

NUTRITION EDUCATION IN ALPHA GENERATION TO ACHIEVE OPTIMAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *Alpha generation requires nutritional education to achieve optimal growth and development. This research aims to provide nutritional education to the alpha generation to achieve optimal growth and development. Method used by researchers is descriptive qualitative literature studies. The authors see a significant correlation between nutrition education and changes in children's behavior in responding to their food dishes. The more nutritional education obtained, the more children will realize the importance of food so that it is more devoured in eating food. References taken by authors are sourced from the author's personal experience as a Nutritionist supported by scientific publications such as reputable national journals, books, websites, and various relevant research sources. The subjects in this study were children aged 0 to 8 years. The results showed that generation alpha is the first generation to hold individuals born in the 21st century who have the characteristics of more believe in social media, prefer to shop online, Rarely make physical contact in communicating, do not like excessive consumption, and repeat the same for pleasure. Wrong nutritional behaviors in elementary school-aged children include not eating a balanced dietary menu, not breakfast, unhealthy snacks, consuming Junk Food and Fast Food, and consuming sugar in excess. Some methods of nutrition education that can be practised in the alpha generation are education in the form of interventions, education using cards, and android-based education.*

Keyword: *Alpha Generation, Growth and Development, Nutrition Education*

Abstrak: Generasi alfa membutuhkan edukasi gizi untuk mencapai pertumbuhan dan perkembangan yang optimal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan edukasi gizi kepada generasi alfa untuk mencapai pertumbuhan dan perkembangan yang optimal. Metode yang digunakan peneliti adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan studi kepustakaan. Penulis melihat terdapat korelasi yang cukup signifikan antara edukasi gizi dengan perubahan perilaku anak dalam menyikapi hidangan makanannya. Semakin banyak edukasi gizi diperoleh, anak akan semakin menyadari pentingnya makanan sehingga lebih lahap dalam menyantap makanan. Referensi yang diambil penulis bersumber dari pengalaman pribadi penulis sebagai Ahli Gizi yang didukung oleh publikasi ilmiah seperti jurnal nasional bereputasi, buku, website, dan berbagai sumber penelitian yang relevan. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah anak yang berusia 0 sampai 8 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa generasi alpha merupakan generasi pertama yang menampung individu-individu yang lahir di abad 21 yang memiliki ciri-ciri lebih percaya pada media sosial, lebih suka berbelanja online, Jarang melakukan kontak fisik dalam berkomunikasi, tidak menyukai konsumsi berlebihan, dan mengulangi sama untuk kesenangan. Perilaku gizi yang salah pada anak usia sekolah dasar antara lain tidak makan menu makanan yang seimbang, tidak sarapan pagi, jajanan yang tidak sehat, mengkonsumsi Junk Food dan Fast Food, serta mengkonsumsi gula secara berlebihan. Beberapa metode pendidikan gizi yang dapat dilakukan pada generasi alpha adalah pendidikan dalam bentuk intervensi, pendidikan menggunakan kartu, dan pendidikan berbasis android.

Kata Kunci: Generasi Alpha, Tumbuh Kembang, Pendidikan Gizi

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INTRODUCTION

An alpha generation is a group of people born after 2010. The characteristic of this generation is that they coexist with the ease of information technology, even since they are still in the womb. The sophistication of technology makes this generation easy to get information since childhood. With the existence of technology that can increase children's creativity, this generation is believed to be more capable, more advanced than the previous generation, namely generation Z. Actually, the alpha generation is not much different from the previous generation. They have used applications to perform several activities simultaneously (Andriyanty & Wahab, 2019). Alpha generation lives in all convenience in various conveniences to find data access, open-minded, transparent, very individualist and instant (Karli, 2017).

The alpha generation is the generation born after the internet generation or generation Z. Generation Z is the generation that has mastered and cannot be separated from technology in everyday life. While the alpha generation is the more sophisticated generation of age Z. It can be ascertained that this generation's dependence on technology is higher. So teachers in this era of technological sophistication must be dynamic towards technological developments and will to learn various technologies that support learning. The alpha generation is also children who born in the millennial generation (Mutiani & Suyadi, 2020).

