

Integrating Family Communication Patterns and Parents Feeding Applications in Children's Food and Language Inclinations

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ABSTRACT

The relationships, manners, emotions, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of parents are all part of their childcare practices. This has to do with providing children with early learning, safety and security, responsive care, healthy eating, and good health. The primary learning environment for children is the family. It is the duty of parents to support their children in completing language-related developmental activities. Parents should be the ones to motivate their children to develop their language and social abilities from a young age. This research reviews the literature on how parents' feeding practices and family communication patterns can influence children's food and language preferences in Owerri villages in Imo State, Nigeria. Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) is the theoretical framework utilized to examine the communication that takes place at family dinners. For the study, three goals and one hypothesis were developed. Purposively, four primary health centers were chosen. 697 respondents made up the study's population (511 females and 187 males). The parents were given systematic checklists and questionnaires about childcare methods as part of the study. The main conclusions demonstrated that parents' feeding applications were below average, psychosocial support practices were mediocre, and family communication patterns were significantly below the criteria. The results also showed a substantial difference between parental childcare methods and family communication patterns, psychological support practices, and feeding applications. Stakeholders are advised to strengthen positive family communication patterns, parents to use play materials to improve their interactions and psychosocial support techniques with their children, and the government to reintroduce environmental applications for parent feeding in every neighborhood

INTRODUCTION

The foods that children can eat and how much they can eat are determined by their parents. Through their own eating habits, tastes, and attitudes, they set an example for their kids' food choices and preferences (Birch, Savage, and Ventura, 2017). However, by expressing their preferences, negotiating, persuading, and demanding that they not consume the foods their parents supply, children have an impact on their parents' eating choices.

Children's eating habits, preferences, surroundings, and eating experiences are greatly influenced by their parents. Rahman, Tariqujjaman, Ahmed, and Sarma (2023); Millanzi, Herman, and Ambrose (2023); Marshak, Young, Bontrager, and Boyd (2017). Given the dynamic nature of the parent-child relationship, determining the extent of parental influence on children's attitudes is challenging. In response to the traits and qualities of their children, parents modify their feeding applications, creating a reciprocal interaction. Previous research has primarily focused on a one-way interaction, maintaining parents as the primary influencer.

More recently, though, research has looked into a reciprocal relationship, with some studies attempting to clarify the intricate relationships between parenting and kids' eating habits. Therefore, the goal of this study is to investigate how parents' feeding applications and family communication patterns can influence children's linguistic and dietary preferences. It also identifies the relationship between children's food preferences and the eating habits of their parents. Early childhood language development is influenced by a number of elements, including as gender, family relationships, family socioeconomic situation, IQ, and health. One element that affects language development is family. The experience of contact and communication inside the family setting, where parents instruct, train, and model language for children, is where this relationship begins. The development of a child's language is made possible by a strong bond between parents and children.

Imitation of sound and touch is the first step in language development, and subsequent advancements are closely linked to the growth of social and cognitive capacities. Language serves as a tool for thought. The process of comprehending, observing, and experiencing relationships is called thinking. Proper communication is made possible by language as an instrument. Children can interact socially and communicate with others more easily because to language.

Children often have the strong desire to learn to speak. This is as a result of two things:

1. Learning to speak is the main means of socializing.
2. Learning to speak is a suggestion to gain independence.

For youngsters, language is a highly important tool for helping them develop their spiritual functions. Children should become proficient in two main skills that are fundamental to speaking in order to improve communication.

1. They have to develop their ability to understand what other people say
2. They have to develop their speaking skills in order that other people understand them.

Typically, a child's environment and surroundings have an impact on their language development. Engaging with more experienced speakers is essential for helping kids improve their communication skills.

Statement of the Problem

Parenting techniques are complex processes that vary from society to society due to environmental and cultural influences. Interactions, actions, feelings, information, convictions, attitudes, and methods pertaining to early learning, safety and security, responsive caregiving, nutrition, and children's health. To address the physical, mental, and social needs of the developing child, these techniques demand time, care, money, and support from parents or other caregivers. Parental practices should be founded on age-appropriate, balanced food provision, dietary variety, and parent-child commitment activities, according to Islam, Khalil, and Rahman (2022).

