

## **Systematic Literature Review on the Effect of Cooking Class on Picky Eaters in Early Childhood**

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**ABSTRACT** Picky eater behavior in early childhood can affect their growth and development, picky eater includes the behavior of choosing food only that they like and do not want to try new types of food, they then to avoid types of food in the form of vegetable protein and animal protein that are not yet known and felt. The impact of picky eater behavior is at risk of children experiencing malnutrition. Efforts to deal with picky eater behavior in children have been carried. Out with various interventions. This study uses a systematic literature review method, with the aim of finding out what interventions can be done to overcome picky eater behavior in children, as input for determining strategies in efforts to deal with picky eater behavior. This study obtained the results that picky eater behavior interventions can be carried out trough cooking class activities.

**KEYWORD:** Systematic Literature Review, Picky Eater, Cooking Class, Early Childhood

### **INTRODUCTION**

Picky eaters or children who are picky eaters in early childhood are a problem that can affect their growth and development (Susilowati et al., 2024). they tend to be selective in avoiding certain types of food and have low interest in food, eat less and they are reluctant to try types of food that are considered new and have never been tried before (Hardini & Wirjatmadi., 2024). The impact of picky eater behavior if not addressed immediately can cause a lack of energy, carbohydrates, protein and fat which can disrupt the balance of children's nutritional intake (Aziseh et al., 2024).

Previous research conducted examined the correlation between children who behave as picky eaters and their level of nutritional adequacy, this behavior and eating patterns will affect the growth and development of children both in terms of physical, cognitive, and social emotional, the results of the study showed that children who do not behave as picky eaters will be more active in receiving food compared to children who are not picky eaters (Aziseh et al., 2024).

Another study on interventions to deal with children who are picky eaters with sensory education, massage techniques, oral care, and dietary modifications, the results of these interventions significantly improved children's picky eating behavior (Susilowati et al., 2024)

Furthermore, research by discusses the problem of picky eaters and overcomes it with Occupational Therapy, namely clinical reasoning from a therapist by synthesizing various information during the therapy process. Understanding the symptoms of picky eaters and providing appropriate and targeted interventions to overcome eating disorders (Holland et.al, 2024)

Another study that has been conducted to meet the needs of vegetable intake in children through the process of choosing vegetable food by children The design of this study used a randomized trial, namely using 12 photos of vegetables shown to children, then the researcher asked whether they had ever seen this vegetable? And have you ever eaten it? The assessment uses a score of 1 = yes and 0 = no. With the highest value of 1. Shows recognition of vegetables and has eaten them (Mourmans, 2023).

Discusses neophobia towards vegetables. Picky eater behavior in children is to eating fruits and vegetables so that the food they consume is less varied. In this study, the correlation between picky eaters and neophobia to the sensitivity of bitter tastes in food and avoiding dislikes of food. The conclusion of this study shows that children who are indicated as having neophobia towards vegetables tend to avoid risks in choosing food. The intervention to overcome this is to pair vegetables with foods that children like (Hendrik-Hartensveld et al., 2023).

Picky eater behavior also occurs in children to consume familiar and unfamiliar fruits. This study identified an effective and easy-to-implement strategy to increase fruit intake in children, namely by analyzing the impact of hunger felt by children on the choice of consuming familiar and unfamiliar fruits. The design of the study was to foster hunger in children, teachers were asked not to provide snacks in the morning until the time of testing, to measure their hunger condition they fasted for about 4 hours and children who were not hungry would be tested 20 minutes after lunch. The test method was that children were asked to taste familiar fruits such as apples and unfamiliar ones such as lychees, the duration of the study was about 5 minutes. The results showed that children who were hungry ate more fruits that were familiar and unfamiliar. These results show feeding fruit that is new or already known to children when the child is hungry is a strategy increase the child's nutritional intake (Fleischeuer et al., 2025).

Another studies highlights the process of adopting the replacement of meat with vegetable protein. This study includes: 1. Plant-based meat alternatives, namely products made from processed vegetable ingredients that are made to resemble meat such as, taste, shape and texture (vegetarian nuggets). 2. Nuts (pre-cooked nuts) as an alternative to meet protein needs (Spendrup et al., 2022).

