



Parents' Understanding of Fulfilling Balanced Nutrition in Preparing Lunch Boxes for Group B Children

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received January 08, 2023

Revised January 10, 2023

Accepted April 13, 2023

Available online April 25, 2023

Kata Kunci:

Gizi, Lunch Box

Keywords:

Nutrition, Lunch Box



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ABSTRAK

Permasalahan Gizi menjadi sebuah permasalahan yang Kompleks bagi anak. Tujuan dari penelitian ini yakni untuk memberikan gambaran dan analisis secara mendalam mengenai pemahaman orangtua dalam pemenuhan gizi seimbang melalui penyediaan lunch box pada anak kelompok B. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif studi kasus. Subjek dalam penelitian ini yakni Kepala Sekolah, guru Wali Kelas pada kelas B-1, guru Wali Kelas pada kelas B-2, dan orangtua. Pengumpulan data pada penelitian ini yaitu dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Teknik analisis data menggunakan teknik triangulasi data. Berdasarkan hasil analisis data maka didapatkan beberapa temuan dalam penelitian ini, diantaranya adalah: pertama, isi lunch box anak menggunakan makanan yang sehat dan bergizi, namun belum sesuai dengan standart gizi seimbang yang dibutuhkan oleh anak. Kedua pemahaman orangtua mengenai gizi seimbang sudah cukup baik, hal tersebut dapat terlihat dari kesadaran orangtua dalam mempersiapkan bekal anak. Ketiga, peran sekolah sangat baik untuk mendukung perkembangan dan pengenalan gizi, baik bagi orangtua dan bagi anak. Dari ketiga temuan tersebut maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa lunch box anak telah berisi makanan yang sehat dan bergizi, hal ini berkaitan dengan tingkat pemahaman orang tua serta dukungan yang cukup baik dari sekolah mengenai perkembangan dan pengenalan gizi bagi anak.

ABSTRACT

Nutritional problems become a complex problem for children. This study aims to provide an in-depth description and analysis of parents' understanding of fulfilling balanced nutrition through preparing lunch boxes for group B children. This type of research is a case study qualitative research. The subjects in this study were the school principal, homeroom teacher in class B-1, homeroom teacher in class B-2, and parents. Data collection in this study was carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques use data triangulation techniques. Based on the results of data analysis, several findings were obtained in this study. First, the contents of the children's lunch box used healthy and nutritious food, but different from the balanced nutritional standards needed by children. Both parents' understanding of balanced nutrition is quite good. It can be seen in parents' awareness of preparing their children's lunch. Third, the role of schools is very good in supporting the development and introduction of nutrition for parents and children. From these three findings, it can be concluded that children's lunch boxes contain healthy and nutritious food. It is related to the level of parents' understanding and good support from schools regarding the development and introduction of nutrition for children.

1. INTRODUCTION

The introduction of balanced nutrition must start from an early age because this period is the key to a period of growth and development that will determine the quality of life for children in the present and in the future (Anjarsari et al., 2022; Maulani et al., 2021). During the development period, early childhood will experience considerable physical and mental development and growth (Fithriyana, 2021; Nopiyanto et al., 2020). Children will respond quickly and process everything they receive. Therefore, various things children receive from childhood will become the foundation of their life in the future (Inten & Permatasari,

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2019). Creating a superior generation can be done by creating a healthy generation through healthy living habits and the introduction of nutrition for children. It is necessary to have a good intake pattern for children to have a relationship between growth and knowledge related to good nutrition (Mustikaningrum & Munawaroh, 2021; Nova & Marlina, 2023). In fulfilling children's nutrition, parents have a very important role. Parents need knowledge and understanding to help children introduce health and provide proper nutrition (Kurniawati & Suwanti, 2019; Muniroh et al., 2022). There is some education regarding balanced nutrition that parents must know, including parents understanding the meaning of nutrition and the importance of balanced nutrition, understanding the concept of the four pillars of balanced nutrition, and the needs needed by children which are related to processes in the body and the impact of malnutrition on the body (Hasrul et al., 2020; Widari et al., 2021).

