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Exploring Parental Food Awareness and Practices that Predict Nutritional Socialization in the Home Environment

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Abstract— *This study examined the relationship between nutritional socialization, parenting food practices, and the nutritional status and academic performance of students. Specifically, it assessed the demographic profile of respondents, their level of awareness of nutritional socialization, parenting food practices, and the extent of nutritional socialization in the home environment. A descriptive research design was employed involving 53 parent respondents and 53 student respondents. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, and descriptive ratings. Results revealed that most respondents belonged to low-income households, with 75% classified as poor and earning less than ₱12,030 monthly. Students generally showed satisfactory academic performance, inconsistent class attendance, and a high prevalence of wasting and severe wasting. Both parents and students demonstrated high awareness of basic nutritional concepts and healthy eating attitudes, although dietary diversity at home was rated low. Parenting food practices were assessed as moderate by parents and consistent by students, while nutritional socialization in the home environment was frequent, with family meals, food-related communication, and children's involvement in food rituals. The study concludes that stronger parental involvement and improved household nutrition practices are essential in enhancing students' health, attendance, and academic achievement.*

Keywords— *Nutritional Socialization, Parental Food Awareness, Food Parenting Practices, Adolescent Nutrition, Rural Philippines, Intervention Program.*

I. Introduction

Parental food awareness and practices are important in shaping adolescents' dietary habits and nutritional status [1]. Filipino youth are increasingly aware of the dual importance of food for personal health and environmental sustainability [2]. It was reported that approximately 12% of adolescents are now overweight or obese, with excess energy and protein intake significantly influencing this likelihood, especially among urban and wealthier adolescents [3][4]. For instance, [5] examined how parental child-feeding practices are associated with 4-year-old children's body mass index. The platform emphasized that nutrition during childhood (ages 5–19) encompasses a wide range of challenges, from undernutrition (stunting, wasting) to overnutrition (overweight) [6].

They examined the roles of social media and television in children's unhealthy habits [7], while [8] examined childcare practices for kindergarten pupils.

Despite the Department of Education's (DepEd) efforts, such as feeding programs, the rate of severely wasted learners remains alarmingly high in some rural areas, such as Agusan del Sur, at around 9.4% [9], highlighting the persistent issue of malnutrition despite ongoing efforts. Many adolescents had misconceptions about basic nutrition concepts and struggled to accurately classify foods, indicating a gap in their nutritional knowledge. The study highlighted the need for clearer, more accessible nutrition education strategies targeted at this age group [10].

Adolescents' dietary behaviors in relation to the school food environment, focusing on how food availability and policies influence eating patterns [11]. It emphasizes the importance of targeting youth in nutrition and food system programs, viewing this life stage as a critical opportunity to break the cycle of malnutrition, poverty, and food insecurity [12]. believed how parents impact their children's eating habits [13]. The feeding program influenced how families approached mealtimes, food preparation, and food preferences. It was also noted that parents' understanding of their role in the program contributed meaningfully to these behaviors [14].

II. Materials and Methods

Research Design

This research utilized a mixed-methods analysis, in which parts of the study gathered quantitative data while another part analyzed qualitative data. This type of research design intentionally integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches, before, during, and after data collection to provide a holistic view of the user experience, rather than treat them in isolation [15].

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Sibagat District, located in the municipality of Sibagat, Agusan del Sur. Sibagat is a rural municipality in the Caraga Region of Mindanao, Philippines, known for its agricultural economy and close-knit communities.

Research Respondents

Marilyn L. Malimbag, and Lowelyn Q. Estoquia, "Exploring Parental Food Awareness and Practices that Predict Nutritional Socialization in the Home Environment" *International Research Journal of Advanced Engineering and Science*, Volume 11, Issue 2, pp. 52-56, 2026.

The respondents of this study consisted of two sets: Grade 7 students and their parents. The Grade 7 students, enrolled for the Academic Year 2025–2026 at Sibagat National High School of Home Industries, Magsaysay National High School, and New Tubigon National High School, were selected as they represent a critical stage in adolescent development.

Research Instrument

This area also included statements that participants had to check for agreement or disagreement, with a 1-4 scale [16]. the respondents' nutritional socialization in the home environment, including the frequency and quality of family meals, food-related communication (verbal modeling), children's involvement in food preparation, food rituals, and behavior and attitudes toward food [17].

Statistical Treatment

The study utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the collected data. A normality test was first conducted to determine whether parametric or nonparametric methods should be applied.

