



The Relationship Between Parenting Patterns and Balanced Nutritional Intake with Nutritional Status of Young Children

Fadillah¹, Didik Suryadi²

dillahmuslim12@gmail.com

Department of Early Childhood Education, Bengkulu University, Bengkulu, Indonesia

Abstrak

Status gizi anak usia dini merupakan indikator kesehatan kritis yang dipengaruhi oleh faktor pengasuhan dan asupan makanan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis hubungan antara pola asuh orang tua dan asupan gizi seimbang dengan status gizi anak usia dini. Metode: Penelitian ini menggunakan desain cross-sectional. Populasi penelitian adalah seluruh orang tua dan anak usia dini di Lab School Universitas Bengkulu Kelas A dan B, dengan sampel jenuh sebanyak 30 responden. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner pola asuh Baumrind, Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ), dan pengukuran antropometri. Data dianalisis secara statistik menggunakan Uji Chi-Square. Hasil: Terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara pola asuh demokratis dengan status gizi normal (86,7%; $p=0,016$). Sebaliknya, pola asuh permisif menunjukkan proporsi status gizi kurang tertinggi (66,7%). Hubungan yang sangat signifikan juga ditemukan antara asupan gizi seimbang dengan status gizi ($p=0,001$). Kesimpulan: Pola asuh demokratis dan asupan gizi seimbang berhubungan signifikan dengan status gizi normal pada anak usia dini. Temuan ini dapat menjadi bahan pertimbangan awal dalam pengembangan program edukasi gizi dan pengasuhan bagi orang tua.

Kata kunci: Pola asuh, asupan gizi, status gizi, anak usia dini

Abstract

The nutritional status of early childhood is a critical health indicator influenced by factors related to parenting and dietary intake. This study aimed to analyse the relationship between parenting styles, balanced nutritional intake, and the nutritional status of young children. Methods: This study employed a cross-sectional design. The population consisted of all parents and young children in Classes A and B of the Lab School at the University of Bengkulu, with a saturated sample of 30 respondents. Data were collected using the Baumrind parenting style questionnaire, a Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ), and anthropometric measurements. Data were statistically analysed using the Chi-Square test. Results: A significant relationship was found between democratic parenting styles and normal nutritional status (86.7%, $p = 0.016$). Conversely, the permissive parenting style showed the highest proportion of poor nutritional status (66.7%). A highly significant relationship was also found between balanced nutritional intake and nutritional status ($p < 0.001$). Conclusion: Democratic parenting and balanced nutritional intake are significantly associated with normal nutritional status in early childhood. These findings can serve as preliminary considerations for developing nutritional and parenting education programs for parents.


Keywords: Parenting style, nutrition intake, nutritional status, early childhood

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✉ Corresponding author:

Email Address: dillahmuslim12@gmail.com (Fadillah¹)

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood, from one to five years of age, is the most vulnerable stage for children, and they face various health problems, especially those related to nutritional status. This is the golden age, or the period when children's growth and development can be optimally shaped (Shloim et al., 2015), However, in reality, too many children in this age group suffer from nutritional disorders,

either malnutrition or overnutrition, which have adverse and often irreversible consequences on their physical and cognitive development (Nadhila et al., 2023). Stunting, wasting, and overweight are among the most common nutritional problems that have long-term consequences for children's health (Khanum et al., 2023; Lopez et al., 2018). Malnutrition in Indonesia remains a significant public health challenge, requiring a comprehensive understanding of its underlying factors.

Parenting style is one of the main determining factors, along with parenting patterns. Parenting style regulates interactions between parents and children, including feeding practices. Inappropriate parenting patterns, such as feeding at irregular times or not meeting nutritional needs, can contribute to nutritional imbalances (Ningning & Wenguang, 2023; Smith et al., 2024). Parents' knowledge of balanced diets is equally important in helping children develop healthy eating habits from an early age. Research has shown that children's dietary habits are strongly influenced by their parents and that children whose parents adopt a democratic style tend to have better nutritional status (Kim-Herrera et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2020).

