

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PICKY EATER AND THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AT GOTONG ROYONG KINDERGARTEN IN SURABAYA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

One of the eating behavior disorders in preschool children is picky eater, a behavior that is picky about food so that children experience limited consumption of a variety of foods. This impacts the nutritional status of children, which can affect their health. Therefore, this study aims to determine the relationship between children's eating behavior disorders (picky eaters) and the nutritional status of preschool children at Kindergarten Gotong Royong Surabaya, Indonesia. This was an observational analytical research with a cross-sectional research design. The sampling method used purposive sampling technique. Data were collected by filling out the CEBQ (Child Eating Behavior Questionnaire) questionnaire and anthropometric measurements of body weight and height, as well as measuring nutritional status using the indicators BB/TB (0-6 months) and BMI/U (>60 months). All data were processed using IBM SPSS v25.0 software with the Spearman rank correlation test. The results of the study showed that 53.6% of preschool children at KB-TK Gotong Royong Surabaya had eating behavior disorders (picky eaters), 46.4% of the children were non-picky eaters, 41.0% had poor nutritional status, and 43.6% had normal nutrition who were mostly non-picky eaters. The bivariate analysis results of the correlation test obtained a p-value of 0.001 ($\alpha > 0.05$). These data showed a relationship between picky eating disorders and the nutritional status of preschool children at Kindergarten Gotong Royong Surabaya.

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INTRODUCTION

Nutritional problems in children are still a matter of public concern today. This happens because children's eating patterns or eating behavior are still problematic, especially preschool children often

experience eating problems. Preschool children often experience eating behavior disorders, which can affect their nutritional status. One of the eating behavior disorders that often occurs is picky eating. Eating behavior disorders are considered normal

for some parents because children at preschool age (3-6years) are active consumers. They only choose foods that they recognize and like¹.

Children with picky eater behavior have limited food variety by refusing new foods and consuming less protein and fibre, such as fruit and vegetables, than non-picky eater children. Meanwhile, preschoolers are in the "Golden Age", where children are in the growth phase, so that they require adequate nutrition².

The incidence of picky eaters in China, according to research by Kwon et al (2017)³, was 54% of 1628 picky eater children aged 3-6 years, while in Indonesia, as many as 33.6% of children experienced picky eater eating disorder⁴, then increased to 44.5%, experienced nutritional deficiencies. In Putri and Muniroh's research (2019), the prevalence of picky eaters in Surabaya was 54.7%⁵. Picky eater behavior is related to nutritional status. Based on 2018 Riskesdas (Basic Health Research) data, it was found that the prevalence of malnutrition was 17.75%, which still exceeded the reduction target of the 2015-2019 National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN)⁶. In 2020, the only predicted reduction in stunting was 26.9%. In 2021, the nutritional status in Indonesia showed that stunting percentage was 24.4%, wasting 7.1%, and underweight 17.0%. The results of Indonesian Nutritional Status Study (SSGI) found that in Surabaya, East Java, the nutritional status was low on the weight/age index. Weight for age (BB/U): 6,200 cases, height for age (TB/U): 6,722 cases, weight for height (BB/TB): 6,551 cases. Even though there has been a decline, nutritional problems need more treatment so that malnutrition does not increase again⁷.

Picky eaters can cause nutritional deficiencies in normal and abnormal development conditions, especially micronutrients⁸. Picky eaters in preschool children cause problems that affect their growth and development. Apart from that, a lack of nutritional intake due to children being picky about food can affect the child's nutritional status. There will be an increased risk of illness, decreased body weight, risk of excess nutrition and even obesity. There can be delays in children's growth and development, decreased intellectual intelligence, digestive disorders and infectious diseases that can cause death⁹. It can also cause children to experience a lack of red blood cells (anaemia), which can lead to stunting¹⁰. Wijayanti & Rosalina (2018)¹¹ and Nadhirah & Taufiq (2021)¹². showed a significant relationship between picky eater behavior and nutritional status in preschool children.

The aim of this study was to discover more about the relationship between picky eating disorders and the nutritional status of preschool children.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a cross-sectional design. The minimum number of samples obtained from the Issac & Michael formula calculation was 88 respondents. Sampling was taken using a purposive sampling technique that had been adjusted to the inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were children aged 3-6 years or 36-72 months, healthy and mothers willing to be respondents, no food allergies, no history of digestive tract infections, especially internal diarrhea, and in the last 1 week, the children were not on cancer treatment or therapy.

The sample obtained was 110 students from a total population of 113 students. The instrument used was a mother and child identity questionnaire, a CEBQ (Child Eating Behavior Questionnaire) sheet containing 35 questions with 8 subscales filled in with a 1-5 Likert scale for each question. This questionnaire had been tested for validity in various countries and had been translated by researchers and tested for validity (0.01-0.04) and reliability (0.937).

Nutritional status was measured by the KEMENKES (ministry of health) standard anthropometric table; the index used was BW/BH (age 36-60 months) and BMI/A (age >60 months). Univariate data analysis is a frequency distribution table, while bivariate analysis used the Spearman rank correlation test with significant correlation is 0,05.