According to McCrindle, alpha generation plays a vital role because they will represent the future and provide an image that can be used to see the age after. In time the alpha generation will represent the majority of the population in terms of consumerism, adopting technology early on, to having a mobile-friendly website. They will be interested in apps that are very easy to use and expect everything to be tailored to their needs. This has been

seen from the previous generation, namely generation Z. They have been exposed to advanced technology that has indirectly influenced them in consuming and learning (McCrindle & Fell, 2020).

Currently, the alpha generation sits in elementary school. This age has a gradual brain development. It started from the development of memory, critical thinking, creativity, and language development. The child's thinking power has developed in a more concrete, rational, and objective direction. This becomes an essential asset in supporting the success of nation-building. The ease of technology on every side of life triggers relaxation of what is needed (Devi, 2012). This has been seen from previous generations, as in research conducted by Muhammedi, which illustrates a tendency to increase socializing and communicating through digital (Muhammedi, 2016).

Generation Alpha has more critical thinking because it gets a variety of information in its time very quickly (Sari, 2019). Ongoing technological advances will cause Generation Alpha to grow individualistically or antisocially. The alpha generation requires a wise attitude from adults to changes so swiftly and technical sophistication. They become a generation that can utilize that sophistication as a positive thing, not instead becoming an individual and away from social and humanistic friendliness (Assingkily, Putro, & Sirait, 2019).

Based on a survey conducted by Global Consumer Insights in 2020, Price water house Coopers (PwC), more than one-third of Indonesian consumers (35%) buy food online (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2020). The habit of eating foods and drinks that are high energy but lack nutrients becomes one factor that needs attention because excess energy triggers children to be overweight and suffer from obesity. Obesity is a serious nutritional problem because obesity can cause children to be lacklustre in learning, even

lose motivation to think so that their intelligence decreases (Koerniawati & Siregar, 2020). Children need parental direction and guidance in choosing snacks because not all traders know the dangers of using additives in snacks excessively (Amaliah & Riki, 2020).

The ease of information obtained by the child, making parents have to filter what information they get. Children are trained to use cell phones wisely. Teaching children to eat healthy foods and avoid junk food must be started early by intending nutrients that help motor development grow optimally. Alpha generations have purchasing power beyond their age. Following the advice of the Ministry of Health in 2014, one of the things that can be done to provide education in nutritional knowledge is to introduce balanced nutrition guidelines to children (Dokumen, 2014). The results prove that nutritional education conducted in school-age children effectively changes knowledge and attitudes towards food. School-age children are easier to change behavior compared to adults. Nutrition education provided is expected to increase the understanding of elementary school-age children regarding balanced nutrition guidelines. Knowledge will affect attitudes and practices of balanced nutrition in everyday life (Yurni & Sinaga, 2017).

Based on data that researchers have obtained, nutrition education with the CIN approach (communication, information and nutrition education) on the application of elementary school students' breakfast behavior shows an increase in the average score of student behavior towards breakfast habits. CIN nutrition for school children can form children's eating habits early to become a better individual in the future. It can change the attitude and behavior of children to get used to breakfast. There is a significant influence between the provision of nutritional education on the improvement of intention and behavior of

breakfast habits (Andriyanty & Wahab, 2019).

Nutrition education using an android-based approach in Fachruddin's research shows that nutritional education interventions positively influence the subject's attitude (Perdana, Madanijah, & Ekayanti, 2017). The results of this study are in line with research showing that there was a significant difference in nutritional attitude scores in the group given nutritional education interventions. Media treatment is also very influential. The android treatment group and the combined android and website showed a better level of healthy attitude when compared to other treatment groups.

