Eudaimonia Journal Psychology
Universitas Sains Indonesia
E – ISSN: 3089-2570
Volume: 3 No 1 June 2026

Psychological Factors Influencing Healthy Food Consumption Behavior in Adolescents: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Healthy eating behavior in adolescents is a crucial factor in supporting growth, development, and long-term health. However, various studies have shown that healthy eating behavior is influenced not only by environmental factors and nutritional knowledge but also by psychological factors. Therefore, a comprehensive study is needed to identify psychological factors that influence healthy eating behavior in adolescents. This study aims to identify and analyze psychological factors that influence healthy eating behavior in adolescents through a systematic literature review approach. The study used PRISMA guidelines and analyzed 11 articles published between 2021 and 2026. Data were analyzed through a synthesis process of the psychological factors found in each study. The results of the study indicate that psychological factors influencing healthy eating behavior in adolescents include attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control, motivation, intentions, and subjective well-being. Attitude is the most dominant factor, followed by self-efficacy, self-control and motivation. Healthy eating behavior in adolescents is influenced by various psychological factors, especially attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control and motivation. These findings demonstrate the importance of considering psychological aspects in efforts to improve healthy eating patterns in adolescents.

Keywords: healthy food consumption behavior, adolescents, psychological factors, systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

Food consumption patterns among adolescents are a crucial issue in public health development. Adolescence is a transitional phase marked by physical, emotional, and social changes, resulting in increased nutritional needs to support growth and cognitive development (‘Aliah et al., 2024; WHO, 2024; Wisudahningsih et al., 2025). However, various reports indicate that healthy eating behaviors among students remain low (Mandala et al., 2026; Purnama, 2021). Adolescents tend to consume fast foods high in sugar, salt, and fat, and low in fruits and vegetables (Permatasari et al., 2024). This condition potentially increases the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in adulthood (Sitorus & Sitorus, 2024).

Healthy food consumption behavior is not only influenced by external factors such as food access, family environment, and economics, but also by psychological factors (Rizkitania et al., 2022). Health behavior theories such as the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) suggest that food consumption decisions are the result of an interaction between cognitive (knowledge, perception), affective (emotions, habits), and self-regulation factors (Yunita et al., 2025).

Unhealthy eating habits in adolescents are a major risk factor for various non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in adulthood (Afshin et al., 2019). Effective interventions are needed from adolescence to prevent these long-term impacts. Current interventions tend to focus solely on nutrition education, without considering the psychological factors underlying eating behavior. However, empirical evidence shows that sustainable behavior change is strongly influenced by psychological factors such as intrinsic motivation, self-control, and social influence (McGill et al., 2015).

Several studies have shown that psychological factors such as body image, emotions, and peer pressure influence students' eating preferences (Birch & Fisher, 1998; Paxton et al., 2006). However, few studies have comprehensively summarized these findings in the form of a systematic review.

This research provides a comprehensive scientific synthesis of the most dominant psychological factors influencing healthy food consumption in adolescents. The results are expected to serve as a basis for designing more effective psychologically based intervention programs, both in schools and families. Comprehensive studies of psychological factors in healthy eating behavior are still relatively limited. Therefore, this research makes an important contribution in filling the literature gap and providing evidence-based recommendations for the development of adolescent health policies.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the results of previous studies examining the psychological factors that influence healthy food consumption among students. The SLR method was chosen because it is capable of presenting scientific evidence in a comprehensive, transparent, and systematic manner through structured stages (Page et al., 2022). The SLR process in this study followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) guidelines, which include the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and study inclusion.

The literature search was conducted in several international and national scientific databases, namely Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The literature search was conducted using a combination of the keywords “healthy diet,” “consumption of healthy foods,” and “consumption of fruits and vegetables.” The keywords were tailored to the characteristics of each database to maximize search results. Article selection was carried out through the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

The researchers applied the following inclusion criteria in this study: 1) both qualitative and quantitative journal articles; 2) journal articles that analyze healthy eating behaviors among adolescents; 3) studies that examine fruit and vegetable consumption behaviors among adolescents; and 4) journal articles published between 2021 and 2026. Furthermore, articles will be excluded if their focus is not relevant to the context of adolescents, if they do not address psychological variables, or if they consist solely of essays, non-systematic narrative reviews, opinion pieces, editorials, or brief reports that do not meet methodological standards.

