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Child feeding practice, picky eating behaviour and nutritional status among toddlers in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Background: Nutritional problems in toddlers in Indonesia are still a serious concern considering that this age group is vulnerable to nutritional problems that cannot be corrected as before, thus having an impact on the growth and development process.

Purpose: To determine the association between feeding practice and picky eating behaviour with the nutritional status of toddlers in Sukamulya Village.

Method: Correlational quantitative research design. The data used comes from secondary data. The sample was 145 mothers with toddlers in Sukamulya Village. Data analysis used univariate analysis and bivariate analysis with the Spearman's rho correlation test.

Results: Most of the feeding practices carried out by mothers in Sukamulya Village are proper (94.5%). Regarding food choice behaviour, there were 73 toddlers (50.3%) who were not picky eating and 72 (49.7%) toddlers who were picky eating. The nutritional status of toddlers in Sukamulya Village consists of 92 toddlers (63.4%) in the good nutritional status category, 28 toddlers (19.3%) are at risk of overweight, 12 toddlers (8.3%) were overweight, 8 toddlers (5.5%) were obese, 3 toddlers (2.1%) experienced severely wasted and 2 toddlers (1.4%) were wasted.

Conclusion: There is no significant association between maternal feeding practice ($r = -0.007$; $p = 0.936$) and picky eating behaviour ($r = -0.010$; $p = 0.907$) with the nutritional status of toddlers in Sukamulya Village.

Suggestion: It is expected that the results of this study will be useful as a reference for the latest data related to toddler nutrition so that it can be a basis for improving health services and can provide direction in the form of counselling or education related to maternal feeding practices and monitoring toddler behaviour in children to optimize toddler health conditions.

Keywords: Feeding Practice; Nutritional Status; Picky Eating Behaviour; Toddler.

INTRODUCTION

The toddler period is the period after birth until before the age of 59 months, which requires balanced nutrition obtained both in quantity and quality to achieve optimal weight and height (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). Nutritional problems at this time will have a permanent and long-term impact because toddlers are going through a phase of growth and development consisting of physical growth, psychomotor development, and mental and social development (Achadi, 2014; Yunike, 2023). Thus, meeting optimal nutritional

needs for children in that period is very important as an effort to prevent adverse impacts on their future.

More than one-third of under-five deaths are attributed to of nutritional problems, although based on the literature it is rarely explained as a direct cause (Bain, Awah, Geraldine, Kindong, Siga, Bernard, & Tanjeko, 2013). As many as 53% of deaths in children under five in developing countries are related to malnutrition (Mustika & Syamsul, 2018).

According on the report The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World according to the

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Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it is stated that the prevalence of children under five with malnutrition and malnutrition throughout the world in 2022 will reach 45 million children under five (toddlers). Based on research data, 17.7% of toddlers in Indonesia experience nutritional problems (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018).

These figures include 3.9% of toddlers being severely wasted, and 13.8% of toddlers wasted. The number of malnourished toddlers with the BB/U index based on districts/cities in West Java Province for the 2019-2021 period reached 159,941 toddlers with 25.3% of them in Bandung Regency (West Java Health Service, 2021). This illustrates that the number of nutritional problems, especially in Bandung Regency, West Java Province, is still quite high.

Efforts to reduce the number of nutritional problems is carried out in various aspects because it is expected not only to be the responsibility of the government but also to be carried out by involving the entire community. In this case, nurses play a role in mobilizing the community and handling in accordance with case management, providing regular counselling and support to improve good health behaviour to prevent nutritional problems in toddlers. Efforts to overcome nutritional problems in toddlers need to involve parents, especially mothers because they are the closest environment who can control the growth and development process. Mothers need to ensure adequate nutrition so that the toddler growth and development process runs optimally. In the family, activities related to the fulfilment of toddler nutritional intake and usually carried out by mothers are related to feeding practice (Niga & Purnomo, 2016).

Feeding practice in toddlers is the participation carried out by mothers in meeting daily food intake both in quality and quantity (Rahmawati, 2016). If the feeding practices carried out by the mother are not optimal, then there are several possible problems that will arise characterized by a thin body, poor nutrition, and even stunting can occur (Purwani & Mariyam, 2013). In feeding practices, proper and good implementation will also affect the growth of toddlers by seeing the condition of their good nutritional status as well. Nutritional status is good when the body obtains good nutritional intake, thus enabling physical growth and general health to be optimally good. Poor nutritional status occurs when the body experiences a deficiency or excess of nutrients (Yuliarsih, Muhaimin,

& Anwar, 2020). However, this statement contradicts the results of other studies that show that there is no significant association between the mother's role in feeding practice and the nutritional status of toddlers (p-value 0.544) (Hasibuan, Batubara, & Suryani, 2019).

