



## Parents' Understanding of *Junk Food* Through Nutrition Education Content

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**Abstract**

This research is motivated by the increase in junk food consumption among children which is influenced by practicality, taste, and media exposure factors. This condition causes nutritional and health problems, so educational efforts are needed to increase parents' understanding of healthy eating. This study aims to describe parents' understanding of *junk food* and the role of digital nutrition education content in increasing nutrition awareness. The method used was a descriptive quantitative research with a survey technique using a questionnaire distributed to 135 parents in RW 06. Sawojajar Village, Kedungkandang District, Malang City. The data was analyzed statistically descriptive to see the level of parental understanding and the influence of exposure to nutrition education content on social media. The results of the study showed that the majority of respondents understood the negative impact of junk food on health, especially the risk of obesity and heart disease, and began to try to replace junk food with healthy home-made food. Most of the respondents also actively access nutrition education content through social media such as TikTok and Instagram, which have been proven to be effective in increasing nutrition knowledge and awareness. In conclusion, digital nutrition education content plays an important role in shaping parents' positive understanding and behavior towards a healthy diet for families. These findings confirm the importance of strengthening nutritional literacy through digital media as a preventive strategy to build healthy eating habits from an early age.

**Keywords:**

Parental Understanding; *Junk Food*; Educational and Nutrition Content.

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Consumption trends *Junk Food* Or fast food such as instant noodles, sausages, and nuggets are increasing among the public, including children. Factors from practicality, good taste, and the influence of advertising that make many parents choose *Junk Food* as a quick solution without paying attention to its impact and nutritional value. Even though consuming *Junk Food* Excessive weight can lead to nutritional deficiencies, obesity, immune disorders, and the risk of developing chronic diseases in children (Veronica, 2019).

To overcome this, the Ministry of Health introduced the principle of 4 healthy 5 perfect as a balanced nutrition guideline consisting of carbohydrates, protein, vegetables, fruit and milk as a complement (Tri, 2024). This is in line with the teachings of Islam in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 168 which emphasizes the importance of eating halal and good food (*Thayiban Elections*). Therefore, nutrition education is an important aspect so that parents understand how to choose healthy food for their children. Thus, nutritional balance is not only a matter of physical health, but also a form of obedience to moral and spiritual teachings (Sulastri et al., 2024). The development of digital technology today opens up great opportunities for the dissemination of nutrition education through various social media platforms. Educational content presented in the form of videos,

articles, or infographics can help people understand the importance of healthy eating and the risks *Junk Food*. The use of digital media as a means of education allows for the delivery of information that is broader, interactive, and easily accessible to the public, especially for parents (Anwar et al., 2022).

Nutrition education content has a crucial role in increasing public awareness and understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition. The goal is to convey nutritional information that is accurate, relevant, and easy to understand by various groups. The topics discussed also vary, ranging from the basics of nutrition, the benefits of certain foods, tips for choosing healthy foods, to how to overcome nutritional problems (Ropii et al., 2024). Data from the Ministry of National Development Planning shows that around 24.4% of the Indonesian population is malnourished, one of which is caused by an unbalanced diet and lack of parental attention to the nutritional content of children's food (Munir et al., 2023). According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO), child malnutrition is the cause of 54% of infant and toddler deaths (Kartiningrum, 2019). One effective way to address this problem is to provide targeted nutrition education content. Nutrition education is important to increase the understanding of parents and the community about the importance of providing nutritious and healthy food for children. With education, it is hoped that there will be a change in children's eating habits that are healthier and reduce dependence on *Junk food* (Ristanti et al., 2025).

A number of previous studies have highlighted related issues. Romadona et al., (2021) found that parents understand the negative impact *Junk Food* children's health, but still have difficulty limiting their consumption. Martoni, (2020) explains that *Junk Food* risk of causing obesity and impaired organ function. Meanwhile, Sulistyani Scott, et al., (2024). proving that community nutrition education is able to increase awareness in choosing healthy foods, and Jihad et al., (2024) emphasized that social media has an effect on adolescents' food preferences. The findings, however, have not specifically reviewed how digital nutrition education content affects the way parents view *junk food*. This is the basis of why this research is important. Research is needed that directly assesses the extent to which nutrition education content helps parents understand the risks *Junk Food* and prefer healthier foods.

