

The relationship between parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang

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ABSTRACT

Preschool-age children are at risk of nutritional problems due to inappropriate eating habits, especially picky eating. Picky eating refers to a behavior in children where they have difficulty eating, causing anxiety for parents and caregivers. Factors that influence picky eating behavior include parenting styles. Inappropriate parenting styles, such as always spoon-feeding the child or not introducing vegetables early on, can worsen picky eating problems and affect the child's eating habits in the future. This study aims to identify parenting styles and the occurrence of picky eating in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang, as well as to analyze the relationship between parenting styles and picky eating in children. The research method used in this study is quantitative analytical with a cross-sectional approach, using a questionnaire to identify maternal parenting styles and children's eating behavior. The research sample consisted of 92 parents of preschool children. The results of the study showed that in PAUD Islam Permatasari School in Tlogosari Semarang, the majority of maternal parenting styles towards preschool children tended to be authoritarian, reaching 31 (41.3%) out of the total sample. In addition, the majority of children did not experience picky eating, with a total of 43 (57.3%). Nevertheless, the results of the study revealed that there was not a significant relationship between the parenting styles of mothers (X) and the occurrence of picky eating behavior (Y) in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari in Tlogosari Semarang. The p-value of 0.179 (>0.05) obtained further supports this conclusion.

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INTRODUCTION

Preschool children are categorized as children aged 60 to 72 months (3-6 years) (Jiang et al., 2019). During the preschool years, it is considered a critical period for stimulating all areas of development, as 80% of a child's cognitive development is typically attained during this stage (Septiani et al., 2018). Nutritional needs in preschool children must be carefully considered as they are in line with the growth and development of their physical needs (Bento & Dias, 2017; Lipkin et al., 2020). Children in the preschool age group are inclined to spend their time playing and neglecting their meal times, leading to inadequate nutritional intake. This can result in nutritional problems in preschool children. One of the causes of balanced nutrition problems in children is incorrect eating habits, such as picky eating behavior (Syahroni et al., 2021).

Picky eating is defined as a eating behavior in children who have difficulty eating, which often causes anxiety for parents and caregivers. The most common form of picky eating is eating slowly (14.3%), refusing certain types of food, especially fruits and vegetables (14%), preferring sweet and fatty foods (13.3%), unwillingness to try new foods (12%), only wanting to try certain types of food (12%), and preferring snacks over main meals (11.1%) (Goh & Jacob, 2012). Picky eating is one of the factors that contribute to malnutrition because children who experience picky eating tend to have lower intake of calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals compared to those who do not have picky eating. Picky eating can also be associated with eating disorders in normally developing children or children with developmental disorders. These eating disorders are caused by suboptimal development, and some children with selective eating have been reported to have low weight gain (Hardianti et al., 2018). The process of development and growth in preschool-age children involves the introduction of various foods, including fast food. This can sometimes lead to selective eating habits in children, where they prefer snacks and dislike vegetables. Children also often become fussy when choosing to play instead of eating while their parents feed them. If these eating pattern disturbances are not addressed promptly, they can develop into more serious eating difficulties, resulting in inadequate nutritional intake for the child.

In Riskesdas 2018, a Ministry of Health study found that a significant number of children under 5 are facing nutritional issues, with 3.9% suffering from malnutrition and 13.8% from undernutrition (Aditianti et al., 2020). The percentage of malnutrition among children under the age of 0-59 months in Central Java is 3.7% malnutrition, 13.68% undernutrition (Anjelina et al., 2022).

Picky eating habits are still prevalent in numerous countries, including Indonesia, where around 20% of children display picky eating behaviors. Among these children, 44.5% experience mild to moderate malnutrition (Idhayanti et al., 2022). Hardianti et al. (2018) highlight that the proportion of picky eating in preschool children reaches 52.4%. Research by Wijayanti et al. (2020), shows that most mothers say their children have eating behavior problems, with 82% of children categorized as picky eaters.

Various elements can contribute to eating disorders in children, including picky eating, and one of these factors is the parenting style employed by parents with their children (Ariyanti et al., 2023). Parenting style involves how parents interact with their children (Kim et al., 2019), including setting rules, consequences, asserting authority, and observing and reacting to their actions (Desiningrum, 2012). Children's eating patterns will also affect their future habits, for example, a wrong parenting style is allowing children to always be fed and not introducing vegetables to them since they were young. Sometimes, school-age children are still being fed. However, if children are not taught to start eating on their own from a young age, they may not be skilled enough to eat on their own even until the end of their school years (Afrizal & Adinda, 2022).