In impoverished nations like Nigeria, they are not sufficiently supplied, which has an impact on the growth and development of the kid and typically results in malnutrition. Parental practices include feeding children based on their food and language preferences, family communication styles, and psychosocial assistance for children. The caliber of these activities shows how open, alert, loving, and affectionate the parents are, how attached they are to their child, and how they support their independence and curiosity. There is strong evidence linking favorable behavioral outcomes in children and growth outcomes to psychological support of children, family communication patterns, and parents' feeding practices in relation to their children's food and linguistic inclinations.

Based on the aforementioned, it can be concluded that parental practices regarding family communication patterns and parents' feeding applications in children's food and language inclinations need to encompass a wide range of regions that should be integrated. Therefore, in order to determine the degree of conformity with family communication patterns and parents' feeding applications in children's food and language inclinations, this study examined parental practices in Owerri villages in Imo State, Nigeria. The study also looked at the psychosocial practices of parents with reference to the appropriate learning activities and the holistic development of their children.

Purpose of Study

In Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria, this study sought to investigate parental practices on family communication patterns and parents' feeding applications in relation to children's food and language inclinations.

Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the parental practices concerning family communication patterns in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria,
2. To identify the parents feeding applications in children's food in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria,
3. To examine the language inclinations practices by parents in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. 1.What are the parental practices concerning family communication patterns in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria?
2. 2.What are the parents feeding applications in children's food in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria?
3. 3.What are the language inclinations practices by parents in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria?

Statement of the Hypothesis

Parents' feeding applications in their children's meals and their linguistic inclinations do not significantly differ from one another in terms of family communication patterns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental Feeding Practices

Parents are largely in charge of influencing their children's eating environment throughout childhood, especially when it comes to their urge to choose or buy. Along with the interactions they have with their children during mealtimes, this also involves the rules they establish regarding the frequency, scheduling, and layout of the meals. The techniques parents employ to regulate and alter what, when, and how much their children eat are referred to as parental feeding practices. These behaviors are similar to monitoring the amount of food consumed, restricting particular meals, or pressing the youngster to eat more.

Numerous interrelated factors, including socioeconomic traits like family income and education, cultural background, personality traits, and psychological well-being, have an impact on these habits. In addition to these considerations, Rahman, Tariqujjaman, Ahmed, and Sarma (2023) observe that parents seem to adjust their feeding habits based on their child's eating habits and temperament, as well as their knowledge and perceptions of these characteristics.

Assessment and Classification of Parental Feeding Practices

In assessing different aspects of parental feeding practices, Vaughn, Tabak, Bryant and Ward (2013) state that various instruments have been developed. The most broadly used tool according to de Lauzon-Guillain, B.; Oliveira, A.; Charles, M.A.; Grammatikaki, E.; Jones, L.; Rigal, N.; Lopes, C.; Manios, Y.; Moreira, P.; Emmett, P.; et al. (2012) is Child Feeding Questionnaire (CFQ), which has indicated to have excellent psychometric properties in the paediatric population. There are seven subscales in this survey. Four of these evaluate how parents view their child's and their own body weight, which probably influences how they regulate their child's diet: Assessing parents' perceptions of their role in childrearing, perceived parent weight, perceived child weight, and concerns around kid weight are all part of perceived responsibility. The remaining three subscales assess the attitudes and feeding behaviors of parents: The degree to which parents restrict their children's access to food is known as restriction; the propensity to encourage youngsters to eat more is known as pressure to eat; and the degree to which parents keep an eye on their eating is known as monitoring.

Vaughn, Ward, Fisher, Faith, Hughes, Kremers, Musher-Eizenman, O'Connor, Patrick and Power (2015) categorized parental feeding practices written in literature into triple overarching concepts – coercive control, structure, and autonomy support – with numerous detailed practices within each concept.