This study aims to describe the level of parental understanding of *junk food* and assess the extent to which the role of digital nutrition education content contributes to increasing the understanding of junk food. This is based on the fact that previous research has not specifically reviewed the role of digital nutrition education content in shaping parents' understanding of *junk food*. The results of the research are expected to contribute to increasing family nutrition literacy and the formation of healthy eating habits from an early age through the use of digital media.

## B. METHOD

This study uses a type of descriptive quantitative research with a survey method to describe parents' understanding of *junk food* through nutrition education content conducted on the population of residents of RW 06, Sawojajar Village, Kedungkandang District, Malang City. The data collected from the respondents were described to explain whether nutrition education content affects parents' understanding of *junk food*. Researchers collected various data using questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed to residents of RW 06, Sawojajar, Kedungkandang, Malang to be filled. The research instrument is in the form of a questionnaire which is compiled based on three main variables, namely parents' understanding of junk food, understanding of balanced nutrition, and exposure to digital nutrition education content. Each variable is described into a number of indicators and question items that aim to explore the respondents' knowledge, habits, and experiences as a whole.

In the variable of understanding about *junk food*, indicators include knowledge about the definition and examples of *junk food*, its content, consumption intensity, health impact, and its restriction strategies. The indicator is reflected in questions about known types of *junk food*, frequency of consumption, health reasons, and forms of food substitution carried out. For balanced nutrition variables, indicators include understanding of balanced nutritional components, sources of carbohydrates and proteins, benefits of milk, and obstacles in providing

nutritious food. The digital nutrition education content variable assesses how often respondents access nutritional content, topics consumed, social media platforms used, and the level of ease of understanding and applying the information obtained. All questions were developed in multiple-choice, closed-end, semi-open-ended and Likert scale formats so that the data generated could accurately and measurably describe the level of understanding and exposure of respondents.

The sampling technique used uses *Simple random sampling* which we took randomly from the population of RW 06 residents. Then, the researchers got 135 participants from parents who lived in RW 06, Sawojajar, Kedungkandang, Malang, who were active in using social media. To analyze the influence between nutrition education content and parents' understanding of *Junk Food*, descriptive statistical analysis techniques were used. The data that has been collected is done by scoring the choices given by each respondent. Scoring is intended to transfer qualitative data in the form of respondents' answers to the questions in the questionnaire into quantitative values (Sihotang, 2023).

## C. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Subject Characteristics

Based on data obtained from 135 respondents, they are residents of RW 06, Sawojajar, Kedungkandang, Malang. In Table 1, it is known that the majority of respondents in this study were women covering 132 respondents (98%), while male respondents were three people (2%). Based on age, the largest percentage (49%) is parents aged 31-40 years, and the smallest percentage is in the age range of 61-70 years, which is 1%. Meanwhile, the age range of other parents is 20-30 years (31%), 41-50 years (15%), 51-60 years (4%), and 61-70 years (1%). The most dominant respondents' jobs were housewives as many as 73 people (54%). In addition, other respondents work as private workers (15%), teachers (8%), self-employed (5%), traders (4%), entrepreneurs (3%), nurses (2%), civil servants (2%), content *creators* (1%), farmers (1%), laborers (1%), *freelance editors* (1%), and students (1%).