Based on various references and approaches to providing nutrition education in elementary school-age children, the authors are interested in analyzing some educational procedures appropriate for the alpha generation in elementary school age, given the challenges of the times, technological sophistication and its impact on eating behavior in children. Therefore, nutritional education in children needs to be done as early as possible.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative research literature study focused on the type of nutritional education following the development of alpha generation children. The proximity of children to technology gives rise to several kinds of nutritional education that can be developed under the characteristics of this generation. The authors looked at how much significance some nutritional education approaches children's changes to eat behaviors. References taken by authors are sourced from the author's personal experience as a Nutritionist supported by scientific publications such as 20 reputable national journals, 1 books, 2 websites, and 1 document from Ministry of Health. Data analysis includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and

verification. The technique of testing the validity of the data uses triangulation of sources and methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Alpha generation and its characteristics

The alpha generation is the generation born after generation Z. Generation alpha is the first generation to hold individuals born in the 21st century. According to McCrindle, the term "homo tabletus" is used for this alpha generation. This generation is considered to be taken in the period 2010-2025. Alpha generation of unborn babies. They've been learning since an early age since the iPad was launched in 2010, screenager has become a hallmark of this generation (Apaydin & Kaya, 2020).

Digital technology has been coming into their environment since birth in their daily lives. Technology, parents, and other social interactions affect their lives. The concept of "connection" is at the core of this generation. Reliance on screens and the world of touchscreens note that this generation prefers to communicate visually through images and audio rather than type messages. They need more attention because their parents spoil them. This generation is technologically literate, and they can learn longer despite close interaction with online learning. They are overgrowing with the influence of technology (Karli, 2017).

Some characteristics of alpha generation among them:

1. They believe in social media Prefer to shop online
2. They barely make physical contact in communicating
3. They are heavily spoiled by generation X and Y
4. They like carbohydrates. They don't like excessive consumption.
5. They repeat the same thing for pleasure.

The drastic digital changes in this generation era make them have a character

that can adapt quickly to changes in their environment. The focus on learning adds skills to a particular field, thus causing new jobs to emerge. Children can promptly imitate what they see, so parents should introduce children to a positive environment to not imitate bad things (Astarini, Hamid, & Rustini, 2017).

Children in this generation tend to have a collaborative nature of work. In addition, the use of social media is very high, making the emergence of influencers in this generation a marketing strategy. Related to that, consumer trends in this generation are oriented to themselves. In everyday life in this generation, social recognition is the most important thing to be used as input or advice (Manuel & Sutanto, 2021).

Wrong Nutrition Behavior in Elementary School-Aged Children

Ignorance of good nutrition in children or parents causes children to often behave wrongly in consuming nutrients. Looking at some of the characteristics of the alpha generation child above is the impact of various errors that may occur as follows.

1. Not eating a balanced nutritional menu, a balanced nutrition menu consists of:
 - a. Source of Carbohydrates: rice, bread, potatoes, cereal
 - b. Protein Source: Fish, eggs, meat, tempeh
 - c. Source of fat: Margarine, cooking oil
 - d. Source Of Mineral Vitamins: vegetables and fruit

There are still many parents who ignore the menu above. For example, in the plate available rice and fried fish only, some parents provide instant noodles, meaning fulfilled sources of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats only without vitamins such as from vegetables and fruits. If these eating behaviors often occur in children, then the child will lack protein and other vitamins. The implication is that

children will experience vitamin A deficiency and iron deficiency.

2. No breakfast

Children often skip breakfast due to busy activities when going to school, or children often wake up, even though breakfast affects the child's intelligence. If the child is not filled with enough nutritional needs from the morning, the child will lack the energy to think and be creative, unable to concentrate and tend to be lazy.

3. Unhealthy snacks

The presence of children at home with androids makes it easy for children to buy something they want. In recent years the POM agency has revealed its findings of various harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde and textile dyes. Research conducted by a study institute in East Jakarta revealed that the snacks commonly consumed by children are brains, fried tofu, instant noodles, meatballs with sauce, syrup ice. Based on laboratory tests on the brains and meatballs found borax, ice and syrup contain rodhamin B. In addition to the above ingredients, there are illegal (Food Additives) such as borax. If these ingredients accumulate in the body over a long period, it will become a carcinogenic compound that causes cancer and tumours.