Other studies child characteristics problems and their relationship with Refusal of food is a response to avoidance caused by low perception and negative responses. When a child decides to accept or reject food, he has gone through several cognitive processes, for example, the child identifies through the taste, smell and texture of the food. When a child is faced with a new food, several choices can

influence his decision to put the food in his mouth, for example, the taste of the food is good or bad. Decision-making strategies about food are influenced by the child's sensitivity to punishment and rewards. When faced with uncertainty about the appropriateness and deliciousness of new foods, children who are more sensitive to punishment may be more likely to avoid new foods that they have never eaten, and children who are more sensitive to rewards will take the risk of trying new foods because they value the benefits of the food more (Van den Brand et al., 2023).

Another Research this study examines the experiences of parents who have picky eater children through a qualitative research approach. The causes of parental concerns about picky eater children should be investigated by health workers about picky eaters and their clinical characteristics to establish clear indicators and share evidence-based knowledge about picky eaters in families such as details of feeding children and focusing on positive strategies used by parents to cope with picky eaters (Chilman et al., 2023).

Discussion of picky eater, many studies have written about it with interventions to overcome it in different ways, likewise with the discussion of cooking class, many have written about it but are generally connected to independence, cognitive abilities, social emotional children and others. In this study, through a Systematic Literature Review specifically to synthesize findings about the influence of cooking class on picky eaters in early childhood. The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze cooking class activities as activities to overcome picky eater behavior and foster children's interest and attraction in choosing good food. This Systematic Literature Review is guided by the research questions, namely:

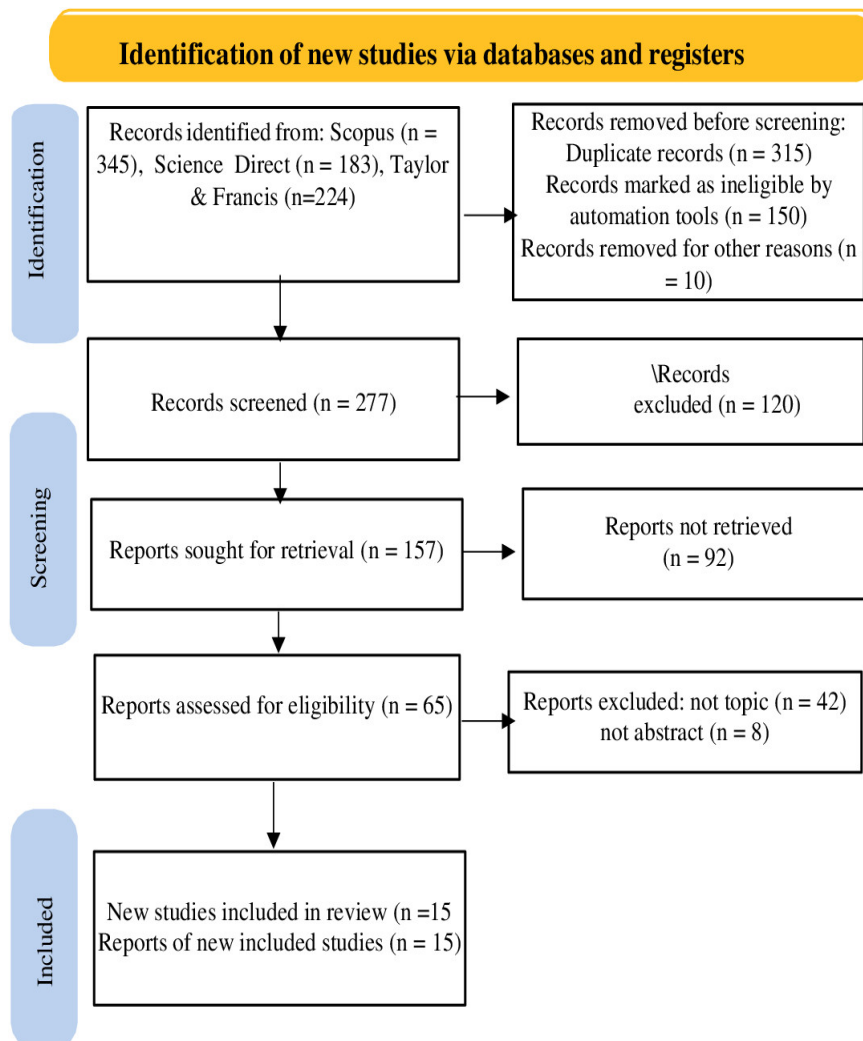
“How do cooking classes affect picky eaters in early childhood?”

