

A10

Eating habits of children depending on age, gender, and education status of parents

The results of this research show that the family plays a significant role in influencing and shaping children's lifestyle behaviour.

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Background

A healthy home environment and positive parental role models are the best ways to adopt a healthy diet and an active lifestyle. Early diagnosis and treatment of childhood obesity are prerequisites for preventing obesity in adulthood. This study aimed to investigate how parenting, including sociodemographic characteristics, influences children's eating habits.

Materials and methods

The study involved 1,479 primary school children and their parents from the Vojvodina region (Republic of Serbia). 795 boys and 756 girls participated in the study. The average age of the boys was 8.17 years (SD = 0.58), and the average age of the girls was 8.09 years (SD = 0.60). Data were collected through a questionnaire, which mothers completed in 81.8% of cases. The questionnaire consists of descriptive information (age, gender, educational status), and The Children's Eating Behavior Questionnaire (CEBQ). In earlier studies, good validity of the CEBQ questionnaire was established (Sleddens, Kremers, & Thijs, 2008; Wardle, Guthrie, Sanderson, & Rapoport, 2001). The CEBQ consists of eight subscales divided into two categories: "food approach" and "food avoidance".

Results

Boys showed statistically significantly higher results in the category of food approach, while girls in the category of food avoidance. Parents' ages were categorised into three groups: 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 years. Children whose parents were in the youngest age group showed higher scores in the food approach, while scores in the food avoidance subcategory were highest in children whose parents were middle-aged. A higher level of parental education has a positive impact on children's eating habits. Children from urban areas have better eating behaviour than children from rural areas.

Conclusions