Parents Perceptions of Their Personal Eating Habits and Their Child’s Eating Behaviors

Vicky Green, PhD, RD, LDN; Simone Camel, PhD, RD, LDN; Mary Fontenot, PhD, RD, LDN
Angeline Munoz, MS, RD, LDN
Louisiana Tech University

Project Overview

Parent eating behaviors influence their feeding practices which subsequently affect their child’s eating behaviors. Many available studies evaluate associations between parent eating behaviors and parent feeding practices (Birch & Fisher, 2000; Brown & Lee, 2011; Zocca et al., 2011). Some studies have determined associations between parent feeding practices and child eating behaviors, but research is lacking that examines associations between parent eating competence and their perception of their child’s eating behaviors (Birch & Fisher, 2000; Jansen et al., 2017). Parent perception of their child’s eating habits may influence the foods provided, eating behaviors, and food acceptance of the child. The purpose of the project is to evaluate associations between the parent’s perception of their own eating competence compared to their perception of their child’s eating behaviors.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference in ecSI 2.0™ score based on demographics.
2. There will be no significant difference in CEBQ score based on demographics.
3. There will be no relationship in scores between the ecSI 2.0™ score and CEBQ score.

Methods

The survey was shared on social media via a Qualtrics link for parents or caregivers (n=186) with children between the ages of three and eight. The survey link was available for two and a half weeks. The sample was relatively older with nearly half (49.5%) being 36 years or older and 75.8% held a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree. The child sex was nearly even, 53.2% were female, and child age was spread across evenly throughout the ages.

Descriptive Statistics

Eating competence and demographics:

- Most of the sample was White (82.3%), the child’s mother (93.5%) and married (88.7%).
- The sample was relatively older with nearly half (49.5%) being 36 years or older and 75.8% held a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree.
- The child sex was nearly even, 53.2% were female, and child age was spread across evenly throughout the ages.

CEBQ subscale scores and demographics:

- There was a significant main effect for parent education level on desire to drink and child age on emotional overeating, F(4, 181) = 3.318, p = .012 and F(5, 180) = 2.85, p = .02, respectively. There was a peak in mean composite emotional over-eating score at age 6.

Results

Eating competence and demographics:

- The percentage of adults that were eating competent differed by age and annual household income, X²(5,186) = 12.57, p = .03 and X²(1, 186) = 6.27, p = .01, respectively.

Figure 7: Bar graph showing frequency of eating competence between age groups.

CEBQ subscale scores and CEBQ subscale scores:

- Parent contextual skills and child food fussiness scores were negatively correlated, r(184) = -.154, p = .04
- Parent food regulation and child desire to drink scores were negatively correlated, r(184) = -.171, p = .02
- Parent food regulation and child emotional over-eating were negatively correlated, r(184) = -.166, p = .02
- Parent food regulation and child satiety responsiveness were positively correlated, r(184) = .185, p = .01
- Parent contextual skills and child enjoyment of food were positively correlated, r(184) = .228, p = .002

Conclusion

This study suggests that eating competence is more likely among older parents compared to younger parents. Parents with eating competence perceive their children to enjoy food more and have less desire to drink. Parental contextual skills are negatively associated with child food fussiness and positively associated with child enjoyment of food. Similarly, parental internal food regulation is negatively associated with child desire to drink and emotional over-eating and positively associated with satiety responsiveness. These findings suggest the eating competence among parents plays a role in the perception of their child’s eating behavior.

References