4. Eating Junk Food and Fast Food

Fast Food is synonymous with food sold in restaurants, derived from heated or directly cooked ingredients. Directly packaged in the form of packages and now carried by customers. Junk food is a term used for foods that have a high caloric value. These foods are commonly called unhealthy foods because they have little nutrient content (Devi, 2012). Junk food can damage health with diseases caused by obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, and others. Fast food becomes the choice of parents who have a busy life. They invite their children to gather

together and enjoy food at the restaurant. Food served is served quickly with a good taste.

5. Excessive sugar consumption

Sugar can be found in syrup, brown sugar, sweets, biscuit jelly, chocolate and almost all children's snacks. In his research, AHA (American Heart Association) found that children aged 4-8 years consume sugar 21 teaspoons per day (Talibo, Mulyadi, & Bataha, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Nutritional Adequacy Figure, the limit of sugar consumption for children aged 4-6 years is 38.75 grams or equivalent to 7.7 tsp of sugar. And for children aged 7-9 years is 45 grams of sugar or the equivalent of 9 tsp of sugar. Consumption of sugar in children can cause dental caries, diabetes, obesity in children. It is estimated that 90 percent of elementary school-age children worldwide have suffered from caries.

Nutrition Education to Achieve Optimal Growth and Development

The fulfilment of nutrients in children in their infancy is significant. If the nutritional needs in children are not appropriately met, it will cause incorrect nutrition. Improper nutrition is a nutritional problem that must be overcome because it will impact the development of human resources, and the nation's story will become hampered. This must be addressed, starting with the family. Seeing the significant challenges of the alpha generation becomes essential to prepare for a good education as early as possible. The provision of nutrition education is more effectively given to elementary school-aged children. Providing their understanding of nutrition is expected to increase nutritional knowledge so that children can be encouraged to behave and determine their behavior in eating food (Dewantari, Syafiq, & Fikawati, 2020). Education provided to children must be presented

attractively so that children are willing to listen, pay attention, and want to apply the message that has been conveyed.

Here are some nutritional education methods that can be practised in the alpha generation:

1. Education in the form of interventions

Intervention media used are reverse sheets, videos and materials in the form of PowerPoint slides. Children are equipped with a pocketbook containing nutritional education materials, and then teachers deliver healthy education materials through the media. The results obtained in Nuril Alifa's research are that there are significant differences in children's knowledge between before and after intervention (Dewantari et al., 2020). The use of different media can involve many senses to capture information well.

Media in pocketbooks presents ten balanced nutrition messages, choosing healthy snacks, tables recording food covered during the week (filled with parents), and behaving cleanly. Between teachers and students, there is cooperation carried out for a month, with the frequency of monitoring time every day, and once a week, the teacher conducts evaluations to students. Students at home fill this pocketbook. Students are trained to record any covered food and taken to school the next day to be shown to the teacher.

2. Education using cards

Nutrition education card media has become one of the media that is quite simple and easy. Characteristics of children who like to play cards are the reason for the use of this method. This card contains a short message about the safety of snacks and food security and exciting images. The existence of engaging media makes it easy for children to understand and practice it in everyday life.

Materials written in nutrition

cards include: understanding healthy snack foods, characteristics of foods that contain artificial dyes, hygiene, food sanitation, examples of foods that contain harmful synthetic dyes and images of how to test, tips on choosing snacks and healthy foods, balanced nutrition messages.

Data collection is done before and after the intervention. The intervention is carried out for a month. With a week duration of 2 meetings, each meeting takes a minimum of 30 minutes (Wahyuningsih, Nadhiroh, & Adriani, 2015).