RESULTS

Study Selection Results

Through a selection process that followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a number of articles that met the inclusion criteria were analyzed in depth. The researchers describe the article inclusion process in the following table.

Table 1. Selection articles

No.	PRISMA Stages	Number of Articles (N)
1.	Articles identified from the database	261
2.	Articles screened (title & abstract)	37
3.	Articles excluded	224
4.	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	15
5.	Articles excluded (not meeting criteria)	22
6.	Articles included in the SLR based on content.	11

Based on the results of a literature search and a screening process in accordance with the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 11 articles were identified as eligible for analysis. These studies were published between 2021 and 2026 and focused on the psychological factors that influence healthy eating behaviors among adolescents. The 11 articles analyzed by the researchers are summarized in the table below.

Table 2. Articles Analyzed

No	Author, Year	Method	Participants	Contributing Psychological factors
1	Ibrahim et al., (2022)	Quantitative	Adolescents >12 years	• Self Efficacy
2	Rahayu, (2026)	Experiment	11-18 years	• Self efficacy
3	Fraczek et al., (2025)	Quantitative	10-14 years	• Motivation • Self efficacy
4	Liu et al., (2025)	Quantitative	Average 15,2 years	• Attitude
5	Jiang et al., (2024)	Quantitative	Average 14,2 years	• Attitude
6	Calvén et al., (2023)	Quantitative	13-15 years	• Attitude
7	Adetya & Viena, (2023)	Quantitative	15-18 years	• Self control
8	Phipps et al., (2023)	Quantitative	12-14 years	• Self control
9	Xue et al., (2026)	Quantitative	Average 19 years	• Subjective Well-being
10	Qibtiyah et al., (2021)	Qualitative	Junior high school students	• Attitude • Intention
11	Marentes-Castillo et al., (2024	Quantitative	15-19 years	• Self Efficacy • Motivation

Of the 11 articles analyzed, most used a quantitative approach (9 articles), one article used an experimental method, and one article used a qualitative approach. The participants were predominantly adolescents aged 10–18 years, although one study involved participants with an average age of 19 years.

Characteristics of the Studies Reviewed

An analysis of the selected articles revealed several psychological factors that are consistently associated with healthy eating behaviors among adolescents. These factors include attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control, motivation, subjective well-being, and intentions.

The distribution of the psychological factors identified in the analyzed studies is shown in the following table.

Table 3. Distribution

Psychological Factors	Number of Studies
Attitude	4
Self-Efficacy	4
Self-Control	2
Motivation	2
Subjective Well-Being	1
Intention	1

The results of the synthesis indicate that attitude is the most frequently cited factor in the literature, followed by self-efficacy, perception, and self-control. These findings suggest that cognitive and self-regulatory aspects play a dominant role in shaping healthy eating behaviors among adolescents.

Summary of Findings Based on Psychological Factors

1. Attitude

   Four studies conducted by Liu et al., (2025), Jiang et al., (2024), Calvén et al., (2023), and Qibtiyah et al., (2021) found that attitudes are significantly associated with healthy eating behaviors. Adolescents with positive attitudes toward healthy foods tend to choose nutritious foods more often than foods high in sugar, salt, and fat.

2. Self-Efficacy

   Self-efficacy was identified in studies by Ibrahim et al., (2022), Rahayu, (2026),

Castillo et al., (2024) and Fraczek et al., (2025). These four studies indicate that an individual's belief in their ability to choose and consume healthy foods plays a crucial role in the development of healthy eating behaviors.

3. Self-Control

   Research by Adetya & Viena, (2023) and Phipps et al., (2023) shows that self-control plays a role in adolescents' ability to resist the urge to consume unhealthy foods and stick to healthier food choices.