This question aims to identify exploring cooking class activities and their influence on early childhood picky eater behavior. Insights from this study are expected to guide the development of cooking class activities to increase early childhood interest in various types of food in a fun way. This review seeks to identify the influence of cooking class activities on early childhood picky eater behavior and provide guidance for future research on cooking class activities and their influence on early childhood picky eater.

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to find and examine cooking class activities for picky eaters in early childhood, especially children aged 5 to 6 years. The aim of providing an overview and understanding of how cooking class activities affect picky eaters in early childhood. It also identifying one way to overcome picky eating behavior in early childhood, namely through cooking class activities.

Figure 1: Prisma Diagram



Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a structured approach to synthesizing research evidence sourced from journals and articles so that it can be used as a strong foundation in the content and discussion to produce good final results (Andriani, 2021). This study uses the PRISMA flowchart to outline the literature study selection process and it identifies the number of literature studies used to be screened and finally included in the analysis. This will help provide transparency on how relevant literature studies were selected.

### Search Strategy

The study used a Systematic Literature Review on the effect of cooking classes on picky eaters in early childhood by searching three indexed and reliable databases by obtaining library sources from Scopus, Science Direct, and Taylor & Francis. The literature search process period was calculated for 1 month, starting from April 1 to 30, 2025. Search Data uses journals or articles published in 2020 to 2025. The search results from each database will be described in Table 1.

Table 1  
Database Search

Directory Search	Keywords
Scopus	“Cooking AND class”, “Picky AND eater”,
Science Direct	“Cooking class”, “Picky eater”, picky eater early childhood”,
Taylor & Francis	“Cooking class”, “Picky eater”

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion and exclusion criteria (depicted in table 2) were used to ensure the quality and relevance of the selected studies:

Table 2  
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication Date	Publication year articles published from 2020 to 2025	Publication year Articles published before 2020
Language	Articles published in English and Indonesian	Articles published in languages other than English and Indonesian
Type of Study	Peer-reviewed journal articles, meta-analyses or review articles on cooking classes and early childhood picky eating	Unpublished opinions, editorials, comments, book reviews or theses
Quality of Methodology	Articles that demonstrate clear research design, robust data analysis, and adequate sample size.	Studies that are not methodologically rigorous such as unclear research design, limited data analysis or inadequate sample sizes.
Field of study	Studies originating from the fields of education and health to ensure alignment with the review focus.	Studies outside the fields of education and health
Focus of Study	Articles relevant to the discussion of cooking classes and picky eaters in early childhood	Articles that are not relevant to the discussion of cooking classes and picky eaters in early childhood
Core Variables	Core variables found in cooking class activities for early childhood and picky eaters in early childhood.	Articles that do not explore cooking classes and picky eating in young children
Population	The research was conducted on early childhood (aged 5-6 years)	Infants, toddlers under 5 years old, and children over 6 years old
Geographic Coverage	Global studies, particularly those relevant to early childhood cooking classes	Studies that are not relevant to cooking classes in general

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cooking class is one of the important life skills to be introduced to early childhood, for parents getting children used to going to the kitchen to be invited to cook will foster the habit of children to try new types of food that are cooked, because the cause of children becoming picky eaters is that they do not know the type of food and the taste of the food. Rejection of new foods is a response to avoidance caused by low perception. (Van Den Barnd et al., 2023). Children do not know the shape and name of vegetables and their tastes so they are reluctant to eat vegetables, children do not know the shape and name of fruit and its taste so they are reluctant to eat fruit, as well as other types of food.

To intervene and improve the eating patterns of picky eaters, many methods have been used by previous researchers. Some intervene by waiting until children feel hungry (Fleischeuer et al., 2025). Other researchers intervene so that children want to eat vegetables by introducing types of vegetables through vegetable pictures from tablet media (Mourmans, 2023). And other researchers who try to intervene in children's picky eater behavior in different ways.

### **RQ: How do cooking classes affect picky eaters in early childhood?**

To answer the research question about how cooking class can affect picky eaters in early childhood. So this study aims to explore cooking class activities as an effort to intervene in children who are picky eaters to want to choose healthy food in a fun way. The selected study is about the influence of cooking class on improving preferences, attitudes, behaviors, and eating patterns of early childhood.

To show how the research results were obtained, the cooking class activity was carried out in a school with a population of early childhood aged 5-6 years. For its implementation, it refers to the findings of the research by Saem, & Kyun, 2025.