- A detailed control that shows an effort to dominate, pressure, or impose the parents' will over the child's diet is known as coercive control. This includes what they called instrumental feeding, which includes actions such as restricting the child's access to food, making them eat, and using food as a reward or to manage unpleasant emotions.
- Structure focuses on how parents set up their child's eating environment to support learning and the maintenance of specific dietary behaviors. This includes parents consistently enforcing food-related norms and boundaries. According to the experts, structure entails procedures like guidelines, boundaries, supervision, role modeling, and the accessibility and comprehensibility of food.
- Supporting "psychological support and encouragement of liberty" is referred to as autonomy support. This entails giving kids choices and allowing them to explore at an age-appropriate pace while also supporting their capacity to fit in if a parent isn't around. Parental techniques that promote autonomy include using reasoning to persuade the child to change their eating reasoning, providing positive reinforcement through verbal feedback such as praise and encouraging the child to adopt healthy eating habits, involving the child in meal planning and preparation, and providing the child with skills that aid in making informed food choices.

Language Intelligence

The most commonly employed intelligence, according to Azhim (2007), is language intelligence. Humans use language to communicate. The capacity to convey and comprehend knowledge to others, both verbally and in writing, is referred to as language intelligence. Another name for language intelligence is linguistic intelligence, which includes skills like proficient word use in writing and speech. Sensitivity to word meaning, word order, sound system, rhythm, and intonation patterns are all components of intelligence.

The family environment, which expands inside the family, is one of the many ways that the environment has contributed to and taught children about language. Additionally, the community setting in which youngsters reside fosters their language development. This facilitates the process of personality development that results from interactions with the local population and unique linguistic and behavioral traits. There are numerous phases in language development that require practice and experience. Throughout childhood, the environment shapes and supplies necessary stimulus.

In language every member of the community must develop four language skills;

- Listening/Listening,
- Speaking,
- Reading, and
- Writing

Spoken language includes speaking and listening, whereas written language includes reading and writing. When learning a language, the ability to listen leads to hearing, and speaking follows imitation. Humans attempt to learn to read when they can speak by identifying letters, syllables, and words. They then learn to write and construct sentences that convey their thoughts and wishes.

Language is one of a child's most important developmental milestones. Because children's ability to communicate in their surroundings is mostly determined by their language skills. Early language development can more readily lessen a child's sensitivity to rage, according to Pennsylvania State University experts. Even with their language skills, youngsters find it simpler to communicate their emotions and generate opportunities for conversation with teachers or parents. Early language development helps children control their anger and avoid expressing their feelings too quickly. According to Chaer (2010), children who struggle with language express their frustration more quickly.

Theoretical Framework

Family Communication Pattern Theory (FCPT) (Koerner & Schrodtt, 2014)

Koerner and Schrodtt (2014) state that the Family Communication Patterns Theory (FCPT) is a widely used theory of family communication. Children's dietary preferences are explained by this theoretical underpinning. Vollmer and Mobley (2013) state that the theoretical underpinning investigates the relationship between families' communicative orientation and the eating habits of their parents. Significant values and beliefs that are shared within families and their connections are reflected in this. This hypothesis states that in conversation-oriented situations, families tend to talk about how members of the family see and think about themselves while focusing on items. The families are separated based on their conformity and conversational orientations using this median.

The four family types are: consensual, pluralistic, protective and laissez-faire.

- I. Both conversation and conformity inclinations are high in consensual families. The parents of these families consider themselves to be the ultimate decision-makers, but they are also quite interested in what their kids have to say about a variety of topics. They decide and resolve conflicts by listening to their kids and taking the time and making the effort to explain their values, views, and choices so that their kids may see why they made them.
- II. Families that are pluralistic tend to be more talkative and less conformist. These parents don't feel the need to dictate to their kids, make decisions for them, or support their choices. In contrast to who promotes the argument, opinions are openly discussed and evaluated according to their argumentative backing.
- III. Families that are protective are more conformist and less talkative. Families in this category talk about a few issues within the family and place a strong emphasis on deference to authority. In this place, parents typically make decisions for their kids and don't see the use in telling them why.
- IV. Laissez-faire is the last type of communication. In both directions, this is low. Here, families don't talk much to each other, and parents tend to think that everyone in the family should be free to make their own decisions.

