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# The influence of caregivers' value tensions on nutrition decisions for their families: A qualitative study in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

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**Coffee Break and Poster Session: P1. Ageing | Children and families | Policies and environments | Young Adults | Indigenizing Wellbeing Research Early care and education, June 12, 2025, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**SIG - Primary Choice:** G. Children and families

**Purpose:** This study explores value tensions in nutrition decisions among caregivers of children (0-4 years) in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Daily challenges like stress, limited support, and financial strain influence tensions between values, such as maintaining family harmony versus making healthy food choices, negatively impacting nutrition decisions by caregivers. Nutrition interventions often fail to address these tensions, making it difficult to integrate advice and support in experienced tensions and caregivers' daily lives. This helps explain their relatively low effect on intervention uptake and effectiveness. We aim to inform future health interventions with an understanding of value tensions in nutrition decisions to enhance their effectiveness in promoting healthy eating.

**Methods:** We conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 caregivers of children aged zero to four, living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. We used pre-interview sensitization exercises (e.g. photo assignments) to enhance participants' awareness and generative techniques during the interviews (e.g. image selection) to facilitate deeper reflection and expression of nutrition decisions and tensions. Transcripts were analysed inductively to identify value tensions, stressors triggering them, and protective factors that mitigate stressor and tension impact.

**Results:** Six key value tensions caregivers experienced regarding nutrition were identified in the analysis. The three most commonly mentioned tensions were balancing the value of health of the child with values of (1) enjoyment of the child, (2) convenience, and (3) caregiver well-being. Specific stressors, such as demanding child behaviour, unhealthy food provided by family and friends, and lack of caregiver 'me-time', triggered these tensions. Protective factors, including social and material support like informal childcare and access to healthy and convenient foods, helped alleviate tension.

**Conclusions:** This study provides insight into how value tensions, stressors, and protective factors shape caregivers' nutrition decisions for their family. Addressing these tensions as barriers to behaviour change can improve intervention uptake. Interventions should support multiple values (e.g. both caregiver well-being and child health) and integrate stress management, social and material support. Additionally, our findings provide guidance to tailor interventions to individual experienced tensions and the moments they take place.