Saem & Kyun (2025) explain that the teaching method in cooking class activities is carried out through several stages. The first stage is class preparation, which involves selecting the menu and preparing the ingredients and tools needed for the cooking activity. The next stage is the demonstration, where the instructor shows the entire cooking process in detail. Following this, students engage in hands-on practice by replicating the cooking steps demonstrated by the instructor. In the final stage, the instructor conducts an evaluation and provides feedback on the students' cooking process and results.

Based on this opinion, the research on the influence of cooking classes on picky eaters in early childhood uses the steps included in the following table:

**Table 3**  
**Cooking class activities**

Stages and Activities	Preparation	Demonstration	Practice	Follow-up	Results
Cooking class 1 Making vegetable salad	1) Provide cooking tools 2) Provide ingredients for making vegetable salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The teacher shows the shape and name of the vegetables that will be processed</li> <li>•The teacher demonstrates how to make a vegetable salad</li> </ul>	Children practice making vegetable salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The teacher explains the benefits of eating vegetables</li> <li>•Teachers and children eat the vegetable salad that has been made together</li> </ul>	Because of their curiosity about the taste of vegetables, both familiar and unfamiliar, all children are willing to try eating vegetable salad.
2nd cooking class Make Fruit Salad	1) Provide cooking tools 2) Provide the ingredients for making fruit salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The teacher shows the shape and name of the fruit to be processed.</li> <li>•The teacher demonstrates how to make fruit salad</li> </ul>	Children practice making fruit salad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The teacher explains the benefits of eating fruit</li> <li>•The teacher and children eat the fruit salad that has been made together</li> </ul>	All children tried to eat fruit salad from previously known and previously unknown fruits.
Cooking class 3 Making crispy chicken fillet	1) Prepare cooking utensils 2) Prepare ingredients for making crispy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The teacher shows the ingredients for making crispy chicken fillet</li> <li>•The teacher demonstrates</li> </ul>	Children practice making crispy chicken fillets	•The teacher explains the benefits of eating chicken	All the children dared to try eating crispy happily because

Stages and Activities	Preparation	Demonstration	Practice	Follow-up	Results
	chicken fillet	how to make crispy chicken fillet		•The teacher and children eat the crispy chicken that they have made together	they ate together.

The results of the research from the cooking class activity, early childhood children who behaved as picky eaters turned out to be willing to try food made from vegetables, fruits and chicken, and perhaps from the types of vegetables and fruits they ate. Perhaps previously they did not know the shape, name and taste of the vegetables and fruits, through eating together after the cooking class activity encouraged children to try eating what they had processed from vegetables and fruits and chicken. This could overcome picky eaters among early childhood children.

Researching about the evaluation program of educational sessions involving a series of cooking activities and evaluating the impact of the program. The results of the study stated that food education through cooking programs was identified as being able to improve healthy eating patterns in children (Oliviera et al., 2023). Research conducted on the impact of cooking classes on vegetable intake in children aged 4-12 years. The conclusion of the study was that there was a slight increase in cooking skills and vegetable intake in children (Vaughan et al., 2024)

On positive parenting patterns between parents and children through cooking classes conducted in families to accustom children to healthy lifestyles and healthy eating patterns. From this study, it was concluded that the involvement of children in cooking classes by children conducted at home with the family can increase children independence. Thus, cooking class activities are an effective intervention in parent-child relationships (Torslev et.al, 2021).

To strengthen the discussion of the literature used in this study, it will be summarized in Table 3 Literature Matrix Table

Table 4  
Literature Matrix Table

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
<p>Susilowati, E, Umayah, A, Diniayuningrum, A.(2024)</p> <p>"Intervention For Managing Picky Eating In Pressure Cool Children : Literature Review"</p>	<p>To evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions such as sensory education, parent training, oral intervention, massage, and dietary adjustment in improving picky eater behavior in children.</p>	<p>Children aged 4 – 6 years</p>	<p>Factors to intervene in picky eater behavior, namely sensory play, training for parents, oral intervention, massage therapy and dietary adjustments.</p>	<p>Sensory Play: effective for introducing various foods to picky eaters. Parental involvement; such as cooking competitions with children has a significant impact on intervening in picky eating in children. Oral intervention: with traditional medicines such as temu lawak pudding has been proven effective in increasing children's appetite and eating patterns. Massage therapy: especially tui na massage, has been shown to increase children's appetite. Adjusting eating patterns:</p>

