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## Sundanese Children's Eating Culture and Nutritional Status in Tangerang, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** The Indonesian nutritional status study mentions cases of malnutrition or malnutrition with a weight-for-age index of approximately 17%. This shows that almost a quarter of children still suffer from malnutrition. Papadangan, which is a culture of eating together in Sundanese tribal communities, has good and new potential as a strategy to prevent underweight toddlers. This study explores the culture of eating habits called 'Papadangan' among children under five in a Sundanese tribe. The research used a qualitative phenomenological study design with 16 informants who had children under five with poor and good nutrition. In-depth interviews were conducted with mothers of children under five. The experience of eating habits of children under five in the Sundanese tribe has five themes: the frequency of eating habits, the meaning of toddler eating habits, the benefits of eating habits, when eating habits are carried out, and the purpose of eating habits. This activity is carried out twice a day, in the morning and evening, involving three to five children under five eating together both on the terrace of the house and in the playground around the house. This eating habit can be used as an alternative for the community to increase the appetite of children under five in Tangerang, meaning that indirectly the community has tried to improve nutrition among children under five through eating together in the area.

**Keywords:** feeding behavior, Sundanese children's culture, nutritional status.

## 印度尼西亚坦格朗巽他儿童的饮食文化和营养状况

**摘要：**印度尼西亚营养状况研究提到了营养不良或年龄别体重指数约为17%的营养不良病例。这表明，近四分之一的儿童仍然营养不良。帕帕丹甘是巽他部落社区的一种集体进餐文化，作为预防体重不足的幼儿的策略，具有良好的新潜力。这项研究探讨了巽他部落五岁以下儿童的饮食习惯文化，即“帕帕丹甘”。该研究采用定性现象学研究设计，对象为16名受访者，他们的5岁以下儿童营养不良和良好。对五岁以下儿童的母亲进行了深入访谈。巽他部落五岁以下儿童饮食习惯体验有五个主题：饮食习惯的频率、幼儿饮食习惯的意义、饮食习惯的好处、饮食习惯何时实施以及饮食习惯的目的。这项活动每天早上和晚上进行两次，三到五个五岁以下的儿童一起在房子的露台和房子周围的操场上吃饭。这种饮食习惯可以作为社区增加坦格朗五岁以下儿童食欲的替代方案，这意味着社区试图通过在该地区一起吃饭间接改善五岁以下儿童的营养。

**关键词：**喂养行为、巽他儿童文化、营养状况。

## 1. Introduction

Nutritional status is a condition determined by the level of the body's need for calories and other nutrients obtained from food intake with measurable physical effects. Trends in the nutritional status of children under five in Indonesia are divided into stunting, wasting, underweight, and overweight. The number of under-fives who are stunted is 21.6%, wasting is 7.7%, underweight is 17.1%, and overweight is 3.5%. The incidence rate fluctuates from year to year [4]. It is caused by many factors in children under five.

An obvious factor in malnutrition is the presence of improper feeding habits in children under five. People consider that formula milk or snacks can replace nutritional intake if children under five do not want to eat, even though good food intake is required by children under five to fulfill nutrition. Toddlerhood is a golden age for growth and development. This is because good nutrition can help the process of growth and development of children and can prevent diseases due to malnutrition in the body. The growth of toddlers is strongly influenced by the quality and quantity of food consumed daily. The quality and quantity of food are determined by family parenting when feeding toddlers. Parents play an important role in childcare [1].

In 2019, ethnoparenting was introduced, which is motivated by the condition of Indonesia, which has many cultures. Ethnoparenting is a parenting activity that is based on a certain local culture or ethnicity, for example, Sundanese parenting. Ethnoparenting is also said to be indigenous parenting or childcare, which is carried out based on the value of local wisdom [2]. The implementation of ethnoparenting is a necessity for the community, given the problems of stunting, malnutrition, and maternal and child mortality that are still high in Indonesia, while the natural wealth and environment are very rich, including in remote areas. The problem is that there is still a lack of knowledge and initiation to return to local wisdom that is already known in the community, while the process of information, globalization, and a way of life that is far from the richness of one's own culture is massively and intensively invading rural areas. This proves that the use of culture is important to increase usefulness in society [2]. This study explores the culture of eating habits called 'Papadangan' of children under five in the Sundanese tribe.

