



The Relationship Between Parenting Styles and Picky Eating in Children: A Systematic Review

Rendri Asokawati Wulan Cahya ^{a*}, Nida Hasanati ^b

^a Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia

^b Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Picky eating is a behavior of choosing food in preschool-aged children that is quite dangerous if not followed up. Picky eating behavior has an impact on the physical, cognitive, and social development of children. Picky eating is influenced by parental parenting styles. This systematic review aims to analyze 12 journals that identified the types of parenting styles applied and also see the relationship between each parenting style and picky eating behavior in children. The results of the systematic review show that permissive and authoritative parenting styles tend to make children behave picky eaters, while democratic parenting styles tend to make children less picky. Permissive parenting makes children more likely to experience picky eating because of the freedom they receive without rules and restrictions. Authoritarian parenting triggers picky eating due to the tension and discomfort caused by parents' strict rules and restrictions. Democratic parenting, on the other hand, fosters openness and a sense of security with established limits and regulations, which also reduce picky eating.

Keywords: Authoritative parenting, democratic parenting, permissive parenting, picky eating, relationships

Introduction

Picky eating is a behavior that rejects certain foods in preschool-aged children. Preschoolers are between the ages of 4 and 6. During this period, a child's nutritional needs must be considered because they will be in line with their growth and development. Therefore, picky eating behavior, where a child is selective about food, is quite dangerous if ignored. If picky eating is ignored, it can lead to delayed development, such as weight and height that are not appropriate for their age. (Astuti et al., 2023). Picky eating is a problem that needs to be addressed and followed up on. (Lukitasari, 2020).

The prevalence of picky eaters in children under 5 years of age in Indonesia tends to be high with a percentage of 33.6% (Fertycia et al., 2022). From the results of previous research, it was found that the majority of parents apply a permissive parenting style and the percentage of children who are picky eaters is 45.5%. (Suryani et al., 2022). This is also supported by other findings which show that the prevalence of picky eating behavior in preschool children is recorded at 23.3% (Maolidya & Nurhaeni, 2025). Picky eating is associated with the development of gross and fine motor skills in preschool children. Furthermore, picky eating behavior also impacts children's psychosocial well-being, leading to feelings of anxiety or isolation due to picky eating behavior during communal mealtimes (Romdiyani et al., 2024). Picky eating can lead to growth problems, reduced immunity, and even impaired cognitive development. Picky eating can also increase the risk of anxiety and stress in children if this unbalanced eating pattern persists over the long term (Sakinah et al., 2025).

The above description aligns with previous research, which states that if left untreated, children who engage in picky eating will have long-term and recurring effects into adulthood. Picky eating can result in children not getting enough nutrition, and children with nutritional problems can increase the risk of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes or cardiovascular disorders at a young age (Puspita et al., 2023). Children who consume only a few types of food can miss out on various important nutrients, such as vitamins, minerals, and protein. These components play a role in bone formation, immunity, and brain development. Nutritional deficiencies resulting from a restricted diet can lead to impaired cognitive development and also increase the risk of anxiety and stress in children. (Sakinah et al., 2025).

Upon closer inspection, several factors influence children's picky eating habits, including internal and external factors. Internal factors include gadget habits and ADHD. External factors include maternal employment, parenting styles, exclusive breastfeeding, parental eating habits, and delays in introducing foods (Sakinah et al., 2025). Parenting styles play a role as a predictor of picky eating behavior (Steinsbekk et al., 2017). Psychologically, picky eating is still related to parenting styles, as a child's psychology is largely determined by parental upbringing, the environment, and relationships within the family. The three types of parenting styles—democratic, authoritarian, and permissive—all influence a child's eating attitudes and behaviors (Lukitasari, 2020).

Parents are the primary educators of children. Therefore, the family environment is often referred to as a non-formal educational environment, which influences various aspects of a child's development. Parenting styles can be defined as the efforts parents make to care for and guide their children from

birth through their maturation (Chumairoh & Darmawan, 2025). In line with other sources which say that parenting is the way parents provide rules, attention and supervision (Wulandari & Tambunan, 2024). Parenting style is a method used by fathers and mothers to guide and educate their children. This includes how parental behavior influences children. In the process of educating children, parents play a crucial role in shaping them according to the norms and values prevailing in society (Fitriani et al., 2024).