Feeding practices by mothers do not always go well because there is a possibility of other factors that can influence, one of which is related to toddler habits in choosing food. In general, toddlers who have eaten various menus will experience psychological development so that toddlers become more independent, autonomous, and can express their emotions to tend to choose food (Bahagia & Rahayuningsih, 2018). Food selection behaviour that occurs in toddlers is also called picky eating which is a disorder in eating characterized by refusing to eat, neophobia, and having foods that are very liked (Damayanti & Setyarini, 2016).

Picky eating behaviour that is commonly encountered in toddlers is a habit in choosing types of food and difficult to introduce to new foods. This behaviour makes toddlers have a habit of choosing their own food which will have an impact on deficient or excess nutritional intake which affects the condition of their nutritional status (Horst, Deming, Lesniauskas, Carr, & Reidy, 2016; Saraswati, Setiarini, Syafiq, & Sumarna, 2012).

The results of research in Aceh Besar Regency, also stated that there was an association between picky eating behaviour and nutritional status in preschool-age children (p-value 0.000). The results of this study explain that the cause of poor nutritional status in children can be caused by poor food selection behaviour, one of which is picky eating (Bahagia & Rahayuningsih, 2018). However, this explanation is different from the results of other studies which found that there was no association between picky eating behaviour with nutritional status (p-value 0.855). This research also explains that toddlers with picky eating behaviour do not experience problems with their growth and development (Wiratmo, Nisa, & Marianna, 2021).

Based on the description above, some studies still show gaps so that further research needs to be done on factors related to nutritional problems in toddlers. Researchers did not find previous studies that discussed simultaneously and directly the association between feeding practice and picky eating behaviour

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with the nutritional status of toddlers. Nutritional problems in toddlers are serious and must be overcome immediately so they need to be investigated more deeply. The need for attention, one of which is more in-depth research regarding toddler nutrition problems is because malnutrition that occurs during the golden period will affect the quality of children's growth and development and their future. Research can be carried out with the scope of areas that have nutritional problems in toddlers, one of which is Sukamulya Village.

Sukamulya Village is a village located in Rancaekek District, Bandung Regency which is the area with the second highest number of malnourished toddlers after Bogor Regency (West Java Health Office, 2021). Based on a preliminary study conducted by the MBKM grant research team Environmental Modification Through Sanitation, Clean Water, Hygiene, and Nutrition for Stunting Prevention 2023, it was found that there were 29.2% of stunted toddlers in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village. Another study conducted in Sukamulya Village also stated that out of a total of 96 toddlers, as many as 31 (32.3%) toddlers were stunted which is still relatively high (Fauziyah, Rosidin, Purnama, Mardiah, Susanti, & Rahayuwati, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

This secondary research is quantitative correlational research with a cross-sectional approach. The

population in this study were mothers who have toddlers (0-59 months) who live in Hamlet III, Sukamulya Village, Rancaekek District, Bandung Regency. The research sample used a total sampling technique of 145 respondents. The instruments in the study used a combination of primary research instruments. This study has gone through ethical approval from the Research Ethics Commission of Padjadjaran University with ethical number 37/UN6.KEP/EC/2023.

The data used in this study were collected between September - August 2023 through the stage of direct data collection from mothers who have toddlers in Hamlet III, Sukamulya Village, which was carried out by the main researcher and his team. Data analysis was carried out univariately and bivariate. The univariate analysis carried out was to present the frequency distribution and the percentage. Bivariate analysis was used to see the relationship between the independent variables (mother's feeding practices, picky eating behaviour in toddlers) and the dependent variable (nutritional status) using the Spearman's rho test. Toddler nutritional status is the condition of a toddler's body assessed using the anthropometric index (BMI) according to age. Then an assessment is carried out with the category severely wasted if the standard deviation value is <3 , wasted value -3 to <-2 , good (normal) -2 to $+1$, Possible risk of overweight $>+1$ to $+3$ and obese $>+3$.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (N=145)