## 2. Method

This research is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach using a phenomenological design. The research was carried out in Pekayon Village, Sukadiri District, Tangerang Regency, with

considerations based on preliminary surveys. There were unique eating habits of children under five in the Sundanese community in Pekayon Village, Sukadiri District, Tangerang. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews and directed group discussions with 16 visitors consisting of two groups. The first group consisted of eight informants with children under five who applied eating habits in the Sundanese community and eight informants with children under five who did not apply eating habits. The criteria for participants included in this research were toddlers with malnutrition, those who had papadangan eating habits, and those who lived in Tangerang.

Observations were made to determine the nutritional status of children under five in families who implemented the eating habits of the Sundanese tribal family and those families of children under five who did not implement the eating habits of the Sundanese tribe. Data analysis in this study was carried out simultaneously with the data collection process (ongoing analysis). After data collection using an audio recorder, transcripts were obtained. The transcript was rechecked and commented on what still needs to be added to the information at the time of the next data collection.

This research also used member checking to assess trustworthiness. Data or results were returned to the participants to check for accuracy and suitability for their experiences. This research received approval from the ethics committee and the government around the area where the research was conducted.

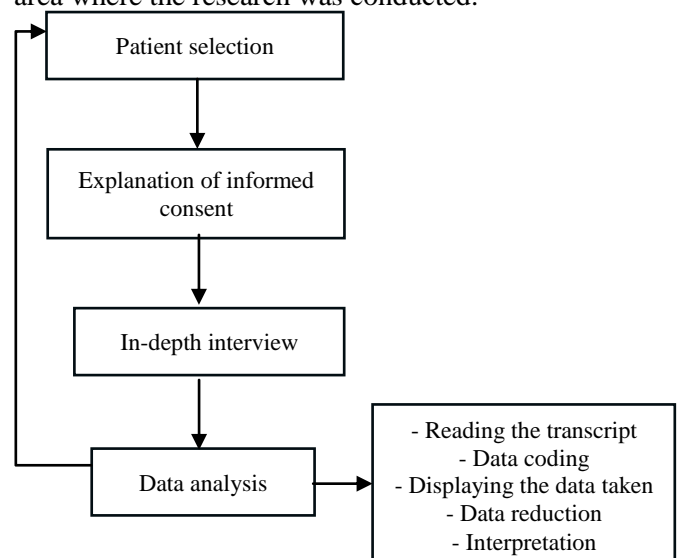


Fig. 1 Research flow (Developed by the authors)

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Characteristics of Research Participants in Sundanese Tribes Who Practice the Papadangan Eating Culture

The average participating child was in the age range of 24-36 months (65%), with male gender accounting for 60%. This research also found five themes:

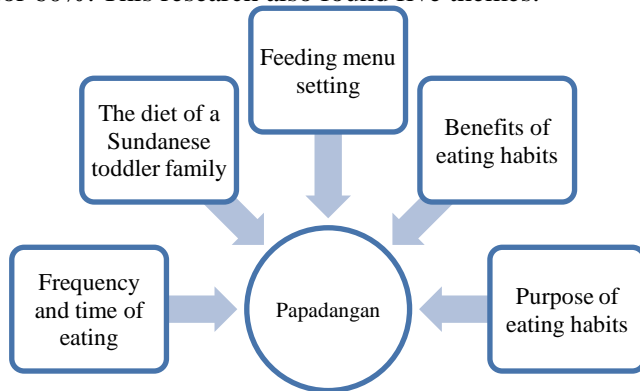


Fig. 2 Theme chart (Developed by the authors)

Table 1 Characteristics of the participants (Developed by the authors)

