

Parents' Perceptions of Organic Food: A Qualitative Content Analysis of an Online Parenting Community

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Introduction. Parents of young children willing to pay an average of \$0.68 more for organic food (McFadden & Huffman, 2017); it is important to understand why. Redsell et al. (2010) and Hjelmar (2011) found parents believed organic food was healthier than local food. Cairns & Johnston (2015) wrote that parents believed buying organic food is part of good parenting. Each of these studies used interviews and/or focus groups to collect data. Organic food and related topics can be a contentious area (Haspel, 2018), so some parents may not have felt comfortable sharing their true opinions. The current study analyzed conversations about organic food on an online forum where parents are able to interact openly and anonymously.

Theoretical Framework. Six factors (Dissociative Anonymity, Invisibility, Asynchronicity, Solipsistic Introjection, Dissociative Imagination, and Minimization of Status and Authority) result in both Benign and Toxic Disinhibition behaviors. Benign Disinhibition includes individuals sharing personal emotions, fears, or wishes or their being very helpful. Toxic Disinhibition includes rude, crude, or hateful behavior and/or visiting dark websites (Suler, 2004). The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of why parents choose to purchase organic food or not through anonymous online data.

Methodology. A qualitative content analysis of conversations about organic food on BabyCenter's online forums was conducted. The site was chosen due to the high volume of people it reaches (more than 100 million parents monthly) (BabyCenter LLC, 2019). The Community section of the site, which allows parents to search for, and add to, conversations about a topic, was used for this study. 'Organic food' was used in the site's internal search tool and filtered for Community results. The first 20 relevant conversations (Porter & Ispa, 2012) within one year of the search data were analyzed. Each comment was coded in two phases. After re-coding, there was 100% agreement between two coders, which is more than the 80% needed for acceptance (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The codes were then organized into themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Redsell, L., & Johnston, J. (2015). Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Child Nutrition*, 30(1), 1-10.
 Hjelmar, M. (2011). Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Child Nutrition*, 26(1), 1-10.
 Cairns, J., & Johnston, J. (2015). Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Child Nutrition*, 30(1), 1-10.
 Porter, L., & Ispa, J. (2012). Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Child Nutrition*, 27(1), 1-10.
 Haspel, J. (2018). Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis. *Journal of Child Nutrition*, 33(1), 1-10.
 Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
 BabyCenter LLC. (2019). *Parents' perceptions of organic food: A qualitative content analysis*. Retrieved from https://www.babycenter.com/organic-food/parents-perceptions-organic-food/



Some data agreed with past research's findings that parents believe organic food is healthier and/or safer (Redsell et al., 2010; Hjelmar, 2011)



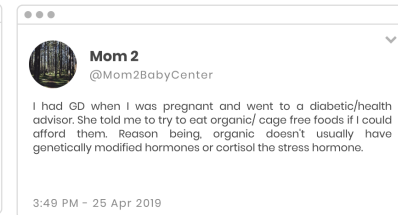
Parents felt judged for feeding their children organic food. Previous literature found the opposite to be true (Currid-Halkett, 2017; Cairns & Johnston, 2015).



Parents conveyed confusion regarding organic labeling, organic practices, and what "organic" is.



Future research should study how parents define "organic" and which sources parents trust when determining which products are truly organic.



Advantages of Organic Food, According to Parents

Safer and/or Healthier. Eating organic food is healthier and/or safer than eating conventionally-grown food

More Ethical. Organic food is more ethical than conventionally-grown food

Disadvantages of Organic Food, According to Parents

Expensive. Eating organic food is more expensive than eating conventionally-grown food

Judged by Others. Parents who feed their children organic food are judged for doing so

Distrust. Not trusting farmers to follow organic procedures or not trusting the value of organic labels

Product Quality. Organic food is dirty or imperfect

Not Safer and/or Healthier. Organic food is not healthier or safer than conventionally-grown food