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Comparative Study of parents and peers on Children's food choices

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Abstract:

Parents are the gatekeepers for the shaping and also determining the foods availability at the house to fulfill the nutritional needs of their child. Preschool children eating behaviour and their peers eating can change the child food habits. Performance is influenced by peer's decisions on food choices. Initially disliked foods can be accepted and frequently consumed by the child. Parental monitoring helps in choosing the appropriate and healthy foods in place of fast, junk or lower calories food contents. Healthy eating behaviour of a child can be developed by influence of peers and family members. The discussions concluded parents and peers are the better judges for child food choices and nutrition. Hence peers and parent's food choices should be based on home prepared foods which are nutritious. Also, peers and parents' impact on food choices and food selection is more or less identical.

Keywords: Parents, peers, influence

Introduction:

Parents are the gatekeepers for the shaping and also determining the foods availability at the house to fulfill the nutritional needs of their child. It is very well implicit that the foods which we consume have a direct impact on our health status. The choice influences the food selection and thereby food habits, changing food habits towards dietary foods can be influenced with the help of peers. Providing positive opportunities for healthy eating by changing food habits makes their food choice healthier. Preschool children eating behaviour and their peers eating can change the child food habits. Performance is influenced by peer's decisions on food choices. Initially disliked foods can be accepted and frequently consumed by the child.

The environment in which the child grows has strong influence on food choices. Parents are the mediators for child performance and food habits. The researchers concluded that parent influence

significantly their child food selection. Parental monitoring helps in choosing the appropriate and healthy foods in place of fast, junk or lower calories food contents. Healthy eating behaviour of a child can be developed by influence of peers and family members. Discuss the school menu and give preference to child in food selection so that healthy eating habits can be cultivated.

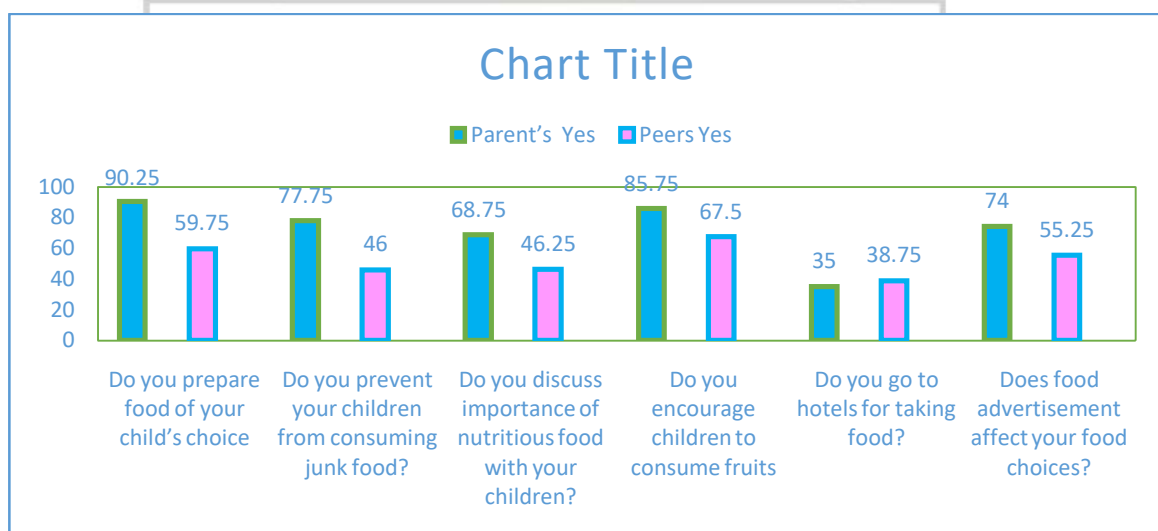
1.1 Comparative study of parents and peers on children’s food choices.

In the present study special emphasis has been given on influence of parents and peers on food selection as the child needs to be guided properly in food choices and cultivating healthy food habits. The symmetrical 6 questions influencing food selection are presented. The frequency of acceptance or rejection for parents and peers are presented separately.

Table 1.1 Comparative study of parents and peers on children’s food choices

Sr. No	Questions	Parent’s Response				Peers Response			
		Yes	Percent	No	Percent	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
1	Do you prepare food of your child’s choice	361	90.25	39	9.75	239	59.75	161	40.25
2	Do you prevent your children from consuming junk food?	311	77.75	89	22.25	184	46.00	216	54.00
3	Do you discuss importance of nutritious food with your children?	275	68.75	125	31.25	185	46.25	215	53.75
4	Do you encourage children to consume fruits	343	85.75	57	14.25	270	67.50	130	32.50
5	Do you go to hotels for taking food?	140	35.00	260	65.00	155	38.75	245	61.25
6	Does food advertisement affect your food choices?	296	74.00	104	26.00	221	55.25	179	44.75

Figure 1.1 Comparative study of parents and peers on children’s food choices



40.25% parents accepted that they always prepare food of their children's choice while 59.75% peers are also of the opinion that whatever the child likes should be prepared and asked to consume.

The consumption of fast and junk foods is prevented 77.75% parents and 46% peers. The nutritional importance of the food consumed by child is well explained by 68.75% parents and 46.25% peers.

