

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH EATING DIFFICULTIES AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN AT PAUD KASIH BUNDA MALANG CITY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Feeding difficulties in preschool aged children are problems that can affect growth, development, and nutritional status. The causes of feeding difficulties include child related factors (age, gender, health history, sensory sensitivity, and temperament) as well as parental factors (mother's education, parental involvement, and mealtime environment). **Objective:** To analyze the factors associated with feeding difficulties among preschool-aged children at PAUD Kasih Bunda, Malang City. **Methods:** This research employed a quantitative method with a cross-sectional design. The population consisted of 65 mothers who had preschool-aged children (3–6 years old). The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, with a total of 39 respondents. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using the Chi-square test. **Results:** There were significant associations between children's health history (p -value = 0.012), sensory sensitivity (p -value = 0.010), and mother's education level (p -value = 0.018) with eating difficulties. Meanwhile, factors such as the child's age, gender, temperament, parental involvement, and mealtime environment showed no significant relationship (p -value > 0.05). Multivariate analysis using multiple logistic regression revealed that sensory sensitivity was the dominant factor influencing eating difficulties among preschool children (p -value = 0.030). Children with sensory processing difficulties had approximately three times higher likelihood of experiencing eating difficulties compared to those with normal sensory function ($\text{Exp}(B) = 3.030$; 95% CI: 1.110–8.260). **Conclusion:** There is a significant relationship between children's health history, sensory sensitivity, and mother's education with feeding difficulties. Sensory sensitivity is the dominant factor influencing feeding difficulties among preschool children at PAUD Kasih Bunda Kota Malang.

Keywords: eating difficulties, preschool children, sensory sensitivity, health history, mother's education