Variables	Results
Characteristics of Mother	
Age (n/%)	
(Mean±SD) (Range)(Years)	(28.89±6.583) (17-49)
<20 years	6/4.1
20 – 35 years	116/80.0
>35 years	23/15.9
Mother's Education (n/%)	
Elementary school	44/30.3
Secondary school	71/49.0
Senior high school	25/17.2
University	5/3.5

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Variables	Results
Family Income per Month (n/%)	
Below UMR City/Regency	96/66.2
Equivalent UMR – IDR 5.000.000	47/32.4
>IDR 5.000.000	2/1.4
Number of Children (n/%)	
1 child	49/33.8
2 children	63/43.4
3 children	27/18.6
≥4 children	6/4.2
Maternal Feeding Practices (n/%)	
Improper	8/5.5
Proper	137/94.5
Characteristics of Toddlers	
Age (n/%)	
(Mean±SD) (Range)(Month)	(31.10±15.625) (0-61)
0 - 6 month	8/5.5
> 6 – 12 month	14/9.7
> 12 month	123/84.8
Gender (n/%)	
Female	77/53.1
Male	68/46.9
Food Selection Behaviour (N/%)	
Picky Eating	
Dislikes Fruits	4/2.8
Dislikes Vegetables	26/17.9
Dislikes Eggs	3/2.1
Dislikes Processed Legumes	10/6.7
Dislikes Meat	9/6.2
Dislikes Fish	5/3.4
Dislikes The Texture of Certain Foods Dislikes Them	4/2.8
Taste of Certain Foods	7/4.8
Only Likes Certain Foods	1/0.8
Dislikes Rice	2/1.4
Difficult Eating Habits	1/0.8
<i>Not Picky Eating</i>	73/50.3
Nutritional Status (n/%)	
Malnutrition	3/2.1
Undernourished	2/1.4
Normal	92/63.4
At Risk of Overweight	28/19.3
Overweight	12/8.3
Obese	8/5.5

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Table 1. shows the majority of respondents ages with mean and standard deviation (28.89±6.583) with an average age of 20-35 years. As many as (49%) mothers have junior high school education. More than half of the respondents (66.2%) have a monthly family income in the range below the City/District UMR. Based on the number of children, as many as 63 respondents (43.45) mostly have 2 children. Most mothers have implemented correct feeding practices for their children, namely (94.5%) and a small number of mothers, namely (5.5%) have implemented inappropriate feeding practices.

As for the characteristics of toddlers, almost all respondents are aged >12 months, namely 123 toddlers (84.8%) with the largest gender being female, namely 77 toddlers (53.1%). As many as 73 toddlers (50.3%) have food selection behaviour so that they are not included in the picky eating category. Less than half of toddlers have picky eating behaviour (49.7%). A total of 92 toddlers (63.4%) are in the good nutritional status category, 28 toddlers (19.3%) are at risk of obesity, 12 toddlers (8.3%) are overweight and 8 toddlers (5.5%) are obese. In addition, there are toddlers with malnutrition as many as 3 toddlers (2.1%) and undernourished as many as 2 toddlers (1.4%).

Tabel 2. Relationship Between Feeding Practices and Picky Eating Behaviour with The Nutritional Status of Toddlers (n=145)

Variables	Nutritional Status of Toddlers						r	p-value
	Malnutrition (n=3)	Undernourished (n=2)	Normal (n=92)	At Risk of Overweight (n=28)	Overweight (n=12)	Obese (n=8)		
Feeding Practice (n/%)								
Improper	0/0	0/0	5/5.4	3/10.8	0/0		-0.007	0.936
Proper	3/100	2/100	87/94.6	25/89.2	12/100	8/100		
Picky Eating Behaviour (n/%)								
Picky eating	1/33.3	1/50.0	48/52.2	8/28.6	7/58.3	7/87.5	-0.010	0.907
Not Picky Eating	2/66.7	1/50.0	44/47.8	20/71.4	5/41.7	1/12.5		

Table 2. shows that correct feeding practices were found in toddlers with normal nutritional status (63.5%). Correct feeding practices were also found in toddlers with nutritional status of possible risk of being overweight (89.2%), obesity (100%), very thin (100%) and thin nutritional status of 2 toddlers (100%). Meanwhile, incorrect feeding practices were found in toddlers with normal nutritional category of 5 toddlers (5.4%) and toddlers with possible risk of being overweight (10.8%). Analysis of the relationship between feeding practices and nutritional status of toddlers using Spearman's rho correlation test showed a correlation coefficient value of -0.007 and a p value of 0.936 which means it is greater than 0.05 so that there is no significant relationship between feeding practices by mothers and nutritional status of toddlers in Dusun III, Sukamulya Village.