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
				creating regular meal schedules and a structured environment will form healthy eating habits in children.
<p>Hardini, NE, &amp; Wirjatmadi, B. (2024)</p> <p>Research title Association Between Picky Eater Behavior With Stunting Among Preschool Children In Surabaya.</p>	<p>Research on the correlation between picky eaters and stunting cases in early childhood</p>	<p>Children Aged 24 - 59 Months</p>	<p>Measuring the nutritional status of children using the parameters of height for age (TB) and picky eater behavior using the Children's Eating Behavior Questionnaire (CEBQ). Analysis using the Chi-Square Test</p>	<p>The test results show that there is a relationship between stunting and picky eater behavior, in addition, children who behave as picky eaters also. stunting will be experienced by children who are picky eater and the risk of stunting is smaller for children who are not picky eaters.</p>
<p>Aziseh, N., &amp; Hakiki, MIK (2024).</p> <p>Relationship Between Picky Eating Behavior and Level of Nutrient Education in</p>	<p>Studying picky eating behavior and its relationship with the level of nutritional adequacy in preschool children in Buduran sub-district.</p>	<p>The target is 64 Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B students from 4 Dharma Wanita Persatuan</p>	<p>The study of children's nutritional adequacy level used a cross-sectional method, random sampling of 64 children, data collection with CEBQ and</p>	<p>In this study, a significant relationship was found between picky eater behavior and carbohydrate sufficiency, namely that most picky eater</p>

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
Preschool Children		Kindergartens.	semi-Quantitative Food Frequency Question. Data analysis used the Spearman Rank Correlation Test .	behaviors include insufficient carbohydrates. These findings are important for providing an understanding of targeted nutrition for children with picky eater behavior to ensure balanced nutritional intake.
Holland, L.C., Verdonck, M., Meredith, P.J., & Chilman, L.B. (2025)  "Exploring occupational therapy practice with children who are picky eaters and their families".	Exploring and intervening in children who behave as picky eaters in families by practicing occupational therapy	Children aged 9 months to 18 years	Qualitative research was used to explore cognitive processes, semi-structured interviews were chosen to allow the researcher to explore the individual experiences of participants.	Therapists understand the symptoms of picky eating is important to provide tailored interventions. to understand children eating disorders thrapists use evidence-based practices Therapists provide targeted interventions to address underlying barriers to eating.
Mourmans, R., Fleischeuer,	The aim of the discuss the influence of	Children aged 4-5 years	Research steps, children are presented with	The vegetable photo task is a good tool to

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
<p>B., Dibbets, P., Houben, K., &amp; Nederkoorn, C. (2023)</p> <p>Choice-induced tasting. “Evaluating the effect of choice on children's acceptance of an unfamiliar vegetable”</p>	<p>picky eaters on unfamiliar vegetables.</p>		<p>12 photos of known and unknown vegetables using a tablet, then the child is given a trigger question, namely have you ever seen this vegetable? And have you ever eaten it? The assessment uses a score of 1 = yes and 0 = no. With a higher score up to (maximum 1). Showing recognition of the vegetable and having eaten it.</p>	<p>measure picky eating behavior in 4-5 year old children. Children were able to distinguish between common and uncommon vegetables, the results of this study indicate that having choices not only increases children's acceptance of food because they can choose what they like and that choice can have a positive effect on food acceptance.</p>
<p>Hendriks-Hartensveld, AEM, Nederkoorn, C, van den Brand, AJP, &amp; Havermans, RC (2023).</p> <p>Child-reported vegetable neophobia is associated with risk avoidance for distaste in</p>	<p>Discussing about vegetable neophobia. Children who are picky eaters often refuse to eat fruits and vegetables, thus reducing their food variety. In this study, we investigated the relationship</p>	<p>Children aged 4 – 15 years</p>	<p>This study is part of Science Live, a research program of the NEMO Science Museum (Amsterdam, The Netherlands) that allows scientists to conduct research at the museum with NEMO visitors as volunteers .in this case the</p>	<p>This study shows that children who are indicated as neophobic towards vegetables tend to avoid risks in choosing food. The strategy to overcome this is to pair vegetables with foods that children like.</p>