III. Results and Discussion

TABLE 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Based on Demographic Profile

Parents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Socio-economic status		
Poor (Less than ₱10,957)	40	75
Lower Income (₱9,520 to ₱21,194)	10	19
Lower Middle Class (₱21,194 to ₱43,828)	3	6
Total	53	100%
Family Income		
Less than ₱12,030	40	75
₱12,031 – ₱24,060	10	19
₱24,061 – ₱48,120	3	6
Total	53	100%
Availability of the Garden at Home		
Yes	45	85
No	8	15
Total	53	100%
Students Grade		
Outstanding	0	0
Very Satisfactory	5	9
Satisfactory	15	28
Fairly Satisfactory	25	47
Did not Meet Expectations	8	15
Total	53	100%
Attendance to Classes		
Attended 95%-100% of the classes	5	9
Attended 90%-94% of the classes	18	34
Attended 80%-89% of the classes	20	38
Attended 80% and below of the classes	10	19
Total	53	100%
Health Status		
Wasted	30	57
Severely Wasted	23	43
Total	53	100%
Overall Total	106	100%

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 53 respondents, showing that the majority belong to poor households (75%), with only 6% classified as lower middle class. Similarly, family income data showed that 75% of respondents' families earn less than ₱12,030 per month, indicating limited financial capacity to support both educational and nutritional needs. Despite these economic challenges, 85% reported having a garden at home, which may help provide supplementary food and improve household food security. However, students' academic grades showed that most were only satisfactory (47%), while 15% did not meet expectations, suggesting that socioeconomic conditions may directly affect school performance. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds often experience limited access to educational resources, poor nutrition, and inadequate academic support, which significantly influence learning outcomes [18]. Similarly, found that socioeconomic disadvantage is strongly associated with lower academic achievement and weaker cognitive performance among learners [19].

Attendance at classes and health status further reflect the challenges faced by the respondents. Only 9% attended 95–100% of classes, while the majority attended 80–89% (38%) or fewer than 80% (19%), indicating inconsistent school participation. This pattern may be linked to the health findings, where 57% were classified as wasted and 43% as severely wasted, reflecting serious nutritional concerns among students. Poor nutritional status negatively affects concentration, cognitive development, and school attendance, ultimately reducing academic performance. [20] Emphasized that absenteeism significantly reduces students' academic success because frequent absences lead to missed learning opportunities and reduced classroom engagement. Likewise, [21] explained that students from low-income households are more likely to experience poor attendance due to health problems and financial limitations, which further contribute to poor educational outcomes. These findings suggest that interventions focused on improving nutrition, monitoring attendance, and providing parental support are necessary to enhance both student health and academic achievement.

Table 2 shows that both parents and students demonstrated a generally high level of awareness regarding nutritional socialization, with an overall mean of 3.497 for parents and 3.778 for students, both interpreted as high awareness. Among the indicators, knowledge of basic nutritional concepts had the highest mean for both parents (M = 3.702) and students (M = 4.117), indicating a strong understanding of fundamental nutrition principles. Parental modeling of healthy eating (M = 3.460) and attitude towards healthy eating (M = 3.494) were also rated highly, indicating high awareness among parents. while students showed similarly high awareness in these areas, with means of 3.815 and 3.879, respectively. However, dietary diversity as practiced at home received the lowest mean for both parents (M = 3.396) and students (M = 3.372), interpreted as low awareness, suggesting that while respondents understand nutrition concepts, actual food variety practices at home remain limited

The ability to interpret food labels was rated as moderate among parents (M = 3.343) but high among students (M = 3.706), suggesting that students may be more exposed to nutrition education in school settings. According to [22], nutritional awareness plays a critical role in shaping healthy food choices and preventing malnutrition, especially among school-aged children. Similarly, [23] emphasized that parental influence and household dietary practices significantly affect

Marilyn L. Malimbag, and Lowelyn Q. Estoquia, "Exploring Parental Food Awareness and Practices that Predict Nutritional Socialization in the Home Environment" *International Research Journal of Advanced Engineering and Science*, Volume 11, Issue 2, pp. 52-56, 2026.

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children's long-term nutrition behavior and academic performance, highlighting the importance of strengthening family-based nutrition education programs.

TABLE 2. Respondents' Level of Awareness Of Nutritional Socialization

Indicators	Parents		Students	
	Mean	Adj. Rating	Mean	Adj. Rating
Knowledge of the Basic Nutritional Concept	3.702	High Awareness	4.117	High Awareness
Ability to Interpret Food Labels	3.343	Moderate Aware	3.706	High Awareness
Dietary Diversity as Practice at Home	3.396	Low Awareness	3.372	Low Awareness
Parental Modeling of Healthy Eating	3.460	High Awareness	3.815	High Awareness
Attitude Towards Healthy Eating	3.494	High Awareness	3.879	High Awareness
Overall Mean	**3.497**	**High Awareness**	**3.778**	**High Awareness**

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Very Low Awareness); 1.81-2.60 (Low Awareness); 2.61-3.40 (Moderate Awareness); 3.41-4.20 (High Awareness); 4.21-5.00 (Very High Awareness)

Table 3 reveals that parents and students differ in their perceptions of parenting food practices, with parents rating the overall level as moderate practice (M = 3.405), while students rated it as consistent practice (M = 3.857). Among the indicators, the availability and accessibility of food received the lowest mean among parents (M = 3.317), interpreted as moderate practice, whereas students rated it higher (M = 3.923), indicating consistent practice. Similarly, structured meals and snack time were rated as moderate practice by parents (M = 3.381) but as consistent practice by students (M = 3.849), suggesting that students perceive meal routines to be more consistently implemented than parents report. Management of food preferences obtained the highest mean for both parents (M = 3.517) and students (M = 3.789), both interpreted as consistent practice, indicating that parents are more actively involved in guiding food choices and encouraging healthier eating behaviors.

