

Empowering Healthy Choices: The Dangers of Snacking Carelessly

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Abstract

The trend of unhealthy eating and the careless consumption of snacks among elementary school children remains a major nutritional issue in various countries worldwide, including Indonesia. Children tend to choose food based on their preferences. The shift in trends toward consuming snacks carelessly negatively affects children's nutritional status and health. This activity aimed to increase students' knowledge and awareness about the importance of choosing healthy snacks and avoiding careless snacking habits. Nutrition education on snacking carelessly was the main emphasis of the community service programs. Thirty-sixth-grade students from SDN Bandar Lor II participated in the activity. PowerPoint and leaflets were used to communicate the content. The education session lasted for one hour. Pre- and post-tests were used to evaluate the results. The results of the activity showed that the participants engaged in the event in a participatory and active manner. The nutrition education on snacking carelessly effectively increased the students' knowledge by 4.6 points. Interactive methods, the use of infographic media, and hands-on practice enhanced participation and motivation in the children's learning process. Nutrition education on snacking carelessly effectively increased the students' knowledge.

Keywords - nutrition education, snacking carelessly, student

Abstrak

Tren pola makan tidak sehat dan kebiasaan jajan sembarangan pada anak sekolah dasar masih menjadi masalah gizi utama di berbagai negara di dunia, termasuk Indonesia. Anak-anak cenderung memilih makanan berdasarkan kesukaan mereka. Pergeseran tren menuju kebiasaan jajan sembarangan berdampak negatif terhadap status gizi dan kesehatan anak. Kegiatan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan kesadaran siswa tentang pentingnya memilih jajanan sehat serta menghindari kebiasaan jajan sembarangan. Edukasi gizi mengenai bahaya jajan sembarangan menjadi fokus utama dalam program pengabdian masyarakat ini. Sebanyak tiga puluh enam siswa kelas VI SDN Bandar Lor II berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan tersebut. Media PowerPoint dan leaflet digunakan untuk menyampaikan materi. Sesi edukasi berlangsung selama satu jam. Evaluasi dilakukan melalui pre-test dan post-test. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan bahwa para peserta mengikuti kegiatan secara partisipatif dan aktif. Edukasi gizi tentang jajan sembarangan terbukti efektif meningkatkan pengetahuan siswa sebesar 4,6 poin. Metode interaktif, penggunaan media infografis, dan praktik langsung mampu meningkatkan partisipasi serta motivasi dalam proses pembelajaran anak. Edukasi gizi mengenai jajan sembarangan efektif dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan siswa.

Kata kunci - edukasi gizi, jajan sembarangan, siswa

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INTRODUCTION

The trend of unhealthy eating patterns remains a major nutritional issue in various countries worldwide. Indonesia is one of the countries facing problems and challenges in achieving a balanced nutritional intake, especially among elementary school-aged children. Riskesdas' 2018 survey shows that the majority of children aged 10-14 years (96.8%) have a habit of consuming less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per week, are accustomed to consuming flavor enhancers (78.5%), and sweet drinks (61.8%) at least once a day (Kemenkes RI, 2019). The consumption rate of unhealthy snacks among Indonesian children is six times higher than the prevalence in Europe (10.3%) (World Health Organization, 2021).

The habit of consuming snacks carelessly has negative consequences for children's health (Rousham et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that contamination of food by microbes causes diarrhea in children (Kirk et al., 2017). High sugar content in snacks triggers dental caries in children aged 10 and under (Large et al., 2024). Other negative consequences are known to be associated with an increased risk of body fat percentage, obesity, and the promotion of metabolic disease development (Rousham et al., 2022).

The environment (Yazdi Feyzabadi et al., 2017) and food additives (Warner, 2024) are the main factors that mediate the negative impacts of consuming street food. Traders often use additives to enhance appeal, reduce production costs, add color, and include non-food preservatives (Ulilalbab et al., 2023). An observational study at SDN 20 in Pekanbaru revealed positive test results for borax content in samples of martabak mini and fish siomay. These test results indicate the presence of addictive substances abuse in children's snack foods (Sepriyani, 2020).