Characteristics	n	%
<i>Age (months)</i>		
24-36	10	65
37-60	6	35
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	9	60
Female	8	40

#### 3.2. Frequency and Time of Eating in a Sundanese Toddler Family

The first theme describes the frequency and time of eating together among Sundanese toddlers by conducting in-depth interviews and obtaining the core on the family eating habits of Sundanese toddlers:

The frequency of eating in families of Sundanese children under five is three times a day: in the morning at 07.00 to 09.00, during the day at 11.00 am to 12.00 pm, and in the late afternoon from 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm. From the results of the interview with the informant, the same answer was obtained for Theme 1 related to the frequency of eating:

“It’s a routine habit of the people here who have children under five, the toddler’s eating hours are already known by the mothers here so they already know the hours when it’s time for children under five to eat” (Informants 1-16).

Feeding arrangements and menu planning should always be carefully performed according to nutritional needs, age, and state of health. Regular feeding means providing all the necessary nutrients for energy and optimal growth and development. Therefore, whatever food is given, the child must acquire all the substances that suit their needs so that the baby’s body can grow and develop. That is, in addition to the baby’s body becoming larger, the functions of their organs must develop in line with the increasing age of the baby [5].

Regular feeding makes the child disciplined without coercion and lead a healthy lifestyle. Getting children used to eating the right way without having to be fed, eating by sitting at the same table from an early age, washing hands before eating, and using cutlery correctly can train children to understand ethics, teach them to live independently, and educate children about cleanliness and order.

Therefore, food arrangements must include the type of food given, the time at which feeding begins, the size of the portion of food per meal, and the frequency of feeding each day. Starting from the age of 1, parents need to make a daily schedule of the child’s diet (food diary) so that the child gets used to a regular diet. In addition to the meal schedule, record the types of food, portions, amounts consumed by the child, and what types of food the child likes or dislikes, even if there are foods that cause allergies [3].

#### 3.3. Diet of a Sundanese Toddler Family

The second theme illustrates the pattern of eating habits with Sundanese children under five by conducting in-depth interviews and taking the essence of the eating habits of families of Sundanese children under five, which are stated as follows:

“The pattern of eating habits of the community here is that when we gather to eat together, Mom likes to arrange a menu for the next day such as what to bring, for example, some bring rice, side dishes such as fish, chicken, and eggs, some also bring vegetables, fruit, and some bring milk. Usually that’s how it is every day, so later we exchange food with each other” (Informants 1-16).

The pattern of feeding children under five can be interpreted as an effort and method that is usually practiced by mothers to provide food to children under five starting from the preparation of menus, processing, serving, and how to give them to children so that the child’s eating needs are fulfilled, both in type, quantity, and nutritional value. Feeding children is aimed at achieving their optimal growth and development. Good and correct feeding can provide good nutrition to increase the ability to develop all existing genetic potential optimally.

#### 3.4. Toddler Feeding Menu Settings

The third theme describes the menu of eating habits with children under five of the Sundanese tribe by conducting in-depth interviews and taking the essence of the eating habits of the Sundanese toddler family, which is stated as follows:

“Usually, to organize the toddler’s diet here varies for each mother. We bring food from home, and this rich habit must be complete meals that contain 4 healthy 5 perfect such as chicken, rice, vegetables, fruit, and milk. Some even bring biscuits and juice” (Informants 1-16).

The regulation of the type and ingredients of food

consumed must also be arranged properly so that the child does not get bored quickly with certain types of food. Food conforms to the balanced nutritional menu for children if the food menu consists of food sources of energy substances, building agents, regulators, and foods derived from milk [3]. In practice, the diversity of foodstuffs can be realized by applying the pattern of the arrangement of dishes "four healthy five perfect," that is, the use of four groups of foodstuffs in the daily children's diet menu enriched with a glass of milk.