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Toddlers with picky eating behaviour more than half of the respondents are in the normal nutrition category (52.2%) and toddlers who do not have picky eating behaviour are also in the normal nutrition category (47.8%). Toddlers who are not picky eaters in the nutritional status condition are likely to be at risk of being overweight (71.4%), overweight (41.7%), very thin (66.7%), thin (33.3%) and obese (12.5%). Picky eating toddlers in the category of possible risk of being overweight (28.6%), obese (58.3) obesity (87.5%) very thin (33.3%) and thin both (50.0%).

Analysis of the relationship between picky eating behaviour in toddlers with toddler nutritional status using the Spearman's rho correlation test showed a correlation coefficient value of -0.010 and a significance value of 0.907. This value means that there is no significant relationship between picky eating behaviour and the nutritional status of toddlers in Dusun III, Sukamulya Village.

DISCUSSION

The Association of Feeding Practices

In this study, the results showed no significant association related to feeding practices by mothers with the nutritional status of toddlers in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village. The results are in accordance with a study involving 100 mothers and toddlers in Tugu Village, Cimanggis District, Depok City, which resulted in research not proving a significant association between feeding practice with the nutritional status of toddlers ($p = 0.877$) (Amelia, 2023). Other research also found that there was no significant association between feeding practices by working mothers and the nutritional status of toddlers, this was illustrated although most feeding practices were not appropriate (97.3%), but the nutritional status possessed by toddlers was in the normal nutritional category (82.5%) (Permatasari, 2018). There are other studies that contradict the results of this study. If the feeding practice is good, it will have an impact on the nutritional status of toddlers is good, but on the contrary, if the feeding practice is not good, the nutritional status of toddlers is also less good, this is evidenced by a p-value value of 0.008 so that there is a significant relationship between feeding practice with the nutritional status of toddlers (Sodikin, Endiyono, & Rahmawati, 2018).

In this study, proper feeding practice by mothers as many as 137 mothers (94.5%) and more than half of toddlers had normal nutritional status amounting to 92 toddlers (63.4%). Proper feeding practice are very dependent on good quality of food consumption in toddlers so that impact will increase nutritional adequacy. The level of nutritional adequacy is one of the factors that can affect nutritional status in toddlers (Sari & Ratnawati, 2018). However, the results of this study show that proper feeding practices not only have an impact on the nutritional status of good toddlers but also have an impact on toddlers with severely wasted, wasted, possible risk of overweight, overweight, and obese.

Based on these results, related to nutritional problems that occur in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village, it cannot be said to be caused by feeding practices by mothers, but may be influenced by other factors either directly or indirectly (National Development Planning Agency of the Republic of Indonesia, 2010). Direct factors consist of food intake and infections that occur in toddlers, while indirect factors include socioeconomic conditions, education, health and family health care, and environmental sanitation (Indarti, 2016; Stewart, Iannotti, Dewey, Michaelsen, & Onyango, 2013). In this study, factors directly related to food intake seen from feeding practices by mothers were analysed and the results were not related to nutritional status. This can be a reinforcement that direct factors in determining the nutritional status of toddlers cannot be separated from the contribution of indirect factors that can support the emergence of direct factors (Supariasa, Bakri, & Ibnu, 2012).

Mother's education level which influences the nutritional status of toddlers also presented in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) report book published by the health department. Toddlers with poorly educated mothers have a fairly high mortality rate than children with highly educated mothers (Jannah & Maesaroh, 2014).

Efforts to overcome and prevent nutritional problems in toddlers are still a focus in the world of health. Many studies are conducted in various regions with the aim of finding out the causes of nutritional problems so that they can reduce the incidence rate. The results of this study show that nutritional problems that occur in Hamlet III of Sukamulya

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Village, Rancaekek District, Bandung Regency are not influenced by feeding practices by mothers. However, to maintain and improve the degree of public health, good feeding practices must still be maintained because there are still other factors that may play a role as the cause of nutritional problems that occur.

