findings align with various theories and previous studies, which emphasize that children's eating habits are not influenced by a single factor but rather result from the interaction of multiple social and environmental aspects. Therefore, the most effective strategy to promote healthy eating habits in children must involve multiple stakeholders, including families, schools, and regulations related to food promotion in the media. With comprehensive interventions, it is expected that healthy eating habits can be established from an early age and continue into adulthood, helping to reduce the risk of diseases associated with unhealthy eating patterns in the future.

This study shows that parental parenting styles have a significant impact on children's eating habits. Parents with an authoritative parenting style are more capable of fostering healthy eating habits compared to those who adopt authoritarian or permissive parenting styles. Additionally, family eating habits, such as eating together and choosing nutritious foods, also contribute to shaping children's dietary patterns. External factors, such as media influence and school policies, also play an important role in shaping children's food preferences. Therefore, efforts to improve healthy eating habits must be carried out comprehensively by involving families, schools, and regulations governing food promotion in the media. With the right measures, children can develop good eating habits and reduce future health risks.

Beyond the role of parents, schools also have a responsibility in shaping healthy eating habits for children. Healthy canteen policies, nutrition education, and the provision of nutritious food in schools can help children understand the importance of a balanced diet. On the other hand, regulations that limit the promotion of unhealthy food

must also be strengthened to reduce the negative influence of fast food advertisements on children. Through collaboration between families, schools, and government policies, healthy eating habits can be more easily implemented from an early age. This synergy will help children develop a healthier lifestyle and avoid the risks associated with poor eating habits.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide important insights both academically and practically. Academically, this research strengthens previous theories regarding the relationship between parenting styles and children's eating habits. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for parents, teachers, and policymakers in formulating strategies to improve children's healthy eating habits. However, this study has some limitations, such as a limited sample scope and the lack of in-depth consideration of socio-economic factors. Therefore, further research with a broader scope is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding. Nonetheless, this study still makes an important contribution to understanding how family and environmental factors influence children's eating habits. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative examination of parenting styles, family eating habits, and external environmental factors particularly media influence and school policies within a single analytical framework to explain early childhood healthy eating behaviors. This comprehensive approach provides a more holistic understanding compared to prior studies that often focus on isolated variables. Based on the findings, several policy recommendations are proposed: (1) implement structured parental education programs focusing on authoritative parenting and nutritional literacy; (2) develop school-based nutrition policies, including healthy canteen standards and regular nutrition education; (3) establish community-based initiatives to reduce exposure to unhealthy food marketing, particularly for young children; and (4) promote multi-stakeholder collaboration between families, schools, health agencies, and policymakers to sustain healthy eating habits from early childhood. These measures, if systematically applied, can create a supportive ecosystem that encourages nutritious food consumption and reduces the long-term risks of diet-related health problems in children.

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