In Priwantiputri's study, the results showed an increase in scores in the control group after education. Children's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors before and after being given nutritional counselling with the medium of nutrition cards have a meaningful difference. But the provision of nutrition education using nutrition education cards is more effective in increasing the knowledge of snack food than using the question and answer lecture method (Priawantiputri, Rahmat, & Purnawan, 2019).

3. Android-based education

Android and websites are comprehensive educational media with supporting features, making the learning process more effective for nutrition education. Android is an educational medium that is relatively easy for children to use because it has a beautiful appearance and can be used anywhere. Created using Wix.com contains exciting templates. The app consists of logos, images, photos, writings, and videos (Perdana et al., 2017).

Lieffers and Hanning's research on comparing nutritional status assessment using conventional methods with nutritional applications for mobile devices had a positive effect (Lieffers, Vance, & Hanning, 2014).

The first step taken in applying this education is to prepare a nutritional theme to be developed. The article taken is the Balanced Nutrition Guidelines.

This theme contains ten balanced nutrition messages, which are then presented in videos, photos and images with exciting colours, and a child character template. The step is to take pretest results before intervention and post-test a week and a month after the intervention. Intervention is done by providing nutritional materials balanced with the lecture method, Brainstorming while the child opens the application on the gadget. As a result, children will capture information signals quickly because they can be accessed anywhere and anytime.

This method can be applied with parents at home. Parents are also obliged to teach children to behave in a healthy life as early as possible by applying balanced nutrition messages in the family environment. Mc Crindler has predicted this method regarding the familiarity of alpha genes to the internet and the utilization of opportunities to develop thought patterns and the formation of children's behavior. Technology trends in children of the alpha generation, making children more intelligent. Among the children are visually skilled and have the ability of the eyes in coordinating in completing tasks (Fadlurrohman, Husein, Yulia, Wibowo, & Raharjo, 2019).

A person who provides intervention and education should have four competencies to be readily accepted by children. Those competencies are pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence, and personality competence. Pedagogical competence is concerned with a person's ability to understand children and understand how to convey helpful

information to children. Professional competence is concerned with an in-depth understanding of what will be delivered by social competence regarding communication ethics and getting along with children and parents. And personality competence concerning the personality of a person who presents information is exemplary and examined.

The rapid development of information technology requires a teacher to be part of the technological progress. As the Alpha generation, teachers must provide approach techniques that are following the present day. Teachers are required to follow the development of technology so that the learning process in the classroom can be received and followed by learners while also taking advantage of the potential that students already have. Teachers have a lot to learn about teaching, which is about designing more activities or learning models suitable for the Alpha generation (Widodo & Rofiqoh, 2020).

Teachers, as the spearhead of education, must strive to teach and manage the classroom effectively. Quality education, along with current developments, is essential to give birth to a knowledgeable generation of alphas who can use their knowledge to face the challenges of 21st-century life and achieve a better life (Ying & Surat, 2021).

Tips and tricks for parents so that alpha generation children are successful in entering the 21st century, namely parents participate in following the growth of technology, information, and communication so that parents have provisions and can guide children to connect with the internet smartly and healthily; direct children to socialize so that their social-emotional can grow well; participate in training and developing the physical-motor aspects of children; to equip children with religious and moral values; educating children not to rely on technology; and play the role optimally as a friend of discussion, a place to ask

questions, and a place to pour out affection for children (Purnama, Sunan, & Yogyakarta, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The alpha generation is the golden generation because, since childhood, it has been acquainted with the sophistication of technology. They are spoiled with various facilities and infrastructure instantly and without the need to think long. Multiple facilities can leap progress or intellectual decline, depending on the environment and parenting. Alpha generation must be equipped with sufficient nutrition to be able to develop optimally. In addition to nutritional debriefing, the alpha generation also requires massive guidance from parents because the temptations in cyberspace are much greater than in the real world. Some healthy education methods that can be practised in the alpha generation are education in interventions, using cards, and android-based education.

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