



Research report

A model of goal directed vegetable parenting practices ☆

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore factors underlying parents' motivations to use vegetable parenting practices (VPP) using the Model of Goal Directed Vegetable Parenting Practices (MGDVPP) (an adaptation of the Model of Goal Directed Behavior) as the theoretical basis for qualitative interviews. In-depth interviews with parents of 3–5-year-old children were conducted over the telephone by trained interviewers following a script. MGDVPP constructs provided the theoretical framework guiding script development. Audio-recordings were transcribed and analyzed, with themes coded independently by two interviewers. Fifteen participants completed the study. Interviews elicited information about possible predictors of motivations as they related to VPP, and themes emerged related to each of the MGDVPP constructs (attitudes, positive anticipated emotions, negative anticipated emotions, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control). Parents believed child vegetable consumption was important and associated with child health and vitality. Parents described motivations to engage in specific VPP in terms of emotional responses, influential relationships, food preferences, resources, and food preparation skills. Parents discussed specific strategies to encourage child vegetable intake. Interview data suggested parents used diverse VPP to encourage child intake and that varied factors predicted their use. Understanding these factors could inform the design of interventions to increase parents' use of parenting practices that promote long-term child consumption of vegetables.

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Introduction

Vegetable intake has been consistently and inversely associated with chronic disease risk (Hu, 2003; Riboli & Norat, 2003; World Cancer Research Fund, 1997; World Health Organization, 2003) and metabolic syndrome in children (Ventura et al., 2008). Despite the benefits of frequent vegetable intake, consumption of the low-energy, nutrient-dense varieties of vegetables fell below recommended levels in all age groups (Krebs-Smith, Guenther, Subar, Kirkpatrick, & Dodd, 2010), while consumption of sweetened carbonated beverages, grain-based desserts, high-fat dairy products, and fatty meats was high (Bachman, Reedy, Subar, & Krebs-Smith,

2008). Food consumption patterns in childhood predicted adolescent (Cutler, Flood, Hannan, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2009) and adult consumption patterns (Singer, Moore, Garrahe, & Ellison, 1995). Thus, establishing healthy eating habits early in life should decrease lifetime disease risk. Development of child dietary behavior was in part influenced through parents' use of food parenting practices, which are actions or behaviors designed to influence children's eating behavior (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Substantial correlational evidence supports relationships between the use of food parenting practices and child attitudes toward food (Nicklas, Baranowski, Baranowski, Cullen, & Rittenberry, 2001), child food intake (Bante, Elliot, Harrod, & Haire-Joshu, 2008; Brown, Ogden, Voegelé, & Gibson, 2008; Wardle, Carnell, & Cooke, 2005) and child body weight (Brown et al., 2008; Ventura & Birch, 2008). What motivates parents to engage in specific food parenting behaviors remains unclear. Understanding influences on these behaviors could inform the design of interventions to increase parents' use of "effective" food parenting practices, i.e. those that promote child consumption of low-energy, nutrient-dense foods, thereby decreasing chronic disease risk.

Behavioral theories specify variables and interrelationships that may provide mechanisms through which behavioral change procedures can affect outcome behaviors (Baranowski, Cullen, Nicklas, Thompson, & Baranowski, 2003). These variables have been labeled

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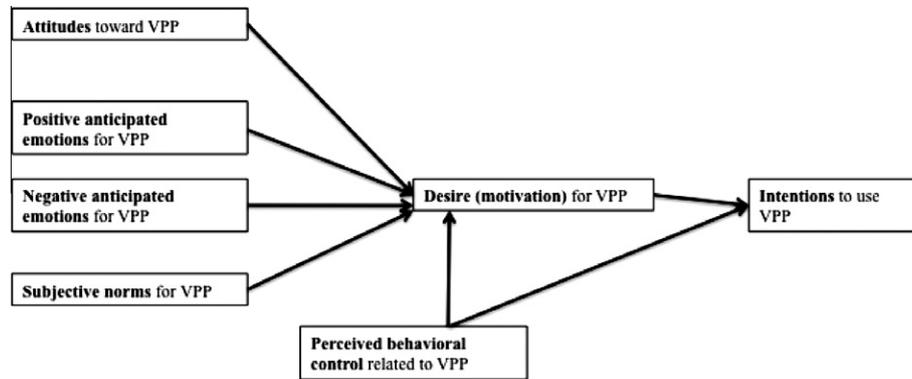


Fig. 1. Model of goal directed vegetable parenting practices (VPP).