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents by characteristics

Variable	n	(%)
Gender		
- Man	3	2
- Woman	132	98
Age		
- 20-30 years	42	31
- 31-40 years old	67	49
- 41-50 years old	20	15
- >50 years old	6	5
Work		
- Housewives	73	54
- Private workers	20	15
- Teacher	11	8
- Self employed	7	5
- Merchant	6	4
- Entrepreneurial	4	3
- Nurse	3	2
- Civil Servants	3	2
- Content creator	1	1
- Farmer	2	1
- Laborer	1	1
- Freelance editor	1	1
- Student	1	1

Income		n	(%)
- IDR 0 – IDR 500,000		46	34
- IDR 501,000 – IDR 2,000,000		43	32
- IDR 2,001,000 – IDR 4,000,000		34	25
- > Rp. 4,000,000		12	9

### Parents' Understanding of *Junk Food*

Of the 135 participants, only one person did not understand what *junk food* was and the other 134 people did. Table 2 shows the types of food that respondents think are included in *junk food* along with the content of its substances.

Table 2. Examples of *junk food* and its substance content

Variable	n	(%)
Consumption of <i>junk food</i> per month		
- Once a month	39	31
- 2-3 times a month	72	49
- 4-5 times a month	15	15
- >5 times a month	9	4
<i>Junk food</i> that is often consumed		
- Instant noodles	73	43
- Sausage	14	26
- <i>Nugget</i>	22	13
- <i>French fries</i>	43	10
- Burger	16	8

Based on data, consumption habits *Junk Food* Most often respondents do it 2-3 times a month (53%). Meanwhile, there are respondents who consume *Junk Food* once a month (29%), 4-5 times a month (11%), and even more than five times a month (7%). The *Junk Food* What they often consume, namely instant noodles (43%), sausages (26%), *Nugget* (13%), *french fries* (10%), and burgers (8%). According to the data, most respondents understand what is meant by *Junk Food* and can name the types. This shows that their level of basic knowledge is quite high. These findings are consistent with Romadona et al., (2021) who report that parents are usually aware of the negative impact *Junk Food*, although in such studies to control consumption *Junk Food* is still an obstacle.

The frequency of junk food consumption in this study was relatively low 2-3 times per month, this is different from the study Nugraha (2022), which indicates that the frequency of consumption *Junk Food* The most, which is more than 3 times a week. Similar Research Husniyah Ulya et al., (2024) also showed that 72% of people consume frequently *Junk Food* more than four times a week. This distinction can be explained through the theory of the Health Belief Model, first proposed by Resenstock (1966) and refined by Becker, et al. in the 1970s and 1980s who showed that educational content on the internet can be used for effective and accessible health communication. Thus, nutrition education materials that are more interesting, appropriate, and in accordance with the needs of parents can be made by health workers, educational institutions, and community groups. In addition, the use of social media as a means of family nutrition intervention can reach more people without space and time limitations (Devi, 2016). In this study, it is associated with the theory, that higher perception of health risks makes parents prefer to reduce consumption *junk food*.

Looking at the income of parents per month, as many as 58% are above Rp. 4,520,212 and 42% have an income of less than Rp. 4,520,212. However, in research (Kencanaputri et al., 2024), consumption habits *Junk Food* at most it is done less than three times a week. In this study, parents' income is divided into two groups, namely low with income below Rp. 4,972,996 (29.5%) and high with income above Rp. 4,972,996 (70.5%). The *Junk Food* what they consume is instant noodles, *Fried Chicken*, meatballs, chicken noodles, and *Nugget*. Frequency of consumption *Junk*

*Food* In this study, it is a low group compared to previous studies. It can be seen that the greater the income of parents per month, the greater the opportunity to buy and consume *junk food*.

**Table 3.** The impact of consuming *junk food* and how to limit *junk food*

Variable	n	(%)
Reasons to avoid <i>junk food</i>		
- Preservatives	59	41
- Harmful substances	26	18
- Excess salt, sugar, saturated fat, calories	43	30
- How to process	8	6
- No fiber	7	5
The impact of <i>junk food</i>		
- Obesity	99	44
- Cancer	25	11
- Increases blood pressure	49	21
- Disorders in the blood vessels of the heart	54	24
Frequency of replacing <i>junk food</i> with healthy food		
- Always	40	30
- Often	67	49
- Sometimes	28	21
- Never	0	0