Parents have roles and responsibilities in the process of child development. Providing healthy food for children is one of the duties and responsibilities of parents. Parents' behavior in providing food for children is a very important factor in influencing child feeding (Aziza & Mil, 2021; Fajriani et al., 2020). Parents play a role in preparing nutritious food during the child's growth period because this growth period is very important and will not be repeated (Afrinis et al., 2021; Fitriana, 2020). Dalam mempersiapkan makanan bergizi pada anak orangtua juga harus memperhatikan kebutuhan gizi anak (Suprpto, 2022). Dimana anak membutuhkan asupan gizi yang berbeda-beda, hal itu bergantung pada tinggi dan berat badan anak, dan tingkat keaktifan pada anak (Ernawati, 2019; Maryani et al., 2022). Regarding nutrition, each child's calories and energy needs are also very different. Therefore, the role of parents is very important to pay attention to the needs of early childhood and prepare children's provisions. From the description above, it can be seen that the introduction and knowledge of balanced nutrition to parents is an important thing to learn so it does not cause problems that result in disease in children due to lack of parental knowledge about balanced nutrition (Langi et al., 2019; Rahmy et al., 2020).

Nutritional problems in children are still a very big problem. It is evidenced by data for 2021 which shows that there are 405 out of 10,997 newborns experience cases of low birth weight babies (Fadilah et al., 2022; Novianti & Utami, 2021). In cases of malnutrition, there were 881 children under five who experienced malnutrition and malnutrition. Nutritional status based on the height-for-age index includes very short and short categories. In 2021 infants aged (0-23 months) in the Buleleng district, there were 56 (0.2%) children in the very short category and 203 babies in the short category. The number of toddlers (0-59 months) is 183 in the very short category and 821 in the short category. The data then shows that nutritional problems in Bali are still occupied with the highest ranking in the Buleleng district. This problem occurs from year to year. The Buleleng district still occupies the number of malnutrition in Bali, so proper handling is needed so that the problems that occur get serious treatment. One of the actions that can be taken to solve this problem is first to analyze parents' understanding regarding the fulfillment of balanced nutrition for their children. Fulfillment of balanced nutrition is closely related to parents' economic status, knowledge, and occupation. One of them is that children's lunches at school must also be an important part that parents must pay attention to.

Lunch Box, commonly known as children's lunch box, is very supportive in fulfilling children's nutrition (Batubara & Handayani, 2018). In addition, adjustments are needed in the food menu according to what is needed. Not only that, but the school must also have regulations regarding provisions that may be consumed by children, such as providing restrictions on the contents of provisions in consuming packaged foods that contain preservatives and sweeteners with ingredients containing chemicals and instant food for children. Therefore good cooperation is needed between schools and parents to improve nutrition fulfillment in children. The existence of a lunch box will be able to help parents to control the food consumed by their children (Rachmawati et al., 2020; Rahmawati et al., 2020). It is because 30% of the calorie needs in children depend on the food consumed during the day. Healthy food supplies can help provide sufficient energy intake for children to carry out activities (Aini, 2019; Insani, 2022).

Previous studies have revealed that parents' understanding of nutrition fulfillment in early childhood through Lunch Boxes influences children's nutritional development (Umasugi et al., 2020). Other studies revealed that parents' knowledge about setting the athlete's diet could help the athlete's fitness level (Sari et al., 2020). Based on some of the results of these studies, parental knowledge about lunch boxes or healthy food menus can help improve children's health. In previous studies, no studies specifically discussed parents' understanding of fulfilling balanced nutrition in preparing lunch boxes for group B children balanced nutrition through preparing lunch boxes for group B children.

2. METHOD

This research belongs to the type of qualitative research with a case study research approach. This study aims to provide an in-depth description and analysis of parents' understanding of fulfilling balanced

nutrition through preparing lunch boxes for group B children. The subjects in this study were the school principal, homeroom teacher in class B-1, homeroom teacher in class B-2, and parents of students with working parents and parents with a background as housewives. Data sources in this study are divided into two types of data sources primary data sources and secondary data sources. This study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling takes samples from data sources by considering several aspects, including whether the person can be a key witness in the research and how deep the informant's knowledge is. Data collection in this study was carried out using interviews, observation, and documentation techniques. The data obtained in this study were then analyzed using triangulation analysis techniques, including triangulation of data collection techniques, data sources, and time triangulation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the results of the data analysis that has been carried out, several findings were obtained in this study, including the first finding relating to the contents of the children's lunch box. The results of observations made on February 1-7 showed that the contents of the lunches for group B children did use ingredients prepared at home. The child's lunch box has several food menus, including bread, yellow rice, and various side dishes, such as tempeh, tofu, eggs, nuggets, and milk. In addition, there are also several types of fruit, such as apples, papaya, dragon fruit, and several other fruit menus. The description of the provisions brought by the child can be seen in [Figure 1](#).