Another key factor is balanced nutrition. Qualitative and quantitative deficiencies or excesses in nutrition will directly affect children's nutritional status. In this context, parenting plays a significant role as a regulator of children's nutrition through food selection, meal scheduling, and the creation of a healthy eating environment (Lopez et al., 2018). Parenting patterns and nutritional intake are two interrelated variables that require integrated study.

The lasting impact on children's health and growth resulting from nutritional deficiencies combined with inadequate, balanced nutrition and supervision, especially in early childhood, requires greater attention to the interaction between parenting styles and the socio-cultural and economic landscape in contemporary Indonesia (Dr. Idrees et al., 2021). Research conducted by Nadhila et al., (2023), emphasising that in addition to parenting styles, the level of education and socioeconomic status of the family also influence children's nutritional status.

Poor nutrition in children under five years of age is a public health issue in this study. Stunting, wasting, and overweight in this age group are indicators of inadequate feeding practices and child care, as well as unmet nutritional needs, presenting significant challenges (Tan et al., 2018). Further research confirms a significant correlation between parenting styles and children's nutritional status, as well as the necessity for community-based interventions to improve malnutrition. (Setiyowati et al., 2019).

This study aims to address the following question: How does parenting style correlate with balanced nutrition intake and the nutritional status of children, particularly those under the age of five? Is there a correlation between specific parenting styles and children's nutrition, and how do children's daily diets contribute to their nutritional status? The quantitative approach in this study is designed to capture the intended relationship (Hura et al., 2023). The questionnaire results, which assess parenting and nutritional intake, as well as measure the nutritional status of children, are expected to be valid and comprehensive.

Previous research has been conducted both internationally and nationally on child nutrition. A study by UNICEF and WHO has highlighted the importance of diet and parenting practices in determining the nutritional status of children (Haslam et al., 2020). Many previous studies have shown that children raised under a democratic parenting style have better nutritional status than those raised under an authoritarian style (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022).

This study aims to investigate the relationship between parenting, dietary intake, and nutritional status, to identify underlying factors that enable more holistic and sustainable improvements in the nutritional status of children in early childhood. This study presents an innovative approach by integrating two primary methods for determining children's nutritional status, parenting, and dietary intake into a unified framework. This integration is important given that other studies have focused solely on one of these two factors.

The gaps identified in this study focus on the limitations in simultaneously documenting the interconnection between parenting, balanced nutrition for children, and children's nutritional status, particularly in the Indonesian context. Most existing studies only focus on nutrition and parenting separately. In the Indonesian context, there has been no integration of quantitative and qualitative analysis within a cultural context to reveal the influence of culture and lifestyle on parenting and feeding practices.

This study emphasises the significance of early childhood care as a foundation for the nation's future development. Poor health and nutrition in children will potentially reduce the quality of education and productivity in adulthood, thereby contributing to the long-term development of this nation (Shafiq et al., 2019). The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for parents, early childhood educators, and healthcare professionals to develop balanced and proportionate parenting patterns and feeding strategies.

This study aims to investigate the relationship between parenting patterns, nutritional intake, and the nutritional status of young children. By exploring this relationship, it is hoped that researchers can identify and compile models that can be applied to intervention programmes to improve the nutritional status of children in several regions in Indonesia. This study is expected to complement and advance existing research, while also providing practical contributions to pragmatic assessments that can improve children's health from an early age.

Cross-sector collaboration between parents, health practitioners, and educators in planning and developing nutrition and parenting systems and ecosystems that support children from an early age is strategic. Therefore, this study also contributes to the advancement of education, providing a systematic direction for data-driven decision-making to enhance the nutritional strength of children in Indonesia.

Continuity of collaboration between parents, health workers, and educators in creating an environment that supports balanced nutrition and positive parenting for early childhood is crucial. Thus, this study not only contributes to the advancement of knowledge but also offers practical guidance for evidence-based decision-making to enhance the nutritional status of children in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGIES

Research Type

This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. This design was chosen because it is suitable for identifying the relationship between parenting patterns, nutritional intake, and nutritional status at a specific point in time, making it both efficient and relevant to the study's objectives.