All respondents admitted that consumption *Junk Food* has a bad impact on the health of the body. Preservatives (41%) are the most common reason respondents avoid *Junk Food*. However, they also have another reason, namely because *Junk Food* contains harmful substances (18%), foods containing salt, sugar, saturated fat, and excess calories (30%), processing methods (6%), and do not contain fiber (5%). Meanwhile, the impact of consuming too much *Junk Food*, most of them consider that obesity is a bad effect of consumption *Junk Food* (44%). While other respondents considered that *Junk Food* can result in disorders in the blood vessels of the heart (24%), increased blood pressure (21%), and cancer (11%). This behavior is in line with the theory of risk perception or risk tolerance defined as a person's readiness to take risks and then handle risks to be able to achieve their goals, that the higher the risk perception, the greater the individual's tendency to avoid the source of danger (Sari et al., 2024).

To limit consumption *junk food*, A total of 40 respondents always made their own food at home (30%) and 28 respondents sometimes bought *Junk Food* and also made their own food menu (21%). The foods that are usually processed by respondents are fruits that are eaten directly or processed into salads (27%), vegetables that are processed into soups, pecel, hodgepodge, *Nugget* vegetables, boiled edamame and boiled potatoes (26%). Some respondents processed *homemade junk food* by using safe ingredients such as noodles, burgers, and sausages from chicken, flour, and vegetables. They also use various animal and vegetable proteins such as fish, eggs, meat, shrimp, tempeh, and tofu. In addition, sweet potatoes are also in demand as a substitute food *Junk Food*. Because oily foods are not good for the body, as many as 132 respondents changed their frying habit by boiling (98%), and the other three respondents never did so (2%). From the findings of the data, it reflects the theory of self-regulation, which according to Bandura, will be a reactive and proactive strategy in self-regulation. There are 3 that can be used to self-regulate, namely, external factors, monitoring, evaluating internal behavior (Amen, 2022). In this study, it is associated with the theory above, namely the ability to direct behavior by choosing healthier alternatives.

This is reinforced by research Amaliah (2020), that additives cause adverse effects in the short and long term on health, such as chromosomal abnormalities, obesity, neurological disorders, and increase the risk of cancer growth. In other studies (Hidajahturrokhmah et al., 2018) also explained that there are several ways to minimize food consumption *Junk Food*,

namely by choosing rice as a staple food, regularly drinking water or fruit juice, not consuming chicken skin, and reducing the level of sauce and mayonnaise.

### Parents' Understanding of Balanced Nutrition

**Table 4.** Foods consumed

Variable	n	(%)
Nutritious foods consumed		
- Rice	8	4
- Vegetables	45	20
- Fruit	85	38
- Protein	87	38

According to respondents, the nutritious foods they often consume are fruits, foods that contain protein, vegetables, and rice. Among the many foods that contain carbohydrates, as many as 132 respondents answered sweet potatoes (46%) and others answered rice (30%), corn (9%), bread (9%), bananas (4%), and *oatmeal* (2%). Meanwhile, foods containing protein, as many as 96 respondents answered eggs (28%) and others answered fish (21%), beef (16%), tempeh (14%), chicken (11%), and tofu (10%).

In addition, the majority of respondents understand that milk plays an important role in bone density, although nine respondents did not know that lack of milk consumption from childhood can inhibit bone growth. In terms of time, 59% of respondents admitted that they had limited time to prepare nutritious food due to busy work, while 12% had more flexible time. These results illustrate that parents have a good awareness of the types of nutritious foods, but are not fully able to implement balanced nutrition consistently due to limited time and family habits. These findings are in line with research Siti Maulani et al., (2021) which shows that parents of kindergarten students have a high level of understanding of balanced nutrition, but its application is still influenced by factors of eating habits, time, and family economic conditions. This shows the existence of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) explaining that a person's behavior is influenced by a rational and planned thought process. In this theory, individuals are considered to have control over their actions, so behaviors arise due to the existence of pre-formed intentions. According to Ajzen (1988), there are three main factors that shape the intention to behave, namely attitudes towards behavior, subjective norms and perception of behavior control. These three components determine how strongly a person intends to do a behavior and whether the intention will be realized (Apriliansyah, 2025).