Figure 1. The Lunch Menu that the Child Brings

The interviews, observations, and documentation also show that all children carry out the eating activity together in class at 10.00 am, and it is done together. Eating together at school is carried out with high enthusiasm from the children, and without coercion, where each child eats lunch. Apart from that, it can be seen that every child is very enthusiastic about joint eating activities because this activity is carried out while chatting and joking with friends so that eating activities in class do not become boring. Regarding the contents of children's lunches, information was obtained that parents prepared their children's lunches and did not buy them outside, besides that children's lunches were also prepared before their children went to school, where parents woke up early to prepare their children's lunches. In preparing the lunches, parents use healthy food ingredients such as bread, milk, and fruit so that the group B children in Pelita Kasih Singaraja Kindergarten use healthy and nutritious ingredients for children. If studied in more depth and related to the nutritional needs of children, as stated in the second chapter, the variety of children's food still needs to be improved. It is because the contents of children's provisions have remained the same, and on average, they only use one to two food ingredients, including fruit and bread. So the fiber and protein content children need has yet to be fulfilled optimally in children's lunch boxes. Therefore, it is still necessary to educate children on the menu of various lunch boxes that children want to bring to school so that children's provisions can be more varied and meet all the needs of children's daily nutritional standards.

The second finding relates to the effectiveness of the Lunch Box Activities carried out by children. In the lunch box activity, it can be seen that the students were very enthusiastic and enthusiastic in carrying out the activity. Students are very happy and enthusiastic when carrying out eating activities together. This is also supported by the results of interviews with parents interviewed by researchers regarding the

effectiveness of lunch box activities. The results of interviews with all parents stated that the children were very enthusiastic and happy when carrying out the activities of eating together and enjoying the contents of the lunch box that had been prepared by the parents beforehand. Based on this, it can be concluded that the lunch box activity at school is very effective. Besides being effective for introducing children's nutrition, it also positively impacts children. Children feel happy when carrying out group meals at school and enjoy the lunches prepared by their parents. Therefore this lunch box activity is considered very effective if done at school. In practice, there are several obstacles, such as working parents needing more time to prepare children's provisions. Parents' understanding and awareness regarding child nutrition related to parental understanding and awareness in fulfilling child nutrition is also an important part of preparing children's food menus, one of which is when preparing lunch box menus for children. Because parental understanding and awareness will be the key to how parents prepare their child's menu, starting from selecting food menus, how to prepare food, and food processing for children.

Based on the interviews that the researchers conducted with the homeroom teacher in class B-2, it was concluded that parents are quite open about fulfilling children's nutrition. Parents have awareness regarding matters related to nutrition. It is evidenced by the statements made by the homeroom teacher, where parents provide support for matters related to activities to fulfill children's nutrition at school. Not only limited to supporting activities at school, parents also participate with schools to carry out activities related to child nutrition. Sometimes the school will collaborate with parents to prepare and provide a healthy food menu for children to eat together. In addition, the food menu provided by the parents is also healthy and prepared by the parents themselves. In the implementation process, parents have monitored children's nutrition at school through the contents of the child's lunch every day after school. The contents of the lunch prepared by the parents are healthy food according to the standard SOP provided by the school. So if children do not finish their food supplies, parents will ask children about things that make them not finish the food and will become material for parents to reflect on.

Parents have strategies for supporting children's development at home, such as calculating their height and weight and conducting question-and-answer activities. Fulfillment of balanced nutrition in children. In addition to matters related to parents' understanding of child provision, the researchers also examined matters related to the fulfillment of balanced nutrition in children carried out by parents. In fulfilling this nutrition, researchers interviewed parents about the steps parents took to support good development in children at home and school. The way parents regulate their children's daily eating patterns to obtain more valid information related to parental actions in fulfilling children's nutrition, the researchers also had the opportunity to conduct follow-up interviews by questioning the intensity or hours of children's meals every day. This question aims to get information on parents' routines in providing nutritious food intake to children.