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
children aged 4–15 years.	between picky eating and food neophobia and bitter taste sensitivity and risk avoidance due to dislike.		relationships between children who behave as picky eaters. Food Neophobia and sensitivity to bitter tastes and the risk of children being reluctant to eat varies, It was hypothesized that children who scored higher on picky eating and food neophobia would be more sensitive to bitter tastes (i.e., PROP tasters) and would be more risk avoidant for aversion.	
Fleischeuer, B., Mourmans, R., Dibbets, P., Houben, K., Hendriks-Hartensveld, A.E.M., van den Brand, A.J.P., & Nederkoorn, C. (2025) Is Hunger The Best Sauce For Unfamiliar Food? A Study Investigating	This study identified an effective and easy-to-implement strategy to increase fruit intake. Analyzing the choice of eating familiar and unfamiliar fruits and its impact on the child hunger.	Children aged 4 – 6 years	The research design is to grow hunger in children, teachers are asked not to give snacks in the morning until the test, to measure their hunger condition they fast for about 4 hours and children who are not hungry will be tested 20 minutes after lunch. The	The results showed that hungry children ate more of both familiar and unfamiliar fruits, suggesting that feeding children new or familiar fruits when hungry is a valuable strategy for higher intake.

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
The Effect of Hunger on Young Children's Food Intake of a Familiar and Unfamiliar Fruit			test method is that children are asked to taste familiar fruits such as apples and unfamiliar ones such as lychees, the duration of the study is about 5 minutes.	
van den Brand, AJP, Hendriks-Hartensveld, AEM, Havermans, RC, & Nederkoorn, C. (2023) "Child characteristic correlates of food rejection in preschool children: A narrative review"	Provides an overview of the study of food refusal in preschool children.	Preschool children	Strategies in making decisions about food are influenced by the child's sensitivity to punishment and reward.	When faced with uncertainty about the appropriateness and palatability of a new food, children who are more sensitive to punishment may be more likely to avoid a new food they have never eaten before, and children who are more sensitive to rewards will take risks to try a new food because they value the benefits of the food more.
Chilman, L.B, meredith, P.J, Southon, N, Kennedy-	Exploring the experiences of parents who have picky		using a qualitative approach on the causes of parental	The causes of parental concerns about picky eating

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
Behr, A. Frakking, T, Swanepoel, L, & Verdonck, M, (2023) A qualitative inquiry of parents of extremely picky eaters: Experiences, strategies and future directions	eating children.		concerns about picky eating children	children should be investigated by health workers about picky eating and its clinical features to establish clear indicators and share evidence-based knowledge about picky eating in families such as details of child feeding and focus on positive strategies used by parents to cope with picky eating children.
Vaughan, K.L., Cade, J.E., Hetherington, M.M., Webster, J., & Evans, C.E.L.2024 “ The impact of school-based cooking classes on vegetable intake, cooking skills and food literacy of children	Investigating the impact of school-based cooking classes on cooking skills, food literacy and vegetable intake in children	Children aged 4-12 years	A comparative study evaluating children who attended cooking classes compared to a control group	resulted in small improvements and progress in cooking skills and vegetable intake in children.

Author & Title	Research purposes	Target Group & Age	Strategy and Sub Categories	Results
aged 4–12 years: A systematic review of the evidence 2001–2021				
Oliveira, L., Sousa, F., & Silveira, M. G. da. (2023) "Promotion of Functional Food in a school context : Evaluation of food education session involving cooking skills	valuating the impact of food education sessions on improving functional food consumption and cooking skills.	Children aged 13-14 years	Giving questionnaires to children before and after cooking sessions	The results of the study stated that cooking class activities can be used to intervene in positive changes in food preferences, attitudes, and behavior of early childhood.

## CONCLUSION

Various research findings indicate that children's involvement in cooking class activities has a positive impact, especially for early childhood. These activities stimulate children's introduction to different types of food, satisfy their curiosity about ingredients and flavors, and help build their confidence as they experience new things. Emotionally, children enjoy participating in cooking classes, which contributes to addressing picky eater behavior in early childhood.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that early childhood education institutions plan and implement cooking class activities as part of the learning process to help overcome picky eating behavior. Furthermore, these activities can be integrated into the curriculum to support the development of children's broader skills. Further research is needed to examine the long-term effectiveness of cooking classes and their influence on other developmental areas. Considering the limitations of this study such as the restricted literature scope and publication time frame future studies should explore the topic more comprehensively and in greater depth.

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