Empirical Review

According to studies by Nørgaard, Brunsø, Christensen, and Mikkelsen (2007) and Olsen & Ruiz (2008), families with a high conversation orientation produce children who influence their parents' purchasing power and have a greater awareness of autonomous consumption than families with a high conformity orientation. According to Koerner and Schrodtt (2014), conversation-oriented families are typically depicted as being preoccupied with providing an explanation for their observations and achievements.

A study by Nørgaard and Brunsø (2011) questioned the conventional wisdom on food-related research. According to their study, a number of families engaged in conversational communication by talking about basic food-related topics, such as opinions and preferences.

Individual dietary preferences and alternatives show variations with time, context, and circumstances, according to prior study (Marshall and O'Donohoe, 2010). Goal-directed behaviors with specific content that reinforces parents' influence over their children's diet are explained by the feeding habits of parents (Vollmer and Mobley, 2013). Feeding habits vary depending on the situation (Vollmer and Mobley, 2013), in contrast to FCPT, which depicts the family members' static values (Koerner and Schrodtt, 2014). Therefore, the theoretical approach of this study explores whether families have different goals in uncommon situations and how this affects the feeding and communication habits of parents. For example, will parents be able to communicate in a consensual manner during hectic weekdays while being more pluralistic on the weekends when they spend more time cooking and shopping? Therefore, including time, circumstance, or context in the current study allows for a broader understanding of the relationship between family feeding practices and children's food choices and family communication patterns.

Parents employ limitations, rewards, pressure, arguments, hiding food, and creating a pleasant environment during meals, according to (Rollins, Loken, Savage, and Birch, 2014). A common feeding technique with parents is to restrict their children's access to foods they want. Giving children non-food rewards, such as stickers and toys, or verbally praising them for good behavior increases their desire to try new foods (Horne et al., 2011). Children's inclinations for the food reward increase and their preferences for the targeted food decrease when food rewards, such as dessert, are offered. According to Sleddens, Kremers, Stafleu, Dagnelie, De Vries, and Thijs (2014), forcing kids to eat food they don't want to eat or to eat more than they want to makes them despise it. Confrontational techniques like reminding kids to finish their veggies (Khandpur, Blaine, Fisher, and Davison, 2014), switching up dinner dishes to include healthier options (Peters, Parletta, Lynch, and Campbell, 2014), and promoting a joyful, calm environment during family meals (Sleddens et al., 2014) are helpful and accommodating ways to improve kids' diets.

METHODOLOGY

The survey design was used in this investigation. Selected parents provided pertinent information. A sample population was purposefully chosen from the Owerri Municipal Council's Primary Health Care (PHC) Center based on accessibility and distance. Based on their participation at the several council meetings with the study team, a total of 60 parents from the PHC were sampled. We created and distributed structured questionnaires and checklists on parental practices pertaining to family communication styles and parents' feeding applications in relation to their children's linguistic and food preferences. The checklists and questionnaires were distributed by researchers and were immediately gathered. The mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research topics. The acceptability of the questionnaire's question items was assessed using the 2.50 decisions point. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using ANOVA.

RESULTS

Parental Feeding Practices in Owerri Municipal Council

Research Question 1: What are the parental practices concerning family communication patterns in Owerri communities in Imo State?

Table 1. Mean Ratings of the Respondents on the Parental Practices Concerning Family Communication Patterns in Owerri Communities in Imo State

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
1	Parents are the primary caretakers responsible for shaping their children's food environment	1	27	33	16	2.83	Accepted
2	The interactions Parents have with their children during mealtimes shape their children's food environment	3	32	38	4	2.56	Accepted
3	Parental feeding practices are the strategies used by parents to control what their child eats	21	26	20	10	2.25	Rejected
4	These practices are influenced by socioeconomic characteristics,	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
5	These practices are influenced by family income and education,	6	27	31	10	2.66	Accepted
6	These practices are influenced by cultural background	8	38	19	12	2.45	Rejected
7	These practices are influenced by personality factors	6	37	28	6	2.44	Accepted

Grand mean 2.51 Accepted

The Owerri Municipal Council's parental feeding practices are shown in Table 1. The study's parent participants were shown seven (7) question items. The aggregate mean of 2.51 from the parents' responses indicated that the feeding practices of the parents in Owerri Municipal Council were, on average. This demonstrated that although there exist parental feeding habits, they are typically

insufficient to support children's growth due to a number of limitations, such as the absence of toys and other playthings that the kids need.