“mediating variables” (Baranowski et al., 2003). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) posits that behavior is a function of intentions, which in turn are a function of attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control, and has been highly predictive of health behaviors (Baranowski et al., 2003). The Model of Goal Directed Behavior (MGDB) (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, & Pieters, 1998) is an expansion of TPB that enhanced its predictiveness (Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001) through the addition of emotions and desires (intrinsic motivations) (Taylor, Bagozzi, & Gaither, 2005). This study explored factors underlying parents’ motivations to use food parenting practices, adapting MGDB Vegetable Parenting Practices (MGDVPP) as the theoretical basis for qualitative interviews (Fig. 1).

Methods

Participants and recruitment

Recruitment methods included flyers posted throughout the Texas Medical Center and announcements posted to the Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children’s Hospital websites. Additionally, participants were recruited from the Children’s Nutrition Research Center’s volunteer database. Eligibility was determined by a brief, online screening questionnaire, which determined whether the respondent read and understood English, and was the primary caregiver of a 3–5-year-old child. Respondents were excluded if they or their child had a disease or condition that resulted in atypical food intake patterns (i.e. a food allergy or G.I. disorder) that might impact vegetable consumption. The full study protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Baylor College of Medicine.

Procedures

Eligible respondents who provided written informed consent were invited to complete an online demographic survey and were scheduled for a phone interview. Two members of the research team were trained to conduct one-on-one in-depth telephone interviews with participants, following standard procedures (Krueger, 1998). The research team developed the interview script using constructs from the MGDVPP (Fig. 1) as the underlying theoretical framework. The script consisted of twelve open-ended questions with suggested prompts and probes, and interviewers were trained to follow up questions with these prompts and probes as appropriate (See Table 1).

Prior to conducting interviews with participants, each interviewer pilot-tested script questions with colleagues who had a child between the ages of 3 and 5. Four practice interviews were conducted by phone and audio-recorded, and interviewers

independently coded all four interviews. The study trainer, an expert in the conduct of focus groups, interviews, and in the collection and analysis of qualitative data, reviewed the audio-recordings and codes and provided feedback to both interviewers.

All participant interviews were conducted in English between December 2008 and February 2009. Verbal permission was obtained for audio-recordings at the time of the interview. Participants were mailed a \$20 cheque after completing the interview.

Data analysis

Data collection and analysis were undertaken concurrently. Data were coded and analyzed using deductive thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). A codebook was developed by the research team to facilitate analysis. Five broad categories corresponding to the constructs of the MGDVPP formed the basis for the codebook (attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, positive anticipated emotions, and negative anticipated emotions as they related to vegetable parenting practices). Each category was assigned a label (e.g. “attitudes”), a definition (e.g. “product of behavioral beliefs”), and a brief description of how to know when to categorize a finding under that particular code or label (e.g. “participant expresses their experiences or perceptions in terms of perceived outcomes and value placed on those outcomes”) (See Table 1 for details on each MGDVPP construct).

Audio-recordings of interviews were professionally transcribed in batches of five. Transcription accuracy was verified by the primary interviewer who listened to the recording while reading the corresponding transcript. Modifications were made as needed to ensure accuracy. Both interviewers independently read all approved transcripts, summarized interview data, created a summary of responses to each question, and identified initial themes that emerged from the data. Interviewers met weekly during this process to compare findings and to resolve inconsistencies in coding. All data (including transcripts) were entered into NVivo to facilitate organization, coding, retrieval, and analysis of data.

The research team met regularly to discuss and interpret study findings. Themes that emerged from the data were expanded and refined over time as additional interviews were conducted, and participant responses overlapped.

Results

Fifteen participants completed the study. Interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. Participants identified themselves as Black, Hispanic, or White (Table 2). All but two participants were female. Repetition of participants’ responses was observed after the eighth interview, and theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) was confirmed with the remaining seven interviews. Themes

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