

Description of Elementary School Children in Choosing Snacks at School

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Abstract

School is one of the places where children are active with their peers. Peers and the diversity of education at school are factors that influence children's habits in choosing education in school. Nutritional food can play both a positive and a negative role. Children can identify a variety of foods through the intestine so that they can form an appetite, but when the intestine contains intestines, it can cause disease. The study aims to figure out how school-age children choose to attend school. This research uses cross-sectional methods with a quantitative-descriptive approach. The research instrument used was a modified Safriana consumption questionnaire. stratified random sampling technique, with 270 respondents from class I to class VI. The results showed that boys were more likely to choose unhealthy choices than girls. Class I students were the most likely to make unsafe choices, while class VI students were the most likely to make healthy choices. Most kids choose important foods that are delicious and cheap, and the most popular kind of food is one-piece. It is suggested that the school should have a school canteen that provides healthy food and provides health education to children about the importance of choosing healthy meals.

Keywords: *Children, Elementary School, Snack.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

School is one of the children's places to be active and play with their peers. On average, in elementary school, they spend between four and five hours at school. Being in a relatively long school can affect children's eating habits, and they often skip breakfast and replace it with calorie- or low-nutrition foods, thereby affecting the child's nutritional status. Peer-to-peer conduct at school prompts youngsters to disregard the eating regimen previously established by their family. Children prefer school meals because they are cheap, attractive, and varied (Almanfaluthi & Budi, 2015). Children's decisions in choosing meals are influenced by the influence of friends (Ayuniyah et al., 2015). Peers have a strong influence on food consumption behavior. (Hateriah & Kusumawati, 2021).

Schoolchildren often forget to eat because of their busy schedules. Children who skip breakfast tend to consume more calories and nutrients than those who eat breakfast in the morning. Moreover, currently, the habit of children bringing food from home is still lacking. Most parents prefer to give their children pocket money to buy snacks rather than provide food supplies (Rahayu & Lastariwati, 2018); only 5% of children like to bring food supplies from home, so the possibility of children buying snacks is higher (Hatta et al., 2018). This increases the consumption of snacks at school. In addition to the recommendations for habits that are ignored, the habit of giving

money is one of the main causes of the emergence of unhealthy snack habits at school, so that children's nutritional needs are not met (Nurbiyati & Wibowo, 2014).

Snack foods play a very important role in providing energy and other nutrients for school-age children. The consumption of school-age children's snacks must be considered because of their high activity (Febryanto, 2016). Not a few school-age children's snacks contain a lot of biological or chemical contamination that can harm health and are of concern to the community, especially parents, schools, and the Ministry of Health. In Indonesia, there are still many school-age children who often consume contaminated snacks, resulting in food poisoning (Badan Pengawas Obat dan Makanan, 2018).

The availability of nutritious and unhealthy snacks at school affects children's snack choices. Children tend to buy the closest available snacks. That is why healthy snacks must be available at home and school so that children can consume healthy snacks. Several factors that can influence the choice of snacks are age, environment, knowledge, the role of parents, and the influence of mass media that often broadcast advertisements on television, making children interested in buying them, especially if the characters playing the advertising products are favorite characters for children (Rahayu & Lastariwati, 2018).

A phenomenon that is currently happening a lot is that children have a high tendency to consume snacks sold in the school area. The presentation of snacks at school is increasingly diverse; snacks are available in a variety of colors, at cheap prices, and with attractive aromas. This development can encourage the habit of snacking at school, especially during recess (Anto et al., 2017). This study aims to determine the picture of elementary school children when choosing snacks at school.

B. METHOD

The research has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Padjaran (number: 840/UN6.KEP/EC/2022). The design of this study uses cross-sectional methods with quantitative descriptive approaches. The population in this study was the entire students of State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung, from Class I to Class VI, as many as 828 people, consisting of 422 students and 406 schoolgirls. Sampling is done using the method of stratified random sampling. The sample used for this research has the inclusion criteria: the whole student of State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung, who can write and read, is willing to be a subject of research, and the exclusion criteria: never eat in school, always bring food supplies from home. The large sample was determined using the Slovin formula and obtained as many as 270 students or children, divided into 6 classes, from 1st to 6th grade. The researchers explain the purpose of the study and ask the selected respondents who are willing to participate in it to sign the informed consent form.