After getting information about the hours children eat daily, the researchers also interviewed other questions related to parents' routines in checking children's health. Where this question aims to obtain information about parents' continued awareness regarding children's health so that it does not only lead to parental knowledge and awareness, but researchers also explore parental awareness information in aspects of children's health, one of which is in the routine point of checking children's health. Based on the parents' answers above, the researchers concluded that parents do not routinely check their children's health when the child has no appetite, and the child who is sick will be taken to the doctor. So there is no routine for parents to check their children to the doctor. It should be something parents pay more attention to because parental awareness in checking children's health is one of the important things, therefore through this topic of discussion, researchers see that parental awareness in checking children's health still needs to be improved so that children's health and development more controllable by parents.

The third finding relates to school support for fulfilling child nutrition. The steps taken by schools to assist parents in preparing and introducing healthy food schools are also not only responsible for providing healthy food intake to children, but they also have a responsibility in assisting parents in introducing good nutrition to parents, both through regulations -rules provided by school SOP and parenting regulations or others. To obtain some valid data related to the activities or steps taken by the school in supporting parents' introduction and understanding of nutrition in children, the researchers conducted interviews with the school principal to obtain data or information relating to school support for the introduction of nutrition on parents. After conducting interviews with the principal regarding the activities to support the introduction of balanced nutrition to parents, the researchers also conducted direct field observations to obtain more valid data. This information the researchers got from the school's social media. The attachment to the documentation of parent meeting activities conducted at schools to support the introduction of nutrition and explanation of SOPs at schools can be seen in [Figure 2](#).



Figure 2. Parenting Activities at School

After obtaining information on activities carried out by schools to support parents in introducing well-balanced nutrition to children, the researchers also conducted follow-up interviews by asking parents questions about the nutritional needs and development of children at school. The researcher asked questions about the activities carried out by the school to review or observe the nutritional needs of children at school. After getting this information, the researcher also examined the information the principal conveyed more deeply. To obtain additional data, researchers are looking for further information, and schools indeed record early detection of growth and development every month. Based on these data, the researcher had the opportunity to obtain data on the growth and development of children from the homeroom teacher in class B. The results of the documentation regarding the early detection of growth and development data that the researchers obtained from the homeroom teacher can be seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Activities of Weighing and Measuring Children's Height

As conveyed by the local school principal regarding certain fields that will investigate further regarding the development and growth of children about nutrition, ENT, eye health, and others, the researchers had the opportunity to observe directly. It is true that schools also provide nutrition review facility services for children who are carried out specifically by doctors who are experienced in their fields. One was when the researchers made direct field observations on February 8, 2023, that the school was carrying out routine checks directly by a pediatrician from the Buleleng Regional General Hospital. In this activity, the researchers observed that the doctor examined the children's eyes, measured the child's height and weight and health, and administered vitamins and deworming medication to each child. Documentation regarding routine inspection activities can be seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Routine Inspection Activities by the Health Center

Supporting activities provided by the school for students related to eating together in the school environment apart from providing activities that support the introduction and knowledge of parents about

children's health, researchers also conduct observations, interviews, and documentation to schools regarding activities carried out in schools to support the introduction and children's understanding of nutrition at school, and matters relating to actions taken by schools to keep children healthy. Researchers directly observed things that the previous principal conveyed to get more accurate data. Researchers carried out direct observation activities at schools. They obtained data that it was true that schools carried out activities to support the introduction of nutrition for children, including fun cooking activities, foodluck party activities, and collaborative activities with parents in introducing children's nutrition. The following are some activities that support the data and information submitted by the school principal.

Schools and parents collaborated in February, commemorating the Chinese New Year. Some parents brought oranges to school, and others brought eggs to consume together. The following are some of the results of the documentation that researchers got themselves when celebrating Chinese New Year activities and carried out with the celebration of peeling oranges, peeling eggs, and eating together. Researchers also had the opportunity to observe directly at the school during the fun cooking activity, where during the fun cooking activity, the school invited a chef experienced in his field to invite the children to prepare healthy and nutritious food. On this occasion, the children were invited to make cassava balls. Chef also invites children to be directly involved in processing these cassava balls. In addition to processing these food ingredients, the chef explained to the children the nutritional content contained in the menu. Documentation results during fun cooking activities at school can be seen in [Figure 5](#).



Figure 5. Fun Cooking Activities

To introduce balanced nutrition to children, facilities are needed to support this nutrition introduction activity, one of which is adequate facilities to carry out lunch box activities at school. So based on this, the researcher feels the need to conduct follow-up interviews with the school principal regarding the facilities needed when carrying out lunch box activities at school. The results of the interviews that the researchers got from the school principal, then to find further data so that the data became more valid, the researchers carried out the direct observation stage of the school environment to seek further information about the information previously submitted by the school principal. Furthermore, researchers made observations supported by documentation.