Based on a preliminary survey conducted in August 2023, it was found that out of 8 mothers who have preschool-aged children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang, 6 of them mentioned that their children exhibit picky eating behavior. Out of these 6 mothers, 2 stated

that their children only want to eat sweet foods, while 4 mothers said that their children only want to eat their favorite foods. Mothers worry about their children's picky eating habits and fear they may not get all the nutrients they need. This is common among preschoolers, who become less interested in trying new foods. Based on these findings, the author is interested in conducting a study on the "Relationship between Parenting Styles and the Incidence of Picky Eating in Preschool Children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang." Conducting the study at PAUD allows for more flexibility and can be done at any time. The research problem background aims to identify parenting patterns and the occurrence of picky eating in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang. Additionally, it analyzes the relationship between parenting patterns and the occurrence of picky eating in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is an analytical quantitative study. The cross-sectional approach is used to study the correlation dynamics between risk factors and effects, where data collection is conducted in this study. The target population for this research is all parents of preschool-age children in PAUD Islam Permatasari, totaling 105, consisting of Class A with 82 children and Class B with 23 children. Meanwhile, the accessible population for this research is respondents who meet the inclusion criteria taken from Class A and B, with their children aged 3-6 years, totaling 92. The sample in this study is the entire accessible population data, totaling 92, consisting of 69 from Class A and 23 from Class B.

The criteria for determining the sample in this study include inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria refer to the characteristics that subjects must have in order to qualify as a sample, while exclusion criteria refer to the characteristics that make subjects ineligible as a sample. The inclusion criteria for the sample in this study include: 1) being a parent of a child enrolled as a student at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari, 2) being cooperative, 3) being willing to be a respondent, and 4) having a child aged between 3 and 6 years old. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria include: 1) mothers with physical and mental limitations, 2) parents who follow a vegan diet or avoid animal products, and 3) children with disabilities, genetic disorders, or autism. The determination of sample size using the Slovin formula. According to the Slovin formula, the minimum sample size is 75 respondents. This study uses purposive sampling technique. The independent variable in this study is parenting style. The dependent variable in this study is the occurrence of picky eating.

The research data utilized in this study is primary data. Primary data refers to data obtained directly by the researcher from the data source/respondents. This data is used to obtain answers from respondents regarding the subject under study, which is related to parental parenting styles and the occurrence of picky eating in children. Authors directly obtain primary data from respondents and collect it through filling out questionnaires to assess the relationship between parental parenting styles and the occurrence of picky eating in preschool children. In this study, questionnaires were used to gather data on parenting styles and picky eating habits. The parenting questionnaire was distributed to parents of preschool children at PAUD Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang, consisting of 21 questions related to parenting styles. The questionnaire on parenting styles included 21 questions divided into 3 categories: 7 questions for authoritarian parenting, 7 questions for democratic parenting, and 7 questions for permissive parenting, arranged randomly. The preschoolers' meal times are as follows: breakfast at 07.00 - 07.30, snack at 09.30 - 10.00, lunch at 12.00, milk at 14.00, snack at 16.00, and dinner at 18.00 (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019).

In this study, a customized Likert scale was employed, consisting of four response choices: SA (strongly agree), A (agree), D (disagree), and SD (strongly disagree). To assign scores, SA is given a value of 4, A is assigned a value of 3, D is given a value of 2, and SD is assigned a value of

1. The categorization is based on the primary parenting style demonstrated by mothers. By comparing the scores for authoritarian, democratic, and permissive parenting styles, we can determine the mother's predominant approach to parenting her children. The highest score among these three styles indicates the mother's prevailing parenting style. The parenting questionnaire has been tested for validity with the results of r statistic between 0.384 - 0.815. The question item is declared valid if the value of r count is greater than r table (0.378). In the validity test of this study, 21 items about parental parenting were declared valid. While the results of the parenting pattern reliability test are 0.746.

The Child Eating Behavior Questionnaire (CEBQ) is a list of questions to obtain information about children's eating behavior. This questionnaire is in accordance with ecological theory and it can also be understood that the culture around children such as eating habits of parents or families can also influence children's eating behavior. This questionnaire contains 35 questions. The child eating behavior questionnaire (CEBQ) contains 35 items and has eight scale values, namely response to eating (4 items), enjoyment of eating (4 items), emotional overeating (4 items), desire to drink (3 items), satiety response (5 items), slow eating (4 items), emotional undereating (4 items), and fussiness (7 items). Each question item has 5 possible answers, namely, "never" (1), "rarely" (2), "sometimes" (3), "often" (4), and "always" (5). Meanwhile, questions classified as unfavorable have possible answers "never" (5), "rarely" (4), "sometimes" (3), "often" (2), and "always" (1). A child is said to be picky eating if the average total score of the food avoidance category (SR, SE, FF) > the average total score of the food approach category (FR, EF), and vice versa.