In addition, the research Santoso & Ranti (2013) It also reinforces this finding, that nutrition education in the elderly is able to increase understanding of the importance of the combination of carbohydrates, proteins, vegetables, and fruits in an early childhood diet. He emphasized that nutrition counseling-based interventions are effective in increasing parental awareness by up to 23% on the importance of balanced nutrition.

### Nutrition Education Content

Of the 135 respondents, there were three respondents who had never seen nutrition education content on social media. Meanwhile, there were 132 other respondents who had frequent frequency (58%), always (16%), and sometimes saw nutrition education content (24%). The table below shows the topics of nutrition education content that they have seen on social media.

**Table 5.** Nutrition education content

Variable	n	(%)
Nutrition Education Content Topics		
- Types of nutritious foods	17	14
- Nutritious food ideas	20	17
- Nutritional content	29	24
- Healthy diet and living	27	22
- The impact of <i>junk food</i>	11	9
- How to choose foodstuffs	3	2
- The dangers of malnutrition	2	2
- Healthy diet	2	2
- Complementary Foods	1	1
- Children's health	9	7
Social Media		
- TikTok	43	32
- Posted on Instagram	42	31
- Posted on Facebook	28	20
- YouTube	23	17

Based on the data, the content topics watched by respondents were related to the types of nutritious foods (14%), nutritious food ideas (17%), nutritional content (24%), healthy eating and living (22%), the impact of *junk food* (9%), how to choose good ingredients (2%), the dangers of malnutrition (2%), healthy diet (2%), complementary foods (1%), and child health (2%). According to respondents, social media that broadcast nutrition education content are *Tiktok*, *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *Youtube*. A total of 43 respondents saw it on *Tiktok*, 42 respondents saw it on *Instagram*, 28 respondents saw it on *Facebook*, and 23 respondents saw it on *Youtube*. After seeing the nutrition education content, 134 out of 135 respondents felt that they had gained new knowledge. In addition, according to respondents who viewed nutrition education content, information from nutrition education content is easy to understand by all ages and easily accessible. Most of the respondents have accessed nutrition education content and the majority of people watch it regularly. The most frequently viewed content is about nutritional content and healthy eating.

This is in line with research (Marwan et al., 2025) which found that interactive digital media users have an effect on improving nutritional literacy. Content presented through social media platforms is more effective in forming habits of consuming healthy and nutritious food. The same research was conducted by (Jihad et al., 2024) that there is a significant influence between social media exposure and public understanding of healthy food. Respondents in this study also experienced an increase in nutritional awareness after obtaining information through social media. This shows that digital media has an important role as an effective and interesting means of education. In addition, respondents' awareness of adverse impacts *Junk Food* and their efforts to choose nutritious foods in line with the results of the research (Martony, 2020) which emphasizes the importance of nutritional efforts to prevent various diseases due to unhealthy diets. From the findings of previous research, it relates to the theoretical framework of digital health literacy, which is defined by Norman and Skinner (2006) as a person's ability to access, understand, evaluate, and apply health information obtained from digital sources. It includes technological capabilities and

An understanding of health content that is widespread on the internet and social media, with an emphasis on the ability to search and assess electronic information about health to help people make informed decisions (Oktaviana & Solihin, 2020).

## D. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that parents have a good understanding of *junk food* and balanced nutrition. Nutrition education content on social media has also been proven to play an important role in increasing awareness and encouraging behavior changes towards a healthier diet.

This research shows that educational content on digital platforms can be used as an effective and accessible health communication strategy. This opens up opportunities for health workers, educational institutions, and the community to develop nutrition education materials that are more interesting, relevant, and according to the needs of parents. The use of social media as a means of family nutrition intervention is also considered potential in reaching a wider group without space and time limitations.

Further research is recommended to review the long-term impact of nutrition education content on changes in family consumption behavior, as well as evaluate the types of content or delivery methods that are most effective for parents from diverse backgrounds. This is important so that educational efforts not only increase knowledge, but also produce sustainable behavior change.

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