RESULTS

The following is the frequency distribution of child and mother characteristics and eating behavior disorders (picky eaters) from 110 respondents. The majority of preschool children were 61-72 months old and male. The average age of the research subjects' mothers was 26-30 years. Most mothers' last education was high school. Mother's employment status was not working. The income level of the parents was high. Based on the number of children, the mothers were included as multiparous mothers, and the number of family members at home was the same size as that of small and medium families.

Most of the students had picky eating behavior, as much as 53.6%. In the cross-tabulation data between characteristics and picky eater behavior disorder, it was found that around 47.3% were aged

61-72 months, and the majority were male, with 64 students (58.2%) who experienced picky eating, 53.6%.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of General Characteristics of Children and Mothers

No	Child Characteristics	(N)	(%)
1	Age		
	36-47 Month	34	30.9
	48-60 Month	24	21.8
	61-72 Month	52	47.3
2	Gender		
	Boy	64	58.2
	Girl	46	41.8
No	Characteristics Mom	(N)	(%)
1	Mom's Age		
	20-25 Years old	10	9.1
	26-30 Years old	45	40.9
	31-35 Years old	26	23.6
	36-40 Years old	19	17.3
	41-45 Years old	9	8.2
	46-45 Years old	1	0.9
2	Last Education		
	Not completed primary school	3	2.7
	Elementary school	10	9.1
	Junior high school	28	25.5
	Senior high school	55	50.0
	Diploma	5	4.5
	Bachelor	9	8.2
3	Job Status		
	Work	52	47.3
	Does not Work	58	52.7
4	Family Income		
	High, if \geq CMW of Surabaya 2023 (\geq Rp 4.525.479,-)	69	62.7
	Low, if <CMW of Surabaya 2023 (<Rp 4.525.479,-)	41	37.3
5	Number of children		
	1 Child (Primiparous)	31	28.2
	2 Children or More (Multiparous)	79	71.8
6.	Family Members		
	<5 People (Little Family)	52	47.3
	5-6 People (Medium Family)	52	47.3
	>6 orang (Big Family)	6	5.4
Total		110	100,0

Table 2. Picky Eater Frequency Distribution

No	Picky Eater	(N)	(%)
1	Yes	59	53.6
2	No	51	46.4
Total		110	100.0

Regarding maternal characteristics, it was found that the highest maternal age of the research subjects was 26-30 years old at 40.9%. Most mothers' last education was high school, as much as 52.7%. The mother's employment status was not working as much as 50%. The average income of the parents of all research subjects in 1 month in the majority of picky eaters was low less than City Minimum Wage (CMW) of Surabaya. Based on the number of children, most mothers felt into the multiparous category at 71.8%. The number of family members of picky eater children including as medium families (5-6 people) was 47.3%.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Nutritional Status

Nutritional Status	(N)	(%)
Severe Malnutrition	4	3.6
Malnutrition	45	41.0
Normal	48	43.6
Possible risk of overweight	3	2.7
Overweight	7	6.4
Obesity	3	2.7
Total	110	100.0

Table 3 shows that most students' nutritional status is normal at 43.6% and has a minimum difference with malnutrition status (41%).

Table 4. Analysis of the Relationship between Picky Eater and Nutritional Status

Nutritional Status	Picky Eater		Non Picky Eater	
	N	%	N	%
Severe Malnutrition	4	6.8	0	0
Malnutrition	41	69.5	4	7.8
Normal	13	22.0	35	68.6
Possible Risk of Overweight	1	1.7	2	4.0
Overweight	0	0	7	13.7
Obesity	0	0	3	5.9
Total	59	100.0	51	100.0
P-value	0.001			
Correlation Coefficient	0.605			

The results of the frequency distribution showed that 69.7% of children were picky eaters and had poor nutritional status. Then the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test was carried out and found a significance of 0.000 (<0.005), so the residual value was not normally distributed, so it could be continued with the Spearman statistical test.

The results of the analysis obtained p-value ($0.001 < \alpha=0.005$) so that there was a relationship between children's eating behaviour disorders (picky eaters) and the nutritional status of preschool children at Gotong Royong Kindergarten Surabaya. The correlation coefficient test results obtained a value of 0.605, which means it had a strong level of correlation or relationship (value range 0.51-0.75).

DISCUSSION

The results showed that the preschool-age children who experienced eating behavior disorders (picky eaters) was 53.6% because preschool children were active consumers who can choose the food they like. Based on parents' reports, the forms of eating behavior disorders in preschool children included refusal to eat meat in some children, dislike vegetables or fruit because of their texture, refusal of new but familiar foods even without tasting the food, protesting against the food served, preferred snacks to main meals because snacks have a very strong taste and colour and shape. Various packaging makes children prefer snacks, as is the same as the Riskesdas report (2018) that around 95.5% of children aged ≥ 5 years fall into the category of consuming fewer vegetables and fruit. Previous research also explained that picky eater children tend to avoid vegetable, fruit or meat food groups

and protest against food¹³. Research (Putri & Muniroh, 2019) also reveals that preschool children tend to like snacks (46%) and sweet foods such as candy or fatty foods such as fried foods (60%) because they taste better and attract attention⁵.