The Child Eating Behaviour Questionnaire (CEBQ) consists of eight distinct scales that evaluate various aspects of children's eating behaviors. These scales include Food Responsiveness (FR), which measures a child's tendency to eat in response to food stimuli; Emotional Over-Eating (EOE), which assesses eating in response to emotional cues; and Enjoyment of Food (EF), which evaluates the pleasure a child derives from eating. Additionally, the Desire to Drink (DD) scale gauges a child's inclination towards consuming drinks. The Satiety Responsiveness (SR) scale measures how well a child responds to feelings of fullness, while Slowness in Eating (SE) assesses the pace at which a child eats. Emotional Under-Eating (EUE) evaluates the decrease in food intake in response to emotions, and lastly, Food Fussiness (FF) measures a child's selective eating behaviors.

Of the above 8 scales, two eating (EOE & EUE) and drinking (DD) scales were excluded from the calculation as eating too much (EOE) and eating too little (EUE) were considered to represent more emotional components of eating habits than usual food approach and avoidance. Drinking habits (DD) were also excluded, as they imply the act of drinking rather than the act of eating, which can be conceptually different. Therefore, the remaining scales included in the calculation were (SR, SE, FF, FR, EF) (Tharner et al., 2014). The remaining five scales were classified into two categories: food avoidance (SR, SE, FF) representing food avoidance and food approach (FR, EF) representing food approach. Kininmonth et al. (2021) used questionnaires to study picky eating. The CEBQ scale had good internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) ranging from 0.72 to 0.91, and internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) ranging from 0.52 to 0.87. The data underwent Editing, Coding, Scoring, and Tabulating, and was organized into a frequency distribution table. Data analysis involved univariate and bivariate analysis using a computer program.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Based on Figure 1, this study proposed following hypotheses: H_a : There is a relationship between maternal parenting and picky eating behavior in preschool-age children at PAUD Islam

Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang, Ho : There is no relationship between maternal parenting and picky eating behavior in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Result

Univariate Analysis

Table 1. Frequency distribution of maternal characteristics

Characteristics	Respondents	
	F	%
Maternal Characteristics	Age (Years)	
	20- 30	5 6.7
	31-40	59 78.7
	41- 50	11 14.7
Education	Total	75 100.0
	Junior High School	1 1.3
	Senior High School	11 14.7
	Higher Education	63 84.0
Age	Total	75 100.0
	3 Years	1 1.3
	4 Years	10 13.3
	5 Years	34 45.3
Parenting Patterns	6 Years	30 40.0
	Total	75 100.0
	Authoritarian	31 41.3
	Permissive	14 18.7
Picky Eating	Democratic	7 9.3
	Mixed	23 30.7
	Total	75 100.0
	Picky eaters	32 42.7
Picky Eating	Not picky eaters	43 57.3
	Total	75 100.0

According to Table 1, the majority of mothers are aged between 31-40 years, totaling 59 (78.7%), while the minority are aged between 20-30 years, totaling 5 (6.7%). In terms of education, the majority of mothers have a college degree, totaling 63 (84.0%), while the minority have completed junior high school, totaling 1 (1.3%). The majority of children are 5 years old, accounting for 34 (45.3%), while the minority are 3 years old, with only 1 (1.3%) in that age group. The majority of parenting styles are authoritarian at 31 (41.3%), while the minority are permissive and democratic parenting styles with the same number at 7 (9.3%). The majority of children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang are not picky eaters, with 43 (57.3%), while the minority or children experiencing picky eating are 32 (42.7%).

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2. Tabulation analysis and the relationship between parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating in preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang

		Parenting Style				Total	Correlation Coefficient	P Value
		Authoritarian	Permissive	Democratic	Mixed			
Picky Eating Occurrence	Not Picky Eating	15	8	5	15	43	-0.157*	0.179*
	Picky Eating	16	6	2	8	32		
Total		31	14	7	23	75		

* Spearman Rank Test

Table 2 presents the results of tabulation analysis and the relationship between parenting styles and picky eating incidents. From the table above, it can be seen that the majority of picky eating incidents among preschool children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang are associated with authoritarian parenting style, with a total of 15 incidents, while the minority are associated with democratic parenting style. Based on the Spearman Rank test results, the p-value is 0.179 (>0.05), indicating that there is no relationship between parenting styles and picky eating incidents. The Spearman Rank correlation column indicates the strength and direction of the correlation results, but since the level of significance or p-value is greater than 0.05, the strength and direction of the correlation are not meaningful.

Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Based on the research findings, the characteristics of the respondents can be divided into two categories: characteristics of mothers/parents, including age and education, and characteristics of preschool children, specifically their age. The majority of parents fall within the age range of 31-40 years, with 59 respondents (78.8%), and the majority of parents have a college education, with 63 respondents (84.0%). According to the KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary), age refers to the length of time a person has lived or been born. Age can determine the level of maturity of parents based on the life experiences they have gone through. The research results indicate that the majority of respondents are in the age range of 31-40 years, which falls within early adulthood. Early adulthood is a period after adolescence where physical and psychological changes have reached maturity. It is a time when individuals must train themselves to become more mature, patient, rational, and accepting in facing the problems and conflicts they encounter. During this period, individuals often face various challenges such as personal issues, work, finances, and social matters. Additionally, early adulthood is often accompanied by emotional experiences, especially those related to economic, work, marriage, and financial issues. Inability to cope with these problems can affect one's attitude and behavior, including the way they parent their children.

In terms of educational characteristics, the majority of parents have a college education, accounting for 63 respondents (84.0%). According to the KBBI, education is the journey of acquiring greater knowledge or comprehension about a specific subject. Bornstein & Zlotnik in (Bornstein et al., 2022) state that parents with higher education tend to raise their children authoritatively, with a less permissive style and more towards an authoritarian parenting style.

The research by Kurniawati & Hartarto (2022) supports the correlation between education level and oral health care parenting patterns ($p=0.000$). Hanifah et al. (2023) also found that parents' education level significantly influences parenting patterns in a positive manner ($p=0.000$). This suggests that higher educated parents have more experience and insight in effective parenting.

Meanwhile, according to Noorhasanah & Tauhidah (2021) higher levels of education can provide the understanding, ability and knowledge to apply positive and better attitudes in meeting children's needs and development, including in terms of parenting. Positive parenting involves open, democratic and supportive parenting. Eating behavior formed in preschool children is based on daily eating habits applied by parents (Haszard et al., 2015). This is because eating habits taught during childhood will determine eating habits as an adult. Preference or dislike for certain foods is also influenced by daily eating habits (Nugroho, 2020).

Identifying Parenting and the Incidence of Picky Eating

a. Parenting

Research conducted at PAUD Islam Permatasari in Tlogosari revealed that the majority of mothers apply an authoritarian parenting style, with 31 respondents (41.3%) following this approach, while a minority adopt a democratic parenting style, with only 7 respondents (9.3%).

Authoritarian parenting is a style where parents encourage their children to follow strict rules, often forcing them to behave like themselves, limiting their freedom to act on their own behalf, and having limited communication and conversation with their children. In terms of eating habits, authoritarian parents tend to control all the food their children consume, not giving them the opportunity to choose the food they desire, and setting limits on the types of food their children can consume (Nida & Hartanto, 2021).

Nyanyi et al. (2019) discovers that parents tend to adopt a democratic parenting style. In this style, mothers are often seen closely monitoring their children's interactions with others or friends in their play environment. They communicate with their children in a gentle and attentive manner, providing guidance and advice when the child makes a mistake. Mothers also control their children's daily activities and set boundaries and rules for them to play under supervision. They educate their children and fulfill their desires according to their needs and abilities. This is mainly because most mothers have a good level of education, allowing them to apply their knowledge of good parenting practices.

These parents tend to control every action their child takes and expect them to follow their commands. They also establish rules that must be obeyed and will punish their child if they make any mistakes. This is because parents believe that at this age, children are not capable of making good decisions for themselves, including choosing healthy food for their well-being. Therefore, parents regulate and monitor the food and beverages consumed by their child to ensure their nutritional needs are met, ultimately promoting optimal growth and development (Khasanah & Fauziah, 2020).