Research Question 2: What are the parents feeding applications in children's food in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 2. Mean Ratings of the Respondents on the Parents Feeding Applications in Children's Food in Owerri Communities in Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
1	Parents feeding practices are specific strategies that parents use to influence children's food choices	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
2	Parents feeding practices are specific strategies that parents use to influence children's food acceptance patterns.	8	38	19	12	2.45	Rejected
3	Parents feeding practices are specific strategies that parents use to influence children's food eating behaviours	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
4	Parents' responsive feeding practices is characterized by recognition of children's hunger cues Parents' involvement promotes children's healthy eating behaviours	1	27	33	16	2.83	Accepted
5	Parents Feeding practices includes allowing children to control the amount of food they eat Parents' controlling feeding practices refers to the extent to which parents show control and supervision in their feeding practices	8	38	19	12	2.45	Rejected
6	Controlling feeding practices are linked to negative outcomes in terms of eating behaviour	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
7	Parental feeding practices and children's dietary outcomes may help improve parents' use of responsive feeding practices and reduce controlling feeding practices.	6	27	31	10	2.66	Accepted

Grand mean 2.51 Accepted

The Owerri Municipal Council's parent feeding applications for children's meals are shown in Table 2. The participants in the study were shown seven (7) question items. The study's 2.50 decision point was used to reject every question item. The findings showed that the amount of food that parents are feeding their kids is far less than what is necessary for their proper development. The youngsters are specifically not fed enough of any essential food classes or enough fleshy foods like meat, fish, or eggs. Based on the comments of the respondents, the parents' feeding applications of their children's food were often below expectations. The approved overall grand mean is 2.51. Thus, it can be concluded that parents' feeding methods of their children's food, which are influenced by

personality traits in the study, worsen the way the children's eating environment is shaped.

Research Question 3: What are the language inclinations practices by parents in Owerri communities in Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 3. Mean Ratings of the Respondents on the Language Inclinations Practices by Parents in Owerri Communities in Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
1	Practice of pronunciation of short or simple sentences is a stimulus by parents for children to learn languages.	21	26	20	10	2.25	Rejected
2	Parents interacting with children help them to recognize objects around them.	3	32	38	4	2.56	Accepted
3	Parents talking to their children help in the process of stimulating them to listen.	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
4	The routine of storytelling by parents stimulates early childhood language skills.	1	27	33	16	2.83	Accepted
5	The storytelling process helps the child to develop his imagination regarding the images he sees.	8	38	19	12	2.45	Rejected
6	Providing opportunities for children to retell the contents of stories they have heard can sharpening their imagination.	6	37	28	6	2.44	Rejected
7	Children use language in various ways for various purposes.	6	27	31	10	2.66	Accepted

Grand mean 2.51 Accepted

The language development preferences of Owerri Municipal Council children are shown in Table 3. Three of the seven (7) question items that were given to the study participants were accepted, while four (7) were refused. This suggests that parents' practice pronouncing short or simple words is a stimulus for children to acquire languages, as the researchers found that children's pronunciation was below average. As a result, the findings showed that the methods pertaining to children's inclinations for language development are insufficient to improve the way in which the children utilize language for a variety of objectives.

Hypothesis Testing

In terms of parents feeding their children food and parents' language tendencies, the researchers evaluated the hypothesis that there are no appreciable differences in parental behaviors regarding family communication patterns. The test results show that there are notable differences in the ways that parents in Owerri Municipal Council behave when it comes to family communication patterns and language inclinations. The findings showed that parental practices regarding family communication patterns varied significantly among the three research areas. According to the post-hoc test analysis, there is a substantial difference between the linguistic inclinations and practices of parents of the surroundings and the applications that parents feed in their children's food.