The instrument used is a modified questionnaire from Safriana (2012). The questionnaire in this study contained 26 questions about the consumption of food, with the content categories agree and disagree. The data collection was done with the help of the respective class guardians and trained enumerators. The researchers

conducted validity and reliability tests, and the validity tests that have been conducted showed $r = 0.444$, while the reliability test resulted in $r = 0,450$, so the instrument can be declared valid and reliable and can be used in research. The collected data is then analyzed descriptively and quantitatively and presented in the form of frequency distribution and percentage.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of research on the description of elementary school children's choices of snacks at school can be seen in the following table (Table 1):

Table 1 Description of Elementary School Children in Choosing Snacks at State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung (n = 270)

Variable	Frequency (f)		Percentage (%)	
Snack Selection Category				
Healthy	118		43,7	
Unhealthy	152		56,3	
Total	270		100	
Snack Selection				
Gender	Healthy		Unhealthy	
	f	%	f	%
Female	63	23,3	70	25,9
Male	55	20,4	82	30,4
Total	118	43,7	152	56,3
Class				
Class I	17	6,30	31	11,5
Class II	11	4,1	27	10,0
Class III	15	5,6	29	10,7
Class IV	14	5,2	27	10,0
Class V	27	10,0	20	7,4
Class VI	34	12,6	18	6,7
Total	118	43,7	152	56,3

Based on the results of the research, it can be seen that more than half of the children at Cihampelas 1 Elementary School (56.3%) chose unhealthy snacks, and almost half (43.7%) chose healthy snacks. Based on gender, a small percentage of women (23.3%) choose healthy food, while a small percentage of men (20.4%) choose healthy snacks. From the table above, it can be seen that more women choose healthy snacks than men. When viewed based on class level, children in grade VI are the students who choose the most healthy snacks (12.6%), while children in grade I are the students who choose the most unhealthy foods (11.5%). Various types of snacks are sold by traders at school; some are liked and disliked by children. This is illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Types of School Snacks Most Popular with Children at Cihampelas 1 State Elementary School, West Bandung (n = 270)

No.	Types of Snacks	Likes		Dislikes	
		f	%	f	%
1	Seblak	246	91,1	24	8,9
2	Yellow rice	224	83,0	46	17,0
3	Candy/cotton candy	209	77,4	61	22,6
4	Ice cream	194	71,9	76	28,1
5	Tofu balls	194	71,9	76	28,1
6	Vegetable lontong	112	41,5	158	58,5
7	Cut fruit	110	40,7	160	59,3
8	Fried tofu meatballs	94	34,8	176	65,2
9	Cimol	85	31,5	185	68,5

From the table above, it can be seen that the most popular snack among children at State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung is Seblak (91.1%), while the least popular snack is Cimol (31.5%).

In addition to choosing various types of popular snacks, behavioral considerations are also factors that can determine children's choice of snacks at school. This is illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Description of Children's Behavior in Choosing Snacks at State Elementary School 1, Cihampelas West Bandung (n = 270)

Behaviour in Choosing Snacks	Selected		Not Selected	
	f	%	f	%
Snacks that are important are delicious and cheap	207	76,7	63	23,3
Snack places must be clean and closed	188	69,6	82	30,4
Colourful snacks	172	63,7	98	36,3
Snacks that are open and can be seen clearly	74	27,4	196	72,6

From the research results, it was known that most children at State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung choose snacks that are tasty and cheap (76.7%), and only a small number choose snacks that are open and clearly visible (27.4%).

Based on the results of this research, it was known that there are differences in the selection of healthy snacks between women and men. Girls choose healthier snacks more often than boys. Wrong behavior in choosing and buying snacks is something that is harmful to children's health; this can be influenced by the snacking behavior of peers. Children will imitate and learn the habits of their peers so that they influence their decision-making when choosing snacks (Lindawati, 2019). Food choices for boys and Girls are not only based on taste but are also influenced by taste and health. Girls are more selective in determining the menu. For Girls, eating problems are complicated. Meanwhile, boys do not think twice about the consequences of eating food, except for obese people and athletes (Dyh/Odi, 2013).