Time and Place of Research

The study was conducted at Bengkulu University's Lab School from June to August 2024. The study's population consisted of all parents of children in the early infancy stage (3-5 years old) who were enrolled in classes A and B of Bengkulu University's Lab School during that semester.

Research objectives (population and sample)

Given the limited population size and inclusion criteria, the sampling technique used was saturated sampling (total population sampling), in which all members of the population were

included as respondents. The final sample size in this study was 30 respondents (parents) and their children.

Inclusion Criteria: (1) Parents of children enrolled in grades A and B at Lab School Unib, (2) Willing to become respondents by signing an informed consent form, (3) Children do not have chronic diseases or special conditions that significantly affect their nutritional status and food intake.

Exclusion criteria: Parents who are unable to be interviewed during the data collection period.

Data collection techniques and instrument development

The instruments used are:

1. Parenting questionnaire, compiled based on Baumrind's theory.
2. FFQ (Food Frequency Questionnaire) form to measure children's nutritional intake.
3. Scales and height gauges to assess children's nutritional status based on the WHO Anthropometric standards.

Researchers visited homes or the Unib Lab School. Home visits to parents were conducted if they were unable to participate in the study at the Unib Lab School. Data were collected using a questionnaire consisting of structured interviews with closed-ended questions and physical measurements of the children.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analysed descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive analysis was performed to determine the frequency distribution and percentage of each variable. Inferential analysis was performed using the chi-square test to determine the relationship and strength of the influence of parenting and nutritional intake on the nutritional status of children in childhood. The p-value was set at 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Parenting styles are among the most significant factors influencing children's growth and nutritional status, particularly during the early years, a critical period of development. Parenting styles, also known as parenting patterns, shape children's habits and behaviours as well as their reactions to food and the environment. In this study, parenting styles were categorised into three main types: democratic, authoritarian, and permissive. The following table presents the frequency distribution of parenting styles from thirty respondents in this study.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Nutrient Balanced Intake

Nutritional Categories	Intake <i>f</i>	%
Good	17	56,7
Less	13	43,3
Total	30	100

The results in Table 2 show that most children have good nutritional intake (56.7%), while 43.3% of children experience balanced nutritional deficiencies. These findings confirm that, although most children have adequate nutritional intake, a significant proportion of children have their nutritional needs not optimally met. This can be a risk factor for nutritional problems in early childhood.

The nutritional status of young children is a crucial indicator in assessing their health, growth, and development. Various factors, including parenting patterns, nutritional intake, and environmental influences, can impact nutritional status. In this study, the nutritional status of children was categorised based on WHO anthropometric standards. The following is the frequency distribution of the nutritional status of young children in the study sample.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Nutrient Balanced Intake

Nutritional Status	<i>f</i>	%
Normal	20	66,7
Less	10	33,3
Total	30	100

The results in Table 2 indicate that most children have a good nutritional intake, at 56.7%, while 43.3% of children experience balanced nutritional deficiencies. These findings confirm that, although most children have adequate nutritional intake, a significant proportion of children still have their nutritional needs not optimally met. This can be a risk factor for nutritional problems in early childhood.

The nutritional status of young children is a crucial indicator of their overall health, growth, and development. Various factors, including parenting patterns, nutritional intake, and environmental influences, can impact nutritional status. In this study, the nutritional status of children was categorised based on WHO anthropometric standards. The following is the frequency distribution of the nutritional status of young children in the study sample.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Early Childhood Nutritional Status

Nutritional Status	<i>f</i>	%
Normal	20	66,7
Less	10	33,3
Total	30	100

Based on Table 3, the majority of children have a normal nutritional status (66.7%), while the remaining third are malnourished (33.3%). These figures indicate that although most children are in the good nutrition category, a significant proportion of children remain at risk of nutritional problems, which requires special attention from parents and healthcare workers. To examine the relationship between parenting patterns and the nutritional status of young children, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted between these two variables. The results aim to describe the distribution of nutritional status according to the type of parenting pattern employed.