TABLE 3. Respondents' Level Of Parenting Food Practices

Indicators	Parents		Students	
	Mean	Adj. Rating	Mean	Adj. Rating
Availability and Accessibility	3.317	Moderate Practice	3.923	Consistent Practice
Structured Meals & Snack Time	3.381	Moderate Practice	3.849	Consistent Practice
Management of Food Preferences	3.517	Consistent Practice	3.789	Consistent Practice
Overall Mean	**3.405**	**Moderate Practice**	**3.857**	**Consistent Practice**

Legend: 1.00-1.80 (Poor Practice); 1.81-2.60 (Inconsistent Practice); 2.61-3.40 (Moderate Practice); 3.41-4.20 (Consistent Practice); 4.21-5.00 (Highly Consistent Practice)

According to [24], parental feeding practices such as food availability, monitoring, and meal structure strongly shape children's eating behaviors and food preferences, particularly during school-age years. Similarly, [25] emphasized that repeated parental guidance and consistent family meal patterns improve dietary habits and help children develop healthier food choices over time. These findings indicate that strengthening parenting practices around food at home is essential for promoting better nutritional behavior and long-term health among students.

TABLE 4. Extent Of Nutritional Socialization In The Home Environment

Indicators	Parents		Students	
	Mean	Adj. Rating	Mean	Adj. Rating
Frequency & Quality of Family Meals	3.279	Sometimes	3.426	Often
Food-related Communication	3.457	Often	3.755	Often
Involvement of Children	3.785	Often	3.698	Often
Food Rituals	3.868	Often	3.589	Often
Behavior & Attitude Toward Food	3.683	Often	3826	Often
Overall Mean	**3.614**	**Often**	**3.659**	**Often**

Table 4 shows that the extent of nutritional socialization in the home environment was generally rated as often by both parents (overall mean = 3.614) and students (overall mean = 3.659), indicating that nutrition-related practices are regularly observed within the household. Among the indicators, food-related communication was rated often by both parents (M = 3.457) and students (M = 3.755), suggesting that discussions about food choices and healthy eating are commonly practiced at home. Involvement of children in food rituals also received high ratings from both parents (M = 3.785) and students (M = 3.698), reflecting active participation in meal preparation and shared family eating experiences. Food rituals obtained the highest mean among parents (M = 3.868), while behavior and attitude toward food had the highest mean among students (M = 3.826), both interpreted as often, showing that positive food behaviors are strongly reinforced in the household. However, frequency and quality of family meals received the lowest mean among parents (M = 3.279), rated as sometimes, while students rated it as often (M = 3.426), indicating slight differences in perception regarding family meal consistency. According to [26] regular family meals contribute significantly to children's nutritional health, emotional well-being, and academic functioning. [27] Further explained that positive family meal routines improve children's dietary intake and reduce unhealthy eating patterns. Similarly, [28] found that involving children in meal preparation strengthens healthy eating habits and promotes food responsibility. Moreover, [29] emphasized that parental communication and modeling during mealtimes significantly shape children's long-term attitudes toward food and nutrition. These findings highlight that consistent home-based nutritional socialization remains essential in improving students' health behaviors and overall well-being.

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study conclude that nutritional socialization and parenting food practices play a significant role in shaping students' nutritional status, academic performance, and overall well-being. Most respondents came from low-income households, with many students experiencing poor attendance, fairly satisfactory academic performance, and concerning levels of wasting and severe wasting, indicating that socioeconomic challenges strongly

Marilyn L. Malimbag, and Lowelyn Q. Estoquia, "Exploring Parental Food Awareness and Practices that Predict Nutritional Socialization in the Home Environment" *International Research Journal of Advanced Engineering and Science*, Volume 11, Issue 2, pp. 52-56, 2026.

affect both health and learning outcomes. Despite these limitations, both parents and students demonstrated high awareness of basic nutritional concepts and healthy eating attitudes, although dietary diversity at home remained low. Parenting food practices were generally moderate to consistent, particularly in managing food preferences and maintaining structured meals, while nutritional socialization in the home environment was frequently practiced through food-related communication, family meals, and children's involvement in food rituals. These results suggest that strengthening parental involvement, improving household dietary diversity, promoting consistent meal practices, and supporting nutrition education programs can significantly enhance students' nutritional health, school participation, and academic success.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that schools strengthen nutrition education programs by integrating practical lessons on healthy eating, food label interpretation, and dietary diversity into regular classroom activities and school-based feeding initiatives. Parents should be encouraged to maintain consistent family meal routines, improve food availability and accessibility at home, and actively involve children in food preparation and healthy food decision-making to reinforce positive eating behaviors. Local government units and school administrators may collaborate to provide nutrition support programs, such as school gardens, feeding programs, and parent seminars on affordable nutritious meal planning, especially for low-income households. Health workers and teachers should also closely monitor students' nutritional status, attendance, and academic performance to identify early signs of malnutrition and provide timely intervention. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies involving larger sample sizes and additional variables such as parental education, food security, and community health services to deepen the understanding of factors influencing students' nutritional socialization and parenting food practices.

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