According to Baumrind, parenting styles are classified into three: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. Authoritarian parenting is a parenting style in which parents tend to be punitive and focus on children's compliance with parental demands. Permissive parenting is a parenting style in which parents are more responsive to children but do not set appropriate limits on their behavior. Authoritative parenting is a parenting style that is flexible and responsive to children's needs but still upholds reasonable standards of behavior. (Brenner & Fox, 2010). Other sources explain that parenting styles are divided into three categories: authoritarian, democratic, and permissive. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by parents controlling all of their children's activities and punishing those who violate them. Democratic parenting encourages children to be independent with limits and controls. Permissive parenting, on the other hand, allows children to do whatever they want without imposing limits (Maharani et al., 2025).

Parenting styles have a substantial impact on early childhood behavior. Cohesive and collaborative parenting styles are needed to foster healthier eating habits in children (Chen et al., 2024). Parenting styles (authoritarian, democratic, and permissive) significantly influence children's behavior (Maia et al., 2025). Permissive parenting, a parenting style that gives children complete freedom, can lead to picky eating. Authoritarian parenting can lead to picky eating because it implements strict parenting practices and requires children to obey all rules. Parents who practice democratic parenting tend to have children who are less picky eaters. (Maharani et al., 2025) .

Further review reveals that permissive parenting can lead to picky eating because it allows children freedom. This allows them to freely choose the foods they want and also those they don't, which ultimately leads to picky eating. This contrasts with children who receive a democratic parenting style, which can foster a child's interest in food. A style that allows children to choose the types of food they eat, coupled with attention to portion sizes, helps children become less picky eaters (Fitriani et al., 2024).

Method

There are several processes in the systematic review process, namely planning the review (identifying the benefits and importance of being developed), conducting the review (journal search, primary journal selection, assessing journal quality, data extraction and synthesis), and reporting (Iswinarti & Surahman, 2022). The author's review planning began with creating research questions using the SPIDER (Sample, Phenomenon of Interest, Design, Evaluation, Research Type) systematic review question formulation. The research question in this review was: What types of parenting patterns are related to picky eating/picky eating in children and are certain parenting patterns related to picky eating/picky eating? Next, the author determined the search terms and designed the search protocol. From these questions, the researcher found keywords that could be used by the author to obtain appropriate answers, namely picky eating, picky eater, parenting, democratic parenting, permissive parenting, authoritarian parenting, children, democratic, authoritarian, permissive, and relationships. These search words were used to search for articles in national and international journals on the publish or parish software. Furthermore, all journals The author checked for duplication using Mendeley. The author screened all journals that had passed duplication based on the title and abstract. Journals that had passed the title and abstract screening were then analyzed based on their full versions. After selecting 219 journals, 12 journals were found that discussed the relationship between parenting patterns and picky eating/eater children. The selection graph can be seen in Figure 1. The author determined the review limitations, namely (1) Journals discussing parenting patterns with picky eating/eater children (2) Quantitative research type, 3) National and international journals, 4) Research conducted in 2022-2025. Journals not included in the criteria are: 1) Journals that discuss parenting patterns but are not related to the problem of picky eating/eater, 2) Qualitative research type, 3) Systematic review scientific papers, 4) Scoping review scientific papers, 5) Works in the form of books and theses.