4. Motivation

   Fraczek et al. (2025) and Castillo et al., (2024) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation contribute to healthy eating behaviors. Adolescents with high motivation tend to be more consistent in following a healthy diet.

5. Subjective Well-Being

   Xue et al., (2026) found that subjective well-being is associated with healthier consumption behaviors. Individuals with high levels of happiness and life satisfaction tend to make better food choices.

6. Intention

   Research by Qibtiyah et al. (2021) shows that intentions are an important predictor of healthy eating behavior. Adolescents with a strong intention to adopt a healthy diet tend to be better able to put that behavior into practice in their daily lives.

DISCUSSION

The results of this systematic literature review indicate that psychological factors play a significant role in influencing healthy eating behaviors among adolescents. The main findings show that attitudes, self-efficacy, motivation and self-control are the factors most frequently identified across various studies.

Attitude emerged as the most dominant factor in the reviewed literature. This finding aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2012), which states that attitudes toward a behavior are one of the primary determinants influencing an individual's intentions and behavior. Adolescents who view healthy eating as beneficial are more likely to choose foods that support their health (Daly et al., 2022).

In addition to attitude, self-efficacy also emerges as an important factor. According to Social Cognitive Theory proposed by Bandura, (1986), self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to perform a specific action. In the context of healthy eating, adolescents with high self-efficacy are better able to overcome obstacles, resist unhealthy foods, and maintain healthy eating habits even in unsupportive environments (Castillo et al., 2024; Yunita et al., 2025).

Self-control has also been identified as a factor influencing healthy eating behaviors. Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by increasing independence in food choices, but also by high exposure to fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages (Reichelt & Rank, 2017). Therefore, the ability to control impulses is a key factor in determining the quality of adolescents' dietary patterns(Wills et al., 2007).

Motivational and intention factors were also found to contribute to healthy eating behavior. These two factors reinforce the view that behavioral change is influenced not only by knowledge but also by internal drives and an individual's commitment to taking specific actions (Ajzen, 1985; Bandura, 1971). Adolescents with strong motivation and intention tend to demonstrate greater consistency in maintaining a healthy diet (Szabo et al., 2019).

Interestingly, only one study examined the relationship between subjective well-being and healthy eating behavior. These findings indicate that research on positive psychological factors remains relatively limited compared to that on cognitive and self-regulatory factors. In fact, subjective well-being can influence an individual's ability to make more adaptive

decisions, including food choices (Bublitz et al., 2013; Xue et al., 2026). Therefore, this factor holds great potential for further exploration in future research.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that healthy eating behaviors among adolescents result from the interaction of various interrelated psychological factors. Interventions aimed at increasing healthy food consumption among adolescents should not only focus on improving nutritional knowledge but also address the development of positive attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control, motivation, and the psychological well-being of adolescents. These findings provide an empirical basis for the development of more comprehensive health promotion programs that are oriented toward the psychological aspects of adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a systematic literature review, healthy eating behaviors among adolescents are influenced by various psychological factors, namely attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control, motivation, intentions, and subjective well-being. Among these factors, attitudes, self-efficacy, self-control and motivation are the most frequently identified in various studies. These findings indicate that healthy eating behavior is influenced not only by nutritional knowledge but also by an individual's psychological state. Therefore, efforts to increase healthy eating among adolescents should focus on strengthening psychological aspects as part of a more effective health promotion strategy.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, efforts to promote healthy eating behaviors among adolescents should focus on strengthening psychological factors such as positive attitudes, self-efficacy, favorable perceptions of healthy foods, and self-control through educational programs in schools, families, and health care settings.

In addition, parents and schools are encouraged to create an environment that supports healthy eating habits by providing nutritious food options and modeling good eating behaviors.

For future researchers, it is recommended to examine psychological factors that have been rarely studied, such as subjective well-being and motivation, as well as to develop research models that integrate various psychological factors in explaining healthy eating behaviors among adolescents.

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