The age of preschool children who were the most picky eaters was 61-72 months. This age had also the highest frequency in the total students sample from Gotong Royong kindergarten. Picky eater behavior continues to occur as the children get older if the behavior is not handled well. According to Muthohiroh (2021), this eating behavior disorder begins to appear when children are 2-3 years old so it can continue in children aged 4-6 years and even into teenagers¹⁴.

On average, Gotong Royong Kindergarten Surabaya's students were predominantly male, and most of them were picky eaters (31.8%) because boys tend to have higher physical activity than girls, so they are more likely to miss meals and are more likely to eat snacks, so their nutritional intake does not match their needs. Boys' emotional levels are higher, and they are at risk of being fussy when eating. In line with a research by Darma et al. (2020), boys are more likely to be picky eaters because their nutritional needs exceed their diet and activity¹⁵. In contrast, in a research by Anggraini et al. (2021), picky eaters were mostly found in women (48.1%)¹⁶. According to Brown et al. (2020), the gender of children who are picky eaters does not differ significantly, so it can be concluded that eating disorder (picky eating) is not significant by gender¹⁷.

In maternal characteristics, most of the mothers' of picky eater children aged 26-30 years, where this age is considered

adulthood and should be mature in thinking and solving problems, especially problems with children's eating behavior and nutritional intake. However, it does not rule out the possibility that picky eater behavior is not determined based on the mother's age but the mother's readiness to care for the children. In Haryansyah's (2017) research, the average age of mothers with picky eater children was 20-30 years¹⁸. The mother's age can influence the ability to determine parenting patterns and determine appropriate food for children if accompanied by a high level of knowledge and experience¹⁹.

The final education level of mothers with picky eater children was high school which was included in the middle-level maternal education category. In contrast, for mothers who had not completed elementary school and had low levels of education, the dominant result was that the children were picky eaters. The level of education shows the level of knowledge obtained by the mother regarding the importance of nutritional content in each food given, so that it can increase the mother's initiative to provide a variety of foods and seek information for solutions for children who experience eating behavior disorders. According to Winarni & Purnama (2018)²⁰, the mother's education level influences attitudes and behavior in feeding practices. The higher the level of education, the easier it is for mothers to get the right information and techniques for feeding their children so that children do not become picky eaters and have adequate nutrition²¹.

Research results showed that the proportion of non-working mothers' employment status was greater than that of working mothers. Mothers who do not work

should have much time with their children and can pay special attention to their children's eating behavior. However, several factors may make mothers think that picky eating is common in children aged 3-6, causing mothers to miss the risks. The eating behavior of children who are picky eaters also depends on the ability to provide food. In contrast, working mothers have little time with their children. However, they can involve other people to care for the child, following the eating patterns implemented so that the mother's employment status does not influence the child's eating behaviour. A Research by Syahroni (2020) also revealed no relationship between mothers' employment status and picky eater behaviour among their children²².

The total income of both parents of Gotong Royong Kindergarten Surabaya students was mostly more than the Surabaya CMW 2023. However, 33.6% of the parents with picky eater children had low income or less than Surabaya CMW 2024. Families with low incomes have limited purchasing power for foodstuffs with balanced and varied nutrition compared to families with high incomes so family income influences the eating behavior of children who are picky eaters because they only want food that is often found and not varied. There is a relationship between income level and the incidence of picky eaters because a high family income level can meet the family's food needs¹⁹.

The research results also showed that most mothers' children, 2-5 people, were classified as multipara, and the largest number of family members at home was in the medium family category (5-6 people). This is very likely to be a risk factor for the eating behavior of picky eater children

because if the number of family members increases without adequate income, it can cause the quality and quantity of food consumption distribution to be unequal between children and adults in one family member. As time goes by, a child's eating pattern will become monotonous. For example, the food provided by the family does not vary. In this way, children will get used to consuming less diverse foods, and it will be difficult for them to accept new foods that they have never tried because their families do not always provide them. Mahmudah's research (2022) also explains that, on average, children who are picky eaters have a large number of family members. Hence, there is a relationship between the number of family members and picky eaters²³.

Several factors may influence the differences between the results of this study and other studies between picky eaters and nutritional status, one of which is due to differences in characteristics, samples and methods of measuring nutritional status, which have different approaches for each indicator²⁴. In this study, some picky eaters still had normal nutrition. Children with picky eating behavior often refuse some food and only accept certain foods according to their wishes. However, there are certain times when picky eaters children can eat other types of food to meet their nutritional needs. According to Cerdasari et al. (2022)¹³, even though children are classified as picky eaters if they get sufficient energy intake from other sources to meet energy and protein needs as well as supporting factors for nutritional status, this can help prevent a decline in nutritional status in older preschool children.

CONCLUSION

There is a relationship between picky eating disorders and the nutritional status of preschool children at Kindergarten Gotong Royong Surabaya.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All researchers have no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research article,

ETHICS CONSIDERATION

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Deby Artika Pangastutik, Widati Fatmaningrum, Bagus Setyoboedi, Sofia Al Farizi have compiled and designed research, starting from collecting data, analyzing data and presenting or reporting data results.

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