85.75% parents encouraged fruits consumption as a part of their diet while 67.50% peers explained benefits of fruits consumption to child.

Taking food outside that is in hotels was prevented by 65% parents and 61.25% peers.

The radio and TV food advertisement affect the child food choices were accepted by 74% parents and 55.25% peers.

The negative scoring of parents ranges from 9.75% to 35% while for peers in the range of 32.50% to 54%.

The peers defined under study include siblings who are five years or more senior in age who can guide, convince child in food selection and food nutrition.

The frequency and percentage for the questions under study are unanimous for peers and parents concluding peers and parents' impact on food choices and food selection is more or less identical.

Neulinger and Symon (2011) effect of family members on healthier diet that is consumption of vegetables, dairy products are acceptable to the child. McCullough et al. (2003) children's food habits are more specially based on parental awareness about nutritional characteristics of the foods. Davidson et al. (2014) peer persuade becomes significant in contents of making the food choices in shaping and forming the children's foods inclination and eating behaviour. Stok (2014) peer influence on eating sufficient amount of food has positive impact on child behaviour. Sharp and Robinson (2015) child food selection and eating behaviour are influenced by adolescence and peers. Kalavana et al. (2010) peers healthy eating pattern influences significantly the child attitude towards food choice. Watts et al. (2018) healthier eating habits and child eating behaviour, food choice of a child are influenced by adolescence. Stead et al. (2011) healthy eating and peer pressure was predominant. Brown et al. (2015) consumption of junk foods can be prevented with peers. Stok (2014) peers feel most of young people should eat sufficient number of fruits which help in influencing behaviour of child. Gronhoj and Thogersen (2015) child fruits and vegetables intake is associated with peer pressure and healthier eating practices. Anderson et al. (2016) considerable peer pressure of ingestion of different foods among children. However, it is not clear whether or not it promotes healthy eating habits.

The above discussion concludes peer influence is bit higher than parents and eating habits

behaviour of child. Hence peer's education on selection of healthy foods and cultivating healthy food intake habits amongst the peers is necessary.

1.2. Comparison between the Parents and Peer's Food Choice Scores.

The two influencing determinants towards child food and nutrition were parents influence and peer's influence. Peers influence also includes sibling's influence. Hence a set of questions are common for parents and peers influence was separately analysed. The frequency and percentage are discussed in previous paragraphs. The score based on food of children choice, preventing junk foods consumption, improve the nutritional quality of food, nutritional importance of fruits consumption and avoiding outside eating based on advertisements.

The average score based on these 6 questions along with their standard deviation are presented in the following table.

Table 1.2 Comparison between the parents and peer's food choice scores

	ROLE OF PARENTS					
Particulars	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6
Mean	1.9025	1.7775	1.6875	1.8575	1.65	1.26
S D	0.29701	0.41645	0.46409	0.35	0.47757	0.43918
S E	0.01485	0.02082	0.0232	0.0175	0.02388	0.02196
	ROLE OF PEERS					
Mean	1.5975	1.46	1.4625	1.675	1.4475	1.4475
S D	0.49102	0.49902	0.49922	0.46896	0.49786	0.49786
S E	0.02455	0.02495	0.02496	0.02345	0.02489	0.02489
Z Value	0.77409 ^{NS}	0.693635 ^{NS}	0.46714 ^{NS}	0.445686 ^{NS}	0.415203 ^{NS}	0.400195 ^{NS}

The Z values based on the average score and standard deviation are also given below the table.

The significance of Z value was tested at 5% level of significance. It is observed that all z values i.e. for preparing food of child's choice, preventing junk foods consumption, improving food nutrition, consumption of fruits, avoiding outside eating and food selection on advertisements. It is revealed that the influence of parents and peers was equally good on all the six questions concluding there was no significant difference between the parents and peers influence on child food choices. Parents can well convince child on food selection, nutritional importance etc.

Birch (1980) examined the influences of the peers on the selections and also eating behaviour of preschool children. The study concluded that influence has significant contribution with food choices amongst preschool children. Identical findings were reported by Lowe et al. (2004), Patrick and Nicklas (2005), Dennison and Shepherd (1995), Story et al. (2002), Stratton and Bromley (1999)

examined parent influence on child food choices. The study concluded that the parents try to provide food that is convenient for preparation and preferred by child. Taylor et al (2005) studied the influence of advertising media on childhood choices. The study concluded that the effect of products promotion on food behaviour can comprise the influences on the foods preferences. Coon and Tucker (2002) studied the effect of TV on food consumption behaviour. The study concluded that children whose family members do watch the TV during the meal times consume fewer amounts of fruits and vegetables and prefer more amounts of pizzas, the snacks foods and soda. Young et al (1996) the very less advertised food such as the fruits and vegetables have a tendency to be rarely to be under consumption of TV viewing families which are positively and also negatively associated with frequency of consumption and child nutrition.

The above discussions concluded parents and peers are the better judges for child food choices and nutrition. Hence peers and parent's food choices should be based on home prepared foods which are nutritious.

Conclusions:

The study concluded that: The frequency and percentage for the questions under study are unanimous for peers and parents concluding peers and parents' impact on food choices and food selection is more or less identical. Parents and peers are the better judges for child food choices and nutrition. Hence peers and parent's food choices should be based on home prepared foods which are nutritious.

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