Table 4. The Relationship between Parenting and Children's Nutritional Status

Parenting	Nutritional Status		Total	<i>p</i>
	Normal	Less		
Democratic	13 (86,7%)	2 (13,3%)	15(100%)	0,016
Authoritarian	5 (55,6%)	4 (44,4%)	9(100%)	
Permissive	2 (33,3%)	4 (66,7%)	6(100%)	
Total	20	10	30	

Table 4 shows that democratic parenting has the highest proportion of children with normal nutritional status (86.7%). Conversely, permissive parenting shows the highest proportion of children with malnutrition (66.7%). The results of the chi-square test indicate a significant relationship between parenting styles and the nutritional status of young children, $p = 0,05$. This means that the type of parenting style applied by parents is closely related to the nutritional status of children. Children raised with a democratic parenting style tend to have better nutritional status compared to children raised with authoritarian or permissive parenting styles.

Table 5. The Relationship between Balanced Nutritional Intake and Early Childhood Nutritional Status

Parenting	Nutritional Status		Total	<i>p</i>
	Normal	Less		
Good	15 (88,2%)	2 (11,8%)	17(100%)	0,001
Less	5 (38,5%)	8 (61,5%)	13(100%)	
Total	20	10	30	

Based on Table 5, it can be observed that children with adequate nutritional intake predominantly have a normal nutritional status (88.2%). In contrast, children with inadequate nutritional intake tend to have a poor nutritional status (61.5%). The analysis results also show a significant relationship between balanced nutritional intake and children's nutritional status, $p = 0,05$. Children with balanced nutritional intake tend to have a normal nutritional status, while those with inadequate nutritional intake are more commonly found in groups with poor nutritional status. This suggests that an adequate intake of macro and micronutrients plays a crucial role in achieving optimal nutritional status in young children.

The results of the chi-square test indicate a significant relationship between parenting styles and the nutritional status of young children, $p = 0,05$. This means that the type of parenting style applied by parents is closely related to the nutritional status of children. Children raised with a democratic parenting style tend to have better nutritional status compared to children raised with an authoritarian or permissive parenting style. This finding aligns with the theory that democratic parenting, which involves open communication, support, and clear rules, promotes optimal child development, including meeting nutritional needs.

DISCUSSION

The results of data collection and analysis from 30 respondents showed a relationship between parenting patterns and balanced nutrition intake, as well as the nutritional status of early childhood. This analysis aims to understand how parenting factors and nutritional fulfilment play a role in determining the nutritional status of children at a very crucial stage of growth.

This discussion will interpret the data presented in distribution tables and crosstabs, then relate the results to relevant theories and previous research findings to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between variables. This analysis also aims to reveal the scientific contribution of the research and answer the research questions posed. The following is a detailed discussion of the relationship between parenting patterns and balanced nutrition intake, as well as their impact on the nutritional status of young children.

The Relationship Between Parenting Patterns and Children's Nutritional Status

The results in Table 4 show a significant relationship between the nutritional status of young children and parenting patterns, with a p-value of 0.016. This indicates that the way parents care for their children impacts their health. Children raised in a democratic parenting style have the highest

proportion of normal nutritional status (86.7%), compared to children raised in an authoritarian style (55.6%) and a permissive style (33.3%). These results align with the theory that democratic parenting, which includes clear rules, support, and open communication, helps children develop well, including meeting their nutritional needs. Children require proper parenting and nutrition. To determine whether there is a relationship between children's nutritional status and their nutritional intake categories, a cross-tabulation was conducted.

Parents in democratic parenting styles are actively involved in raising their children, such as communicating with them and teaching them about healthy and balanced diets. Studies have shown that this parenting style is beneficial for children's physical health and their social and emotional development ([Wardani et al., 2023](#)). When children are educated about how to choose healthy foods, they tend to make better food choices. Other studies show that children raised in more democratic environments have better psycho-social development ([Lonto et al., 2019](#); [Nurasih & Elfi, 2019](#)).