Elementary school-aged children tend to choose food according to their independent food preferences (Bernardino et al., 2024). Children's food preferences are influenced by various factors, including taste, texture, color, aroma of the food, marketing by vendors, and the behavior of adopting habits from their parents (Monalisa et al., 2020). Children often like to try new foods without parental supervision. This habit leads to the selection of unhealthy foods and neglect of personal hygiene before eating (Tunio et al., 2024).

The detrimental effects of snack food consumption are also influenced by hygiene and handwashing practices (Walmsley et al., 2013). A study on handwashing habits before meals among students at SDN Ngadirejo 3 in Kediri showed that 27.5% of students rarely wash their hands (Ulilalbab & Suprihartini, 2018). Nutritional and health issues become more serious when the habit of eating and snacking carelessly is combined with the behavior of rarely washing hands before meals.

Nutrition education has emerged as a successful strategy to address the problems of students' careless snacking and their infrequent hand washing before meals. For kids to develop good snacking habits, nutrition guidance in primary schools is essential. The significance of systematic nutrition education in addressing nutritional issues has been emphasized by several initiatives (Peralta et al., 2016). Students at SD Tumpakrejo 2 and SDN Tumpakrejo 1 have increased their healthy eating habits as a result of similar nutrition education efforts (Maduretno et al., 2015).

Nutrition education methods regarding the dangers of snacking carelessly are a preventive action aimed at increasing students' knowledge about the importance of choosing healthy snack foods. Thus, the nutrition education conducted for students at SDN Bandar Lor II in Kediri is necessary to enhance knowledge and support improvements and changes in students' behaviors related to nutrition and health.

METHOD

The nutrition education was conducted on Thursday, June 13, 2024. The target is students of SDN Bandar Lor II, Mojojoto, Kediri. The participants involved in the nutrition education consisted of 30 sixth-grade students. The activity took place in the fifth-grade classroom using lecture and discussion methods with PowerPoint and leaflets as media. The duration of the nutrition education was one hour, from 10:00 to 11:00 AM. Participants' initial knowledge was measured using a pre-test. The results of nutrition education and changes in knowledge were measured using a post-test.

The nutrition education team provided material on the dangers of snacking carelessly and the importance of handwashing before meals. The details of the team members' tasks include:

1. Proposal submission for education.
2. Preparation of materials, media, and documents.
3. Documentation and reporting of the activities.

The scope of the education material consists of the definition of snacks and snacking carelessly, the negative impacts, examples of dangerous snacks and healthy snacks, and independent handwashing practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The nutrition education activity about snacking carelessly for sixth-grade students at SDN Bandar Lor II in Kediri began with coordination with the school principal and teachers. The coordination discussed the schedule for implementation, the target of the education, and the technical aspects of the activity. The education was conducted for 30 sixth-grade students at SDN Bandar Lor II in Kediri.

The nutrition education began with measuring the students' initial knowledge using a pre-test form consisting of 10 questions. The pre-test covered knowledge related to food safety and the dangers of snacking carelessly. The activity continued with the presentation of material on food safety and the dangers of snacking carelessly. In the second session, the practice of proper handwashing based on the Ministry of Health guidelines was conducted simultaneously. The evaluation of the final knowledge after the education was carried out using a post-test. The results of the pre-and post-test evaluations are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Pre- and post-test on the dangers of snacking carelessly.

No.	Question	Correct Answer		
		Pre-test score	Post-test score	Point of change
1	Snacking carelessly harms health	93.0	97.0	4.0
2	Examples of unhealthy snacks	87.0	93.0	6.0
3	Snacking carelessly promotes health	87.0	100.0	13.0
4	Washing hands before eating	97.0	97.0	0
5	Snacks that are brightly colored and have many flavors are healthy	93.0	93.0	0
6	Having breakfast at home is better	93.0	93.0	0
7	Definition of healthy snacks	93.0	100.0	7.0
8	Washing hands before touching food	87.0	93.0	6.0
9	Drinks that are good for health	87.0	97.0	10.0
10	Eating food in a comfortable place	100.0	100.0	0
	Mean	91.7	96.3	4.6

Studies show that nutrition education conducted systematically and interactively successfully improves students' knowledge. Participants engaged in the activities in a participatory and active manner. The average scores from pre- and post-tests indicate an increase in scores. Evaluation results indicate that there was an improvement in students' knowledge after receiving nutrition education. The average pre- and post-test scores are illustrated in Figure 1.