Discussion

The lunch box is defined as a child's lunch box, which is brought to school and has previously been prepared by the parents so that children can bring their lunch to school and be consumed together with friends during break activities ([Budiarti et al., 2023](#); [Fitrianti et al., 2022](#)). Provisions are prepared, such as equipment, money, and so on. These provisions are used as something in the future if needed ([Azyzah & Rizqiya, 2022](#)). One that is usually used as a provision is food. Food is a nutrient that can be converted into an energy source and is useful and needed by the body ([Efendy & Setiawan, 2021](#); [Eprillia, 2022](#)). Food is a very important human need, and good and correct management is needed so that the contents absorbed in the body can benefit the body ([Purbowati et al., 2019](#); [Wahyudin & Angraeni, 2021](#)). However, these foods do not include water content, drugs, and other things intended for treatment ([Umasugi et al., 2020](#)).

Lunch box activities effectively get children to bring food to school through provisions. Bringing supplies is carried out to prevent children from consuming unhealthy, careless, unhealthy and snacks ([Aisa et al., 2023](#); [Umniyah & Nurhalimah, 2022](#)). Besides that, this provision aims to ensure that children get

healthy and sufficient food to avoid hunger so that when learning activities are carried out, children can concentrate and focus. Lunch box activities carried out at school can help children get to know more about the variety of food menus so that it will also make children more accustomed to eating healthy food. Besides that, eating together is also done while playing so that it is more able to attract interest in children. The implementation of the lunch box activity received a very good response from the children. The children's curiosity grew, and they were happy when they ate and finished their food. Apart from that, children's independence has also started to develop since this lunch box activity began. It is well known that children must eat alone and not be fed at school. So that in addition to being effective and liked by children, this lunch box activity can also increase children's independence.

In carrying out lunch box activities, parents' understanding and awareness regarding fulfilling children's nutrition through feeding is called parental feeding (Inten & Permatasari, 2019). In this parenting style, parents are responsible for providing the best and healthiest food to meet their children's nutritional needs. Parents must also meet the nutritional needs of children as a form of parental duty and responsibility for the growth and development of children in the future (Anjarsari et al., 2022; Maulani et al., 2021). So, in its implementation, parents play a role in preparing nutritious food during the child's growth period because this growth period becomes a very important period and will not be repeated (Hasrul et al., 2020; Widari et al., 2021). In preparing nutritious food for children, parents must also pay attention to the nutritional needs of children. Where children need different nutritional intakes it depends on height and weight, as well as the level of activity of children (Mustikaningrum & Munawaroh, 2021; Nova & Marlina, 2023). Regarding nutrition, each child's calories and energy needs are also very different. Therefore, the role of parents is very important to pay attention to children's needs and prepare children's provisions. The role of parents in preparing nutritious food is also very closely related to the level of education and skills of a mother. The higher a mother's education level, the more she can implement a nutritious food menu for her family and children (Afrinis et al., 2021; Fitriana, 2020). On the other hand, parents with low education can be allowed that they will generally have more difficulty receiving information related to balanced nutrition, which will result in nutritional problems in children. If observed in the field, the factor that is seen in most parents is the lack of knowledge of parents regarding the importance of fulfilling nutrition in early childhood, it has an impact on the growth period of early childhood (Ernawati, 2019; Maryani et al., 2022; Munawaroh & Auliya, 2022).

Based on these results, it can be seen that parents' knowledge and awareness of children's growth and nutrition is good. The variety of food menus needs to be improved because children's food menus in lunch boxes still need to be improved. The results obtained in this study are in line with the results of previous research, which also revealed that parents' understanding of nutrition fulfillment in early childhood through Lunch Boxes is good enough that it can have a positive influence on children's nutritional development (Umasugi et al., 2020). Other studies revealed that parents' knowledge about setting the athlete's diet could help the athlete's fitness level (Sari et al., 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis and discussion of parental knowledge about lunch boxes or healthy food menus, it can help improve children's health. It was concluded that the children's lunch boxes contained healthy and nutritious food. It was related to the level of parents' understanding and adequate school support regarding the development and introduction of nutrition for children.

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