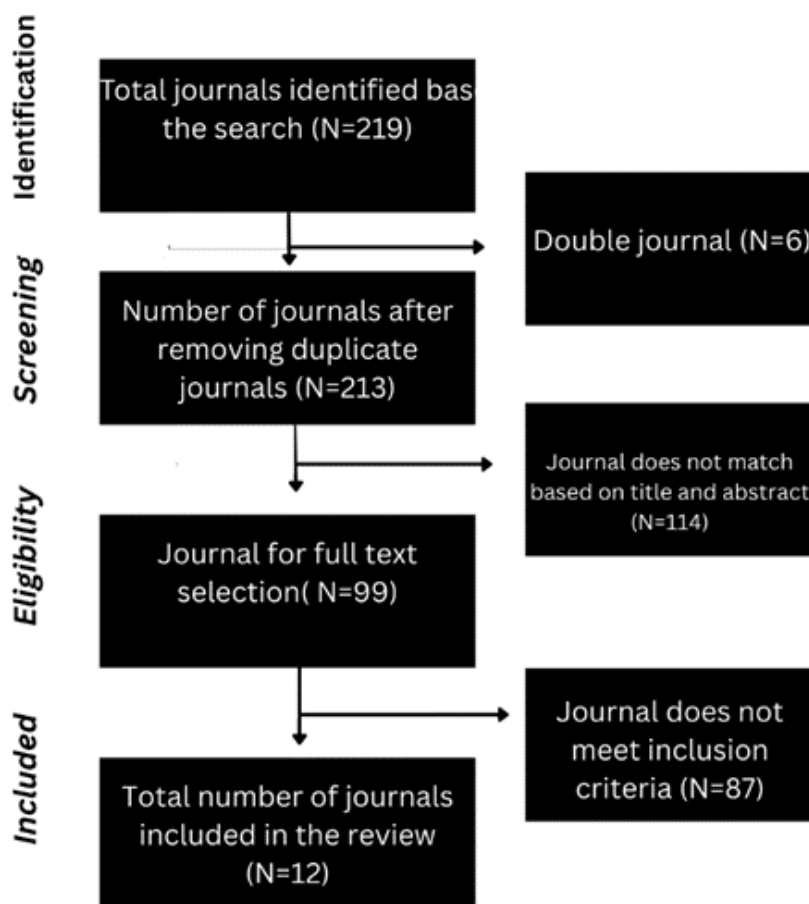


Figure 1 PRISMA chart for journal selection flow

Discussion

Picky eating is a behavioral eating disorder in children related to psychological development and growth. It is characterized by a child's reluctance to try new foods and a tendency to choose only foods they like. This condition causes children to restrict food choices (especially vegetables and fruit), and to exhibit extreme disinterest in food, often using various methods (sucking on food, covering their mouth, or even claiming they are full) when faced with undesired foods (Utami, 2016). Children who are picky eaters tend to have a less varied diet compared to children who are not picky eaters (Priyanti, 2013).

Picky eating behavior, if not handled properly, will have long-term impacts on children's physical and even mental health (Sakinah et al., 2025). Being picky about food can lead to children lacking essential nutrients. This can potentially lead to decreased brain function, such as concentration, problem-solving, and language development. This occurs because certain nutrients necessary for brain development are not being met (Roberts et al., 2022). It is also reinforced that previous research shows that there is a relationship between picky eating behavior and psychological problems such as anxiety and less than optimal social interactions (Taylor & Emmett, 2019). In addition, children with picky eating behavior will experience problems with their motor performance (Chao, 2018).

The previous description shows that picky eating behavior is dangerous if it persists over a long period. Several factors influence picky eating, including both internal and external factors. However, picky eating behavior is more common during the preschool years, when children are still under parental supervision (Taylor & Emmett, 2019). Pressure and control exerted by parents have a relationship with children's eating behavior, including picky eating (Costa & Oliveira, 2023). In line with previous research findings, parenting strategies will have an impact in the form of encouragement to try new foods, so that it can be interpreted as having an influence in reducing picky eating behavior (Chen et al., 2024). A supportive and consistent parenting style tends to prevent children from experiencing picky eating (Podlesak et al., 2017). The previous description indicates that parenting is the most influential factor in children's picky eating behavior. Therefore, researchers conducted a systematic study to determine which parenting styles can reduce or increase picky eating behavior, as follows:

Table 1

Types of Parenting Styles for Picky Eating/Eater Children

Author	Title	Types of parenting styles	Results
(Fitriani et al., 2024)	The relationship between parenting styles and picky eating behavior in preschool-aged children (aged 4-6 years)	Democratic parenting style	Democratic parenting: Research shows that the majority of child respondents at Nada Selorejo Kindergarten in Malang City do not exhibit picky eating behavior. (<i>non-picky eaters</i>). There is a relationship between parenting styles and picky eating behavior in preschool-aged children.
(Maolidya & Nurhaeni, 2025b)	The relationship between parenting patterns and maternal knowledge about nutrition with picky eating behavior in preschool children	Authoritarian, permissive, and democratic parenting styles	Authoritarian parenting styles are positively correlated with picky eater behavior, permissive parenting styles are negatively correlated with picky eater behavior, and democratic parenting styles are negatively correlated with picky eater behavior.
(Maharani et al., n.d.)	The relationship between parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating in pre-school children at Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Dawaul Munawar, Cihideung Community Health Center, Tasikmalaya City	Permissive parenting style	There is a significant positive relationship between parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating in preschool children.
(Magdalena et al., 2024)	The relationship between parenting patterns and the incidence of picky eating in preschool children at Islamic Preschool Permatasari Tlogosari Semarang	Authoritarian parenting style	The study found that 50% of picky eater children had authoritarian parents.
(Ariyanti et al., 2023)	<i>Factors associated with picky eating in preschool children</i>	Democratic parenting style	There is a relationship between parenting styles and parental eating behaviors and picky eating behavior in preschool-aged children. Democratic parenting styles and positive parenting behaviors do not lead to picky eating in children.
(Aishah et al., 2025)	The association between exclusive breastfeeding, parenting styles, and picky eating behavior among preschool children at state kindergarten pembina meulaboh, west aceh	Permissive parenting style	No significant association was found between parenting style and picky eating behavior. Although democratic parenting emphasizes guidance without coercion, the excessive permissiveness of parents in this approach may have influenced the findings, leading to the lack of observed association between parenting style and picky eating behavior.

Author	Title	Types of parenting styles	Results
(Rahayu et al., 2023)	The relationship of maternal parenting with the incidence of picky eater in pre-school age children at tk tunas harapan winduraja village	Democratic parenting style	There is a link between parenting styles and picky eating in preschool children. Children raised democratically tend to develop positive acceptance habits.
(Samiah et al., 2023)	Knowledge, parenting patterns and eating habits of parents regarding eating difficulties in children aged 4-6 years	Permissive parenting style	There is a significant relationship between parental knowledge, parenting styles, and eating habits and eating difficulties in preschool children aged 4-6. Young mothers, who lack experience and often give their children more freedom, can lead to picky eating.
(Suryani et al., 2022)	The correlation between parenting style and picky eater habits on the preschool students	Permissive parenting style	There is a relationship between parenting patterns and picky eating behavior in preschool children.
(Fertycia et al., 2022)	Factors related to the occurrence of picky eating in toddlers	Authoritarian parenting style	There is a significant relationship between parenting styles and picky eating. Research shows that parents who practice authoritarian parenting have higher rates of picky eating than those who practice democratic and permissive parenting styles.
(Nugeraheny et al., 2022)	The relationship between parenting patterns and feeding problems in preschool children at Aisyiyah Banyudono Ponorogo Kindergarten	Authoritarian, permissive, and democratic parenting styles.	There is a positive relationship with a weak correlation between parenting patterns and feeding problems in preschool children. In this study, there are three parenting patterns, namely authoritarian, permissive and democratic parenting patterns.
(Rizky et al., 2022)	Parenting patterns towards children's eating behavior in economically weak families in Cilame Village	Authoritarian parenting style	The result is that authoritarian parenting patterns influence eating behavior with a percentage of 7.7%.

Table 1 shows that several types of parenting styles are related to picky eating behavior. All of the journals analyzed indicated that parenting styles were related to picky eating behavior. Four journals stated that permissive parenting styles were associated with picky eating behavior.^r (Lukitasari, 2020). From the previous description, it can be interpreted that permissive parenting patterns are positively correlated with picky eating/eating behavior (Maolidya & Nurhaeni, 2025). So when a child receives a permissive parenting style, the child has a tendency to be picky/eat (Astuti et al., 2023). In permissive parenting, children have freedom to choose their food. This condition results in children choosing only a few favorite foods (minimal food variety) (Podlesak et al., 2017). Suboptimal parenting can also potentially lead to picky eating in children. Permissive parenting is a concern, as it influences children's eating behavior (Hayati & Amran, 2022)

As for the results of the analysis, as many as 3 journals used an authoritarian parenting style which showed that this parenting style was related to picky eating/eater behavior (Lukitasari, 2020). In line with previous research which states that authoritarian parenting can cause children to experience picky eating/eater behavior (Suryani et al., 2022). In line with other findings which state that authoritarian parenting is detrimental to children's consumption patterns, in this context, authoritarian parenting tends to make children picky eaters (Qudri et al., 2025). This can occur because authoritarian parenting emphasizes that children must obey the rules set by their parents. Parents with an authoritarian parenting style tend to be pushy, harsh, and rigid. Parents with an authoritarian parenting style tend to ignore their children's feelings about the rules they have set. Authoritarian parenting is a parenting style that tends to be considered disruptive to child development. The previous description is supported by previous findings that suggest that authoritative parenting negatively impacts child development (Taib et al., 2020).