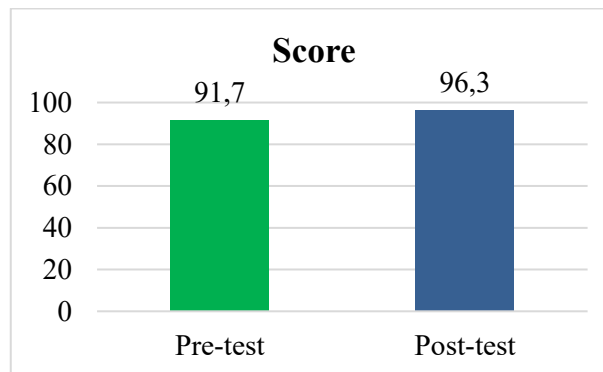


Figure 1. Graph of the increase in students' knowledge regarding the dangers of snacking carelessly

Nutritional education regarding the dangers of snacking carelessly resulted in a significant overall increase in students' knowledge (4.6). Six out of ten questions given as an evaluation showed changes, while four remained unchanged. The most significant change was observed in the response to the question 'Does snacking carelessly promote health?' (13 points). In the pre-test, some students still answered 'yes,' but after the material on the dangers of snacking carelessly was provided, their answers changed to 'no.' A similar change occurred with the question 'What drinks are good for health?' (7 points). The post-test indicated an increase in students' knowledge about the types of drinks that are good for their health. The education activities are illustrated in Figure 1, A and B.

A significant increase in students' understanding and knowledge about the dangers of snacking carelessly is reflected in the improvement in knowledge measured by post-test scores. Most students had a limited understanding of the importance of choosing healthy snacks and the dangers posed by snacking carelessly. After participating in the education session, the majority of students were able to proficiently identify various types of harmful snacks and better recognize nutritious, healthy foods and their impacts on health.



Figure 2. A. Implementation of nutrition education regarding the dangers of snacking carelessly, B. Handwashing practice together, and C. Group photo with the teacher and sixth-grade students of SDN Bandar Lor II

The increase in knowledge among students who received an education aligns with previous studies. Research on health education regarding the selection of healthy snacks has positively impacted students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in choosing healthy snacks at SDN 01 Madegondo (Aderita, 2020). Similar studies have shown an increase in students' knowledge about healthy snacks among elementary school students who received nutrition education (Lanita, 2024). Other studies explain that nutrition education can significantly enhance knowledge and change the behavior of elementary school students (Ariga et al., 2020).

Nutritional education for elementary school children has many important benefits. Educational programs enhance children's knowledge about nutrition and help them understand the importance of healthy foods and balanced nutrition. Interactive nutrition education in the classroom increases students' interest in understanding the material presented (Raut et al., 2024). The second session of nutrition education included hands-on handwashing practice. References indicate that the use of engaging nutrition education strategies, including hands-on practice and the use of infographic media, has been associated with higher motivation and interest among students (Akhiryani et al., 2023) and better understanding (Indriasari et al., 2021). Nutrition education is a powerful tool for enhancing healthy eating habits, nutrition knowledge, and attitudes (Cheng et al., 2020). The long-term impact of nutrition education is related to behavioral changes and a tendency to have a more positive attitude toward nutrition education in adulthood (Kuwahara & Eum, 2022).

Having a deeper comprehension of the information offered empowers children to choose nutritious snacks with knowledge, improving their health and fostering their development. In the end, offering nutrition education not only improves knowledge and comprehension but also has the potential to influence future attitudes and behaviors related to snacking carelessly in primary school students.

CONCLUSION

Nutritional education regarding the dangers of snacking carelessly for sixth-grade students at SDN Bandar Lor II in Kediri effectively enhances students' knowledge. Interactive methods, the use of infographic media, and hands-on practice increase participation and motivation among students during the learning process. Collaboration in nutrition education involving teachers, students, and educators is expected to lead to long-term changes in students' behaviors. It is recommended that future nutrition

education programs continue to involve teachers and students collaboratively to ensure sustainable behavioral changes

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