Based on the analysis of parenting item questions, the majority of "strongly disagree" answers were found in question number 11, "If the child is not hungry, I ask why the child doesn't want to eat," with a total of 34 (45.3%). This is consistent with the results where the majority of parenting styles applied by parents are authoritarian. With the majority of "strongly disagree" answers to question number 11, it shows the parents' attitude of not giving the child the opportunity to express their feelings and desires. It also indicates that parents restrict the child's freedom to act, including in terms of eating. These attitudes are characteristics of an authoritarian parenting style (Arlinghaus et al., 2018).

b. Picky Eating

In the study on picky eating behavior, it was found that the majority of children at PAUD Islam Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang are not picky eaters, with 43 children (57.3%). Picky eating (difficulty eating) is a condition where a child refuses to eat, has difficulty consuming food or drinks clearly and in appropriate amounts for their age physiologically (naturally and normally) from opening their mouth willingly, chewing, swallowing, and digesting well without the need for specific vitamins or medications (Taylor & Emmett, 2019).

Based on the analysis of picky eating item questions, the majority of "never" answers were found in question number 24 "My child has difficulty enjoying food" with a total of 26 (34.7%). From these majority of answers, it can be concluded that the majority of children do not have difficulty accepting/liking food and are not selective about food. This aligns with the research findings indicating that most children do not exhibit selective eating behaviors.

Every parent wants to ensure their child receives proper nutrition, so they will make an effort to provide it in their own way. However, parents should not impose their eating patterns on their child, especially if they follow specific diets such as avoiding animal products (Sari et al., 2023). The occurrence of picky eating in children can be affected by a variety of factors, one of them being the parenting style practiced by parents.

Relationship between Parenting and Picky Eating

The results of the analysis of parenting patterns towards picky eating using the Spearman Rank test showed a p-value = 0.179 (>0.05) which means that there is no relationship between

parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating at PAUD Islam Permatasari in Tlogosari. There is no relationship between parenting and picky eating in this study due to other factors that influence and are influenced by different situations and conditions. Many factors may be a factor in the occurrence of picky eating in children, both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as appetite disorders, psychological conditions, and physical conditions. While external factors of picky eating include parenting patterns, exclusive breastfeeding, and parental eating behavior (Arisandi, 2019).

Authors suggest that there may be other factors at play in the prevalence of selective eating in preschool-aged children. In addition to situational differences, various factors can affect research results, such as the characteristics of the participants. Based on these characteristics, researchers propose that the educational level of parents plays a significant role in the formation of picky eating behaviors in children, as it is closely related to parental eating habits. According to Noorhasanah & Tauhidah (2021), a higher level of education can provide understanding, ability, and knowledge in implementing a positive and better attitude in meeting children's needs and development. Parents with higher levels of education tend to develop and improve their thinking patterns in educating their children (Duman et al., 2018). In terms of eating, parents also not only think about their own needs and health, but also the interests of their children. The higher the education, the more aware parents will be that intentionally or unintentionally children will imitate their parents' eating behavior, so parents will be wiser in determining what they eat, especially if in front of their children (Islamiyah et al., 2020).

The study found that 50% of picky eaters have authoritarian parents, but there was no significant relationship between parenting style and picky eating. This suggests that while there may be a correlation between authoritarian parenting and picky eating, it is not a definitive factor in determining a child's eating habits. Other factors such as genetics, sensory sensitivities, and exposure to a variety of foods may also play a role in the development of picky eating behaviors. A study in Latin America said authoritarian parenting with too much pressure and control causes children to eat unhealthy foods, so authoritarian parenting can have a tendency for children to experience picky eating (Arredondo et al., 2015)

Research Limitations

The method of data collection did not involve direct interaction with respondents, as the authors entrusted the questionnaires to the school for distribution to students, who were then expected to pass them on to their parents at home. Consequently, the researcher was unable to oversee the process firsthand.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, the study presents several conclusions that can be drawn and recommendations based on the research findings. In general, the authors concludes that: The majority of mothers in PAUD Islam Permatasari in Tlogosari Semarang adopt an authoritarian parenting style for preschool-aged children, accounting for 31 (41.3%) participants. As for the occurrence of picky eating, the majority of children, 43 (57.3%), are not picky eaters. The findings indicate no significant relationship between maternal parenting style and picky eating behavior among preschool-aged children in PAUD Islam Permatasari in Tlogosari Semarang, with a p-value of 0.179 (>0.05).

The study suggests three main points, Parents and the community should offer quality care to children to avoid picky eating in preschoolers by encouraging healthy eating habits Future researchers can use the findings as a basis for studying picky eating in preschool children. Educational institutions, such as the Midwifery Study Program at the Islamic Sultan Agung University, should incorporate the results into their teachings on child nutrition.

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