Consequently, the hypothesis was disproved, and it was determined that there are notable differences in parental practices with regard to family communication patterns, language inclinations, and parents' feeding applications of their children's food.

Table 4. ANOVA Test Results on the Parental Practices Concerning Family Communication Patterns in Terms of Parents Feeding Applications in Children's Food, and Language Inclinations Practices

Source	Type III sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Intercept	164.303	1	164.303	5117.410	<0.001
Error	0.225	7	0.032		

DISCUSSION

The Owerri Municipal Council has adopted some parental feeding habits as a result of this study. According to the first research question, parents are the main caregivers who shape their children's eating habits, which fall far short of what the WHO recommends for healthy growth and development (2010). In particular, the kids don't receive enough focus in the classes on vital nutrition. Parental feeding practices are the methods parents employ to regulate what their children eat, and it was also discovered that the interactions parents have with their kids during mealtimes influence their dietary environment. Poor growth and development may result from parents' contacts with their children in Owerri Municipal Council being inadequate. The findings support the claims made by Islam et al. (2022) and Millanzi, Herman, and Ambrose (2023) that age-appropriate, balanced food provision and parent-child engagement activities should be the main focus of parental childcare in regard to eating practices.

Parents' feeding applications of children's food in Owerri Municipal Council were, on average, based on the parents' responses to the study's second research question. This suggests that although parents feed their kids food, the amount is not as large as anticipated. Due to a number of constraints, such as an inadequate home environment, parents' feeding applications of their children's food are therefore insufficient to improve their developmental process. The conclusion of this is that a child's performance will be subpar because of a minor shortcoming in the feeding apps that each parent provides. As anticipated, this may eventually have an impact on the child's overall level of activity, emotional stability, and intellectual capacity. This supports the findings of Skar et al. (2019), who found that children who were exposed to parent feeding applications showed improvement, and the intervention group's parent feeding application behaviors significantly increased.

Lastly, the Owerri Municipal Council's findings on water cleanliness and hygiene showed that children's inclinations toward language development in this area were average. As a result, the inclinations of children's language development are insufficient to stop parents from introducing applications into their homes. The implication is that a child's growth and development may be hampered by inadequate language development preferences. This result is

consistent with a study by Marshak, Young Bontrager, and Boyd (2017) that shows children from households where language development is not consistently encouraged are more likely to be underdeveloped.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children's feeding habits and the amount and quality of food they receive are directly influenced by their parents. Given that children's actions also affect parents' choices, the link between parents and children is probably reciprocal. It is challenging to draw broad conclusions since the extent to which feeding practices are thought to be the primary drivers of influence varies depending on the type of activities.

The family has a significant influence on how a youngster behaves and speaks. It is the duty of parents to support their children in completing their developmental tasks, including language development. Parents can help children develop their language skills by introducing appropriate and polite greetings during family conversations, practicing the pronunciation of short or simple sentences as the child recognizes them, asking others, letting kids know what's around them, letting them talk, telling stories, and using democratic parenting techniques.

Limitations

Limitations in the study includes;

1. Lack of longitudinal studies has a long follow-up periods and studies examining parental feeding practices.
2. Most studies center on self-reported amount that are the main practical technique for assessing behaviours in large-scale studies.
3. Previous studies have demonstrated reliable relationship between parental information and behavioural evaluation of eating.
4. Long-term interventions target parental feeding practices at diverse developmental stages should be investigated to fully value the cause-and-effect relationship of effective strategies for promoting healthy development of children.
5. Parents should prioritize accessible feeding practices that esteem children's satiety cues.

FURTHER STUDY

1. Given the findings of this study, there is a need for stakeholders to strengthen good feeding practices knowledge provision for parents nursing children.
2. Communities should enhance their interaction with their children because improved family communication patterns and parents feeding applications in children's food and language inclinations enhance children's development.
3. Government should reintroduce environmental inspection officers in the community so as to enforce family communication patterns.
4. 4.Finally, parents feeding applications in children's food should be established in the Municipal Council.

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