In this studied, class VI children were the students who chose the most healthy snacks, while class I children were the students who chose the most unhealthy foods.

Class VI students have higher knowledge and experience compared to class I students in elementary school. A child can acquire knowledge both internally and externally. Internal knowledge is obtained from one's own life experiences, while external knowledge is knowledge obtained from other people, including family and teachers. Good knowledge is related to the behavior of choosing snacks in school-age children. Knowledge about snacks is the ability to choose snacks that have sources of nutrients and the ability to choose healthy snacks (Fahleni & Tahlil, 2016).

Someone who has good knowledge of snack foods will allow the child to be more selective in choosing healthy snacks (Ernia & Tahlil, 2017). This was in line with the results of research (Rahayu & Lastariwati, 2018), which states that there is a relationship between knowledge about snack foods and the choice of snack foods in grades 4 and 5 of elementary school, where students who have good knowledge of snack foods choose good snack foods too. The more information about healthy snack choices for students, the higher their health status will be (Salsabila et al., 2023)

Of the various kinds of snacks sold at Cihampelas 1 Elementary School, West Bandung, the snack that is most often chosen and liked by children is seblak. Seblak is a favorite snack typical of West Java and is liked by many people. It is made from crackers, noodles, and spicy seasonings. Although it has a delicious taste, if seblak is consumed too often, it can cause health problems such as hypertension, increase the risk of coronary heart disease because it contains a lot of saturated fat, lack essential nutrients, and cause metabolic disorders (Aidilla, 2024).

More than half (59.3%) of children at State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung did not choose cut fruit as a healthy snack. Cut fruit is fresh fruit that is an excellent source of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Cut fruit is one of the healthier foods because it is low in calories, rich in nutrients, and good for digestion and overall health (Aryanta, 2022; Maulida, 2024). Likewise with yellow rice and vegetable lontong, including healthy foods. Yellow rice contains turmeric, which has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, but the use of coconut milk in yellow rice should be limited because it can increase saturated fat content. If yellow rice is combined with other foods in balanced amounts, yellow rice can be part of a healthy diet, but in this study, not all children (83%) chose yellow rice as part of the food they consumed.

In addition to choosing food in terms of healthy food types, behavioral factors in determining the choice of food places and storage methods are also important factors in ensuring that the food consumed is healthy and not contaminated with bacteria that can cause disease. Snack safety is a requirement that must be considered and implemented to avoid the potential for biological, chemical, and other contamination that can interfere with, be dangerous, and harm human health. The selection of ingredients for the presentation of snacks that are not right will result in foodborne illness, unbalanced student nutritional consumption, and ultimately cause students to be less productive (Ulilalbab & Suprihartini, 2018).

In this study, children at State Elementary School 1 Cihampelas West Bandung showed a higher preference for delicious and cheap snacks (76.7%) compared to

snacks stored in clean and closed places (69.6%). The phenomenon of cheap and delicious snacks today is indeed interesting and reflects changes in consumer preferences and the development of the food industry, especially home-grown foods that are widely sold in schools. Cheap and delicious snacks provide wide access to various groups, especially people with middle to low incomes. With affordable prices, more people can enjoy delicious food without having to spend a lot of money. However, there are concerns about the safety and quality of the ingredients used because cheap snacks often use low-quality ingredients and contain lots of sugar, salt, and preservatives that can have a negative impact on health. Snacks for children must contain a good and balanced composition of nutrients and not contain preservatives, artificial colors, or unnecessary additives. The characteristics of healthy snacks are that they do not have striking colors, do not have an excessive sweet-sour-savory taste, are packaged in safe plastic packaging, and have a permit (Nurbiyati & Wibowo, 2014).

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study, it was found that girls in this study chose more healthy foods (23.3%) compared to boys (20.4%). The type of snack food that was most liked was Seblak (91.1), while the type of snack food that was most disliked was Cimol (68.5%). In terms of behavior related to choosing snacks, children in this study chose more delicious and cheap snacks (76.7%) than snacks that were open and clearly visible (72.6%).

The selection of children's snacks in schools today is still heavily influenced by factors that are less supportive of health, so it is suggested that the school should have a school canteen that provides healthy food. Children need to be given education to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition and the significance of choosing healthy snacks, so that it is hoped that children can learn to make choices against healthier snacks.

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