The Association of Picky Eating Behaviour

The results of this study showed no significant association between picky eating behaviour and the nutritional status of toddlers in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village. The results of this study are strengthened by other research which has similar results conducted on 34 children aged 3-5 years which showed that there was no significant association between picky eating behaviour and nutritional status in preschool-aged children in Sidodadi village ($p = 0.655$) (Mulyani, Muliani, & Lupiana, 2023).

The results of other studies also found that there was no consistent significant difference in nutritional intake between picky eating and non-picky eating children. A child's weight status (BMI) was not associated with a component of picky eating behaviour (Brown & Perrin, 2020; Li, Horst, Edelson-Fries, Yu, You, Zhang, & Wang, 2017). However, there are other studies that contradict the results of this study. Picky eating behaviour is associated with different nutrient intake and poor growth patterns in early childhood. Nutritional intake is very influential on the development of children from infants to adolescents. Picky eating behaviour in toddlers means that the child does not meet the requirements in a balanced diet that not only affects growth but, but also functions as immunity, supporting intellectual abilities and emotional formation (Kwon, Shim, Kang, & Paik, 2017; Wijayanti & Rosalina, 2018).

It can be concluded that the difference in the results of this study show that picky eating behaviour is not one of the factors that affect the nutritional status of children in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village. Picky eating behaviour can make toddlers limited to eating food so that they are only interested in what they like and difficult to be directed to accept new menus. As a result, toddlers do not enjoy the food served and there is a possibility of nutritional deficit (Cerdasari, Helmyati, & Julia, 2017).

However, based on the results of research, it can be said that picky eating behaviour does not always create health or social problems. In picky eating children, food intake remains and is fulfilled which includes carbohydrates, proteins, and vitamins contained in the food they consume. Therefore, the nutritional status of children cannot be said to be influenced by picky eating behaviour (Brown, Schaaf, Cohen, Irby, & Skelton, 2016).

From the study conducted, researchers found that overall children who had picky eating behaviour were as many as 72 toddlers (49.7%) showed some behaviour or rejection of certain food groups. Such as disliking vegetables (19.9%), processed nuts (6.9%), meat (6.2%), disliking certain Flavors (4.8%), disliking fish (3.4%), fruits (2.8%), certain food textures (2.8%), eggs (2.1%), rice (1.4%), only liking certain foods (0.7%), and difficult eating habits (0.7%). Although children have picky eating behaviour, when the adequacy of macronutrients is fulfilled, their nutritional status is good and picky eating behaviour is not the main factor in determining nutritional status. Picky eating behaviour that tends to refuse food at one time but will eat food that he refuses another day. So that this behaviour can balance nutritional needs even though it is not consumed every day (Li et al., 2017).

Related to nutritional problems seen from the nutritional status of toddlers in Hamlet III of Sukamulya Village, although not caused by picky eating behaviour toddlers still need to be considered because toddlers with picky eating behaviour may have limited nutritional intake containing fibre, protein, and fat due to consumption of foods that are not diverse even though it is not proven to be a dominant direct factor (Taylor, Wernimont, Northstone, & Emmett, 2015). Therefore, regarding picky eating behaviour although not related in this study, mothers as parents and health workers, especially nurses, still must control the behaviour of toddlers because there is still the potential for malnutrition and greater risk at the age of less than 3 years if picky eating behaviour is not considered (Ekstein, 2010; Cerdasari et al, 2017).

Differences in results can theoretically occur because they are made possible by other, more dominant factors. In addition, the number and samples in this study are limited so that it becomes one that affects the results obtained.

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CONCLUSION

The practice of feeding by mothers is mostly appropriate. The average nutritional status of toddlers is in the good nutrition category. There is no significant relationship between feeding practices and picky eating behaviour with the nutritional status of toddlers.

SUGGESTION

It is expected that the results of this study will be useful as a reference for the latest data related to toddler nutrition so that it can be a basis for improving health services and can provide direction in the form of counselling or education related to maternal feeding practices and monitoring toddler behaviour in children to optimize toddler health conditions.

Parents, especially mothers, are also expected to be able to take a more adaptive approach to their children to continue to provide varied nutritional intake and control the behaviour of feeding children so that nutritional needs in toddlers can be optimally met.

Further researchers are expected to be able to develop better research methods to analyse other factors that can be related to nutritional status as an effort to reduce the number of nutritional problems that occur.

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