Authoritative parenting creates a tense atmosphere between parents and children. Children tend to be fearful. In this context, children who receive authoritative parenting tend to experience higher levels of picky eating. This can occur because the tense atmosphere when eating with parents creates an uncomfortable situation, so children tend to choose monotonous or similar foods and avoid new or unfamiliar foods (Podlesak et al., 2017). And it has also been proven in previous research that authoritative parenting makes children more picky eaters (Lukitasari, 2020). So authoritative parenting is detrimental to children's eating conditions because it makes children picky eaters (Simamora & Siallagan, 2020).

The results from the table above show that three journals indicate a relationship between democratic parenting and picky eating behavior. This aligns with previous similar research findings, indicating that democratic parenting is associated with picky eating behavior. However, the relationship is that the more a child receives democratic parenting, the lower the child's picky eating behavior (Maolidya & Nurhaeni, 2025). Democratic parenting makes children less likely to engage in picky eating behavior (Maharani et al., 2025). Democratic parenting provides the opportunity to give freedom and children feel cared for, with a parenting style that does not cause feelings of anxiety, fear or tension, this can prevent children from behaving as picky eaters (Lukitasari, 2020).

Democratic parenting fosters openness between parents and children, while also fostering a secure attachment. In this context, democratic parenting can reduce the likelihood of children experiencing picky eating (Lukitasari, 2020). This occurs because democratic parenting is a parenting style in which parents act as a medium for stimulating children to become more independent. Parents with this democratic parenting style tend to be more caring and attentive. This type of parenting style creates space for children to open up to their parents (A. Tabi'in, 2020). Democratic parenting is a parenting style that uses a lot of responsive feeding. Therefore, responsive feeding can be used to overcome the problem of picky eating because responsive feeding can be used to improve children's self-feeding abilities and responses to parents' verbal language (Lukitasari, 2020).

Continuing from the results of the table, two journals were obtained which stated that parenting patterns are related to picky eating behavior and in these journals, each parenting pattern, namely permissive, authoritative, and democratic parenting patterns, is reviewed regarding picky eating behavior (Nugraheny et al., 2022; Maolidya & Nurhaeni, 2025). These findings align with previous research that examined the three parenting styles and their respective influences on children's behavior. However, each parenting style exhibited both negative and positive relationships. Permissive and authoritarian parenting styles tended to have a positive relationship, while democratic parenting tended to have a negative relationship (Lukitasari, 2020).

Reinforcing the previous explanation, it was found that permissive parenting is considered a soft and less empowering parenting style because it gives children freedom without any restrictions on norms that children must follow. This condition tends to make children act according to their desires. So in the context of the problem of picky eating, if a child does not like a food, it is easy to refuse that food. Therefore, permissive parenting tends to make children behave more picky eaters. Similarly, with authoritarian parenting, which in this parenting style tends to be quite rigid and tense, ultimately making children feel insecure, making them more likely to experience picky eating (Lukitasari, 2020b).

Conclusion

A systematic review found 12 journals showing that parenting styles are associated with picky eating behavior in children. Four journals examined the relationship between permissive parenting and picky eating, three journals examined the relationship between authoritative parenting and picky eating, three journals examined the relationship between democratic parenting and picky eating, and two journals examined the relationship between parenting styles and picky eating, each of which discussed each parenting style. Authoritarian parenting makes children more picky eaters due to the tense and fearful conditions imposed by parents. Permissive parenting can also lead to picky eating due to the situation that spoils children with excessive freedom. Democratic parenting tends to reduce picky eating behavior because in this parenting style, children are given freedom but still provide limits or rules, and the creation of safe and open relationships minimizes children's picky eating behavior.

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