

The Incidence of Picky Eater Among Toddler in Aceh: A Descriptive Study

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2024.907008>

Received: 27 May 2024; Revised: 13 June 2024; Accepted: 20 June 2024; Published: 29 July 2024

ABSTRACT

Toddler is a commonly used term for children up to 5 years old. Age grouping of children 1 to 3 years are referred to as toddlers and ages 3 up to 5 years as pre-school, which is usually known as the golden age, where children will experience very rapid and critical growth and development, this typical development also affects children's eating patterns, where they begin to experience changes in eating patterns to become picky eaters. This study aims to evaluate the incidence of picky eater among toddler in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, Indonesia. This is a descriptive study with a cross-sectional approach involving 171 mothers selected with simple random sampling method. The results of this study showed that the incidence of picky is relatively high, namely 137 (80.1%) of the respondents. Respondents with picky eater were predominantly female, namely 73 respondents (42,7%). In conclusion, this study showed a high incidence of picky eater among toddlers in Lhokseumawe District, Aceh, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Toddler is a commonly used term for children up to 5 years old. Age grouping of children 1 to 3 years are referred to as toddlers and ages 3 up to 5 years as pre-school. At this age, children tend to become more independent, in which they develop autonomy, a self-concept begins to emerge, and are able to interact with the surrounding environment and express their emotions. They also enjoy exploring new things. This typical development also affects children's eating patterns, where they begin to experience changes in eating patterns to become picky eaters (Fertycia, 2022).

The development of children's eating behavior begins at the end of toddler age until pre-school age. Children learn what, when, and how much to eat, which is based on the family's culture, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and practices related to food and eating. The role of parents is critical in shaping children's eating experiences, as this will influence their eating behaviors and weight status (Purnama, 2018).

Picky eater is a term for children who have picky eating behavior, who do not want to eat, or who only like a certain variety of food. This picky eater problem needs to be considered by parents and health workers because it can potentially have a detrimental impact on both the child and the caregiver (Lestari, 2019). Several studies have shown a high prevalence of picky eaters. A previous study on 3000 children aged 4-24 months showed an increase in the prevalence of picky eaters from 17% to 47% in boys, and from 23% to 54% in girls. Another study on 120 children in Singapore showed that 13%-22% of children were reported as picky eaters. In Indonesia, the 1-5-year-old age group was the most likely to experience feeding difficulties (58%), with a total of 45.9% of them having feeding difficulties (Arifah, 2018).

The incidence of picky eaters in various countries is quite high. In Indonesia, previous local study showed that the proportion of picky eaters in preschool children reached 52.4% (Hardianti, 2018). Among children with picky eaters, at least 44.5% of them experiencing mild to moderate malnutrition (Idhayanti, 2022). Previous study suggested that picky eater problems in children might have a serious impact on development and growth, which can lead to stunting and wasting. Failure to fulfill nutrition can result in significant weight loss,

impaired physical health, social, and cognitive development (Prasetyo, 2020). Thus, early identification and action through measurement of nutritional status in children with feeding difficulties is essential to prevent the catastrophic potential of malnutrition.

The results of an initial survey at the Muara Dua Community Health Center in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh, Indonesia through sporadic interviews by author showed that some children had eating difficulties such as picky eater. Based on the data and the results of the initial survey, the author aims to further evaluate the incidence of picky eater among toddler in this population.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study with a cross-sectional approach that aimed to explore the epidemiology of picky eating in toddlers from Aceh, Indonesia. The population of this study were all mothers with a toddler in Muara Dua Community Health Center, Lhokseumawe district. Eligible respondents are recruited using a simple random sampling method, with a total sample of 171 respondents. All respondents agreed to participate and signed the informed consent form.

Data were collected using a questionnaire. Mother's age, education, occupation, and family income, along with children's age, gender, and incidence of picky eater data were collected. Mother's age was classified using the Ministry of Health Republic Indonesia classification and the family income was divided into two categories based on regional minimum wage (IR. 3,413,666). Picky eater behavior was determined using a questionnaire developed by the author. Tabulation of the data was carried out on SPSS software, the data were analyzed descriptively to obtain the frequency (n) of the variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (n=171).

No	Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Mother Age		
	≤ 25 years old	44	25.7
	26-35 years old	92	53.8
	36-45 years old	35	20.5
2	Children Age		
	4 years old	88	51.5
	5 years old	83	48.5
3	Children Gender		
	Male	77	45
	Female	94	55
4	Parents Education		
	Elementary school	37	21.6
	Middle or high school	97	56.8
	University	37	21.6

5	Parents Occupation		
	Employed	80	46.8
	Housewives	91	53.2
6	Family Income		
	≥ UMR Rp 3.413.666	83	48.5
	< UMR Rp 3.413.666	88	51.5
	Total	104	100

Table 1 shows that the majority of mothers in this study aged 26-35 years old (53.8%), had middle or high school as educational background, and worked as housewives. More families had an income more than the regional minimum wage, although the percentage did not differ by a huge margin. The children were predominantly 4 years old (51.5%) and female (55%)

1.2 Incidence of Picky Eater

Table 2. Incidence of Picky Eater (n=104).

No	Incidence of Picky Eater	Male	Female	Total (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Picky Eater	64	73	137	80,1
2	Non-Picky Eater	13	21	34	19,9
	Total			171	100

Table 2 shows that the incidence of picky is relatively high, namely 137 (80.1%) of the respondents. Respondents with picky eater were predominantly female, namely 73 respondents (42,7%).

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the majority of toddlers in the Muara Dua Community Health Center working area of Lhokseumawe City are classified as picky eaters, with a prevalence up to 80.1%. This finding is higher than previous research in other regions in Indonesia, with a picky eater prevalence of 52.4% in Semarang (Hardianti, 2018) and a prevalence of 58.6% in Bengkulu (Lestari, 2019).

Picky eater behavior in children can be identified if children show specific characteristics such as consuming a limited variety of foods, eating in more than 30 minutes, refusing to try new foods, showing strong food preferences in the form of preferences or dislikes (Sumarni, 2019). Another study reported that most children with picky eater behavior rarely ask for food, do not enjoy a variety of foods, have a low appetite and feel full easily compared to children without picky eaters behaviour (Putri, 2019).

Feeding difficulties in children including picky eater, have the potential to increase the risk of malnutrition as they get older (Astuti, 2018). Previous studies have reported that picky eaters tend to consume less fiber and carbohydrates, and eat fewer vegetables, fruits, fish, and rice. Low intake of vegetables and fruits can lead to deficiencies in daily micronutrients required especially during child development (Rahma, 2018). Evidence suggests that picky eaters are an important problem in children that must be identified early to prevent malnutrition that can have a substantial impact on children's growth and development.

This study has several limitations. First, this is a descriptive observational study that could not identify the relationship among variables, further studies are needed to confirm the association between demographic characteristics or other factors to the incidence of picky eater behaviour in toddler. Second, the data of this study is collected using a questionnaire, which had a risk of bias particularly recall bias. Third, this study is

conducted in a selected population, thus the generalizability is limited, further studies with heterogenous subjects in multiple geographic location should be done to accurately assess the burden of picky eater among toddler.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study showed a high incidence of picky eater among toddlers in Lhokseumawe District, Aceh, Indonesia. This finding indicates an urgency for further explorative study in this population to construct interventional strategies in order to mitigate picky eater problem.

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