

Annex B – Details of KKH Study

I-VAST (Integrated Variety, Autonomy, Setting and Timing) Study on Singapore caregiver feeding practices and children eating behaviours

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Objective

To assess:

- Eating behaviours and habits, and caregiver feeding practices in infants and toddlers (from zero to two years old) in the four specific domains of variety, autonomy, setting and timing

Method:

- Online questionnaire

Target audience:

- 1,073 caregivers of infants and young children (zero to two years old)

Period of survey:

- October 2023 to January 2024

Findings

Variety:

- 20% of infants aged between 0 months and 1 year were offered foods only from 3 food groups or less.
- 50% of infants aged between 0 months and 1 year were not introduced to a variety of textures during mealtimes.
- 39.5% of children aged between 0 and 6 months were not introduced to a variety of flavours during mealtimes.
- 10% of infants between 0 months and 1 year started consuming sugar-sweetened beverages.
- 20% of children above 1 year old consumed sugar-sweetened beverages daily or a few times a week.

Autonomy:

- 10% of children aged between 1 year and 2 years were not able to self-feed with their hands or utensils.

- 17.4% of children aged between 1 year and 2 years were perceived by their caregivers to not be consuming enough milk or solid foods.
- 8% of caregivers of children between age 6 months and 1 year, and 11.8% of caregivers of children between age 1 year and 2 years could not tell if their child was hungry or full.
- 64.7% of children between 0 months and 2 years, were encouraged to finish milk in bottle, or food from plate by their caregivers (regardless of hunger/fullness cues)

Setting:

- 33.3% of children between 0 months and 2 years required a special setting to assist them with eating during mealtimes.
- Out of all 240 children (33.3%) who require a special setting, 42.5% were provided screen time by their caregivers as a distraction during mealtimes.

Timing:

- 36.4% of children between 6 months and 1 year, and 23.9% of children aged between 1 and 2 years were not provided milk or food at regular timings.
- 50.4% of children aged between 6 months and 1 year, and 23.2% of children aged between 1 and 2 years were still provided milk between midnight to 6am every night, or on most nights a week.

Caregivers' concerns and perceptions on child growth and feeding:

- A higher proportion of caregivers (20.7%) perceive their child to be underweight and not eating enough, compared to the proportion of parents (7.4%) who perceive their child to be overweight and overeating.
- The proportion of parents who struggle getting the child to eat and perceive mealtimes to be difficult increases with age (9.9%, 15.5% to 28.8%).

Caregiver awareness of child feeding guidelines:

- 33.3% were not aware that issues with child feeding affects the long-term health of children.
- 42% were unaware or uncertain about the availability of age-appropriate recommended feeding guidelines.
- 90% agreed that it will be useful to have guidelines on child feeding and eating.

Conclusion

The study revealed sub-optimal child eating behaviors and caregiver feeding practices in Singapore, underscoring the necessity for the development of the Singapore Guideline for Feeding and Eating in Infants and Young Children