Authoritarian parenting, characterised by strict rules and control, can cause children to dislike healthy foods, resulting in poor nutrition [Faizin \(2021\)](#), in addition, relevant research has found that authoritarian parenting is associated with difficulties in children's development of independence and decision-making skills, which in turn affects their eating habits. This situation indicates that children raised by these individuals may not be acquiring the knowledge necessary to meet their nutritional needs and to choose healthy foods to eat.

As a result, the outcomes of permissive parenting are very confusing. Even though the nutritional status of most children involved in this study was inferior, 66.7% of these children were malnourished, indicating that inadequate supervision can have a negative impact. Permissive parenting tends to allow children to take responsibility for their own decisions, and they sometimes choose foods that are unbalanced or lacking in nutrients ([Guna et al., 2019](#); [Salafuddin et al., 2020](#)). Children raised with permissive parenting may struggle to develop healthy eating habits, which can negatively impact their health and development ([Agustini Purnama, 2022](#); [Solekah et al., 2022](#)).

Parents need to understand how their parenting style affects their children's health and development. Studies show that, in order to improve children's nutritional status, parental education on child care and nutrition is essential. Understanding the importance of providing children with healthy food choices and being transparent about their eating habits can help improve their long-term health.

The Relationship Between Balanced Nutrition Intake and Nutritional Status in Early Childhood,

Table 5 shows a significant correlation between the nutritional status of toddlers and the fulfilment of balanced nutritional intake. According to the collected data, 11.8% of children with poor nutritional status and 88.2% of children with good nutritional intake were classified as having normal nutritional status. However, with a p-value of 0.001, only 38.5% of children with low nutritional intake showed normal nutritional status, while 61.5% showed poor nutritional status. These results suggest a significant relationship between the two, supporting the notion that a balanced nutritional intake helps children become healthier.

All food groups, fats, proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals must be included in a balanced diet to support children's physical and mental growth. Children who regularly consume nutritious foods tend to have better nutritional status, which supports optimal growth and development (Burke et al., 2019; Kuckertz et al., 2017). Building healthy eating habits in children requires consistent parenting. According to several studies, parents who adopt a more flexible parenting style are more likely to educate their children about the importance of nutrition and its link to good health (Timpano et al., 2010).

Authoritarian parenting can cause children to lose interest in the food they choose, leading to unhealthy eating patterns and nutritional deficiencies. Research shows that children raised in authoritarian environments tend to lack the freedom to choose the foods they want or know why certain foods are good for them (Murray, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). This leads to unhealthy food preferences, resulting in poor nutritional status and diet quality (Kopala-Sibley et al., 2017).

The same thing happens with permissive parenting. Children who are not supervised can choose what they eat, but without guidance, they may choose unhealthy foods. Data shows that children in this category are more prone to malnutrition, even though most of them receive adequate nutrition. This shows that permissive parenting does not ensure ideal nutrition (Pinquart, 2017; Qian et al., 2022). Studies show that permissive parenting often results in children not receiving proper guidance, which leads to them lacking an understanding of the importance of nutrition in their daily diet.

This study has several limitations in measuring parenting patterns and nutritional intake because it relies on parents' self-reports, which may introduce biases such as recall bias or social desirability bias, where respondents tend to give answers that are considered "good" socially. The results cannot be generalized to a broader population due to the relatively small sample size (n = 30). To achieve external validity, the study results should be further tested by involving a larger number of respondents and a more diverse sample. However, the findings of this study provide important initial insights into how parenting patterns and nutritional intake influence the health of young children. These results can also serve as a foundation for future research using more comprehensive methods.

CONCLUSION

The findings of a study with 30 participants indicated a substantial association with parental child-rearing practices. Children nurtured in a democratic setting typically exhibit superior nutritional status compared to those reared in authoritarian or permissive environments. Furthermore, a robust association was identified between children's nutritional status and adequate nutrient consumption. The dietary health of youngsters is adequate.

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