### 3.5. Benefits of Eating Habits of Sundanese Families with Children under Five

The fourth theme illustrates the benefits of eating habits with Sundanese children under five by conducting in-depth interviews and taking the core of the eating habits of the Sundanese toddler family, which is stated as follows:

"If a child here has difficulty eating and does not want to gain weight, usually, the mother will practice *papadangan* (eating together in Sundanese) with other toddlers; this has been done by mothers here since ancient times. When invited to eat together, toddlers will be happy because they will be playing with their friends, so the rice runs out faster" (Informants 1–16).

The size of the portion of food per meal should be appropriate. For children's nutritional adequacy, not only the types of foodstuffs given must be diverse but also attention must be paid to the amount of food eaten or the large portion of food per meal. An insufficient portion of food will cause the child to be deficient in nutrients. On the other hand, excess portions of food will also cause children to become overnourished and overweight. Several studies concluded that those who experienced obesity (overweight) in childhood and adolescence are more susceptible to diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and others [3].

### 3.6. Purpose of Eating Habits of Sundanese Children under Five

The fifth theme illustrates the purpose of eating habits with Sundanese children under five by conducting in-depth interviews and taking the essence of the eating habits of families of Sundanese children under five, which are stated as follows:

"We eat together here automatically because if this is done, it means that our child has trouble eating. This goal is so that the food runs out quickly, the weight rises, and the child does not get sick easily. This eating habit is carried out by toddler mothers until their children are considered heavy enough" (Informants 1–16).

Family meals can provide an opportunity for children under five to observe other family members eating. The child can learn how to use the cutlery and eat certain foods. Children of this age begin to know how to eat on their own, although they still have difficulty picking up or scooping food; thus, the child is

trained to explore eating skills without help. To independently cultivate the child's eating skills, the child should not be accustomed to always being fed by their parents or caregivers. Eating together can also teach children under five about food. In general, the child prefers to eat the food that their parents eat. As the toddler grows, they begin to become interested in the food eaten by their friends.

Thus, parents play a crucial role in providing models or examples for children by choosing healthy and nutritious foods. The pattern of feeding children under five can be interpreted as an effort and method that is usually practiced by mothers to provide food to children under five starting from the preparation of menus, processing, serving, and how to give them to children so that the child's eating needs are fulfilled, both in type, quantity, and nutritional value. Feeding children is aimed at achieving their optimal growth and development. Good and correct feeding can produce good nutrition to increase the ability to develop all existing genetic potential optimally. In addition, the habits of Sundanese families with children under five can be applied to the nutritional status of children under five. Further research could be conducted on the *papadangan* culture as one of the strategies for preventing malnutrition among children under five.

## 4. Discussion

From the results above, it can be explained that culture is a way of life that develops and is shared by a group of people and passed on from generation to generation. One of them is the eating habits of the Sundanese people in terms of feeding children under five with the aim of improving their nutritional status and preventing malnutrition and stunting. Culture can be seen from two sides: the object or results of human thought and work and the social side, such as morals, customs, values, and rules that have become community habits and are difficult to change.

Eating is a basic human need. Every day, we must eat so that we have energy for activities, including meeting the nutritional status of children under five. Ideally, according to theory, people should eat three times a day for their nutritional needs. Families with children under five in the Sundanese tribe are not an exception; there are many eating habits in the families to increase appetite in the hope of a better nutritional status of their toddlers. Various eating habits are often practiced in Sundanese toddler families to increase appetite: *paphare*, *babancakan*, *ngariung*, and *papadangan*. Among the most widely practiced types of eating habits in families with children under five in Sundanese tribes is *papadangan*. *Papadangan* is a culture originating from the West Java region. Usually, a lot is done in a family event with relatives or get-togethers with relatives. *Papadangan* can be done anywhere, on the terrace of the house, in the garden, in the rice fields, and in other places.

## 5. Conclusion

This research explores the papadangan eating culture among children under five. This eating habit improves the appetite of children under five in Tangerang, meaning that indirectly, the community has tried to improve nutrition of children under five through eating together in the area. Further research to assess the nutritional status of children under five by providing papadangan interventions is necessary. Hopefully, culture-based interventions can be a strategy to reduce malnutrition among children under five.

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