

Traditional Supplementary Food Based on Local Wisdom of Tangerang for Early Childhood

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ABSTRAK. Makanan tradisional tidak hanya merupakan warisan budaya, tetapi juga memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk kebiasaan makan sehat serta menumbuhkan pemahaman awal mengenai prinsip-prinsip halal pada anak usia dini. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi pengenalan makanan tradisional melalui program pemberian makanan tambahan di lembaga Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini di Kabupaten Tangerang. Metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif digunakan dengan melibatkan lima lembaga Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini sebagai subjek penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipan, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model analisis Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setiap lembaga Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini memiliki program pemberian makanan tambahan yang beragam, dengan menu makanan tradisional yang dipilih secara cermat, seperti bubur kacang hijau, singkong kukus, ketan hitam, serta kue tradisional lokal. Anak-anak menunjukkan antusiasme tinggi terhadap makanan yang disajikan, sementara orang tua memberikan dukungan penuh terhadap program ini. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan sumber daya dan pengetahuan guru tentang keragaman makanan tradisional. Namun, terdapat peluang untuk memperkuat program ini melalui kerja sama dengan masyarakat serta peningkatan pelatihan bagi pendidik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengenalan makanan tradisional pada anak usia dini dapat dilakukan secara efektif dengan dukungan yang tepat, sekaligus memberikan dampak positif pada pemahaman budaya dan nilai-nilai agama sejak dini. Rekomendasi diberikan untuk memperkaya variasi menu tradisional serta memperdalam pengetahuan mengenai aspek kuliner dan halal.

Kata Kunci: Makanan Tradisional, Anak Usia Dini, Program Pemberian Makanan, Kabupaten Tangerang

ABSTRACT. *Traditional food is not only a cultural heritage but also plays a crucial role in shaping healthy eating habits and fostering an early understanding of halal principles among young children. This study aims to explore the introduction of traditional food through supplementary feeding programs in Early Childhood Education early childhood education institutions in Tangerang Regency. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, involving five early childhood education institutions as research subjects. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's model. The findings reveal that each early childhood education has developed varied supplementary feeding programs, with carefully selected menus of traditional food such as porridge made from mung beans, steamed cassava, black sticky rice, and local snacks. Children showed high enthusiasm for the meals served, while parents provided strong support*

for the programs. Challenges identified include limited resources and insufficient knowledge of diverse traditional food among educators. Nevertheless, opportunities exist to strengthen the program through community collaboration and teacher training. The study concludes that introducing traditional food in early childhood settings can effectively foster cultural understanding and religious values, provided that adequate support is available. Recommendations are proposed to enrich the variety of traditional menus and to deepen knowledge on culinary and halal aspects.

Keyword : Traditional Food, Early Childhood, Feeding Program, Tangerang Regency

INTRODUCTION

Traditional food constitutes an essential element of cultural heritage that encapsulates the historical narratives, biodiversity, and collective values of local communities. In the Indonesian context, where cultural plurality is deeply embedded in the social fabric, traditional food serves a dual role: it is not only a primary source of sustenance but also a marker of cultural identity, social cohesion, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The preparation, consumption, and transmission of traditional recipes are closely linked to processes of cultural reproduction, where values, norms, and local wisdom are continuously reinforced within families and communities. Beyond its nutritional value, traditional food is embedded with cultural and religious meanings, such as adherence to halal principles, which remain fundamental to the daily lives of the majority of Indonesians (Mulyaningsih et al., 2021; Syartika & Delfi, 2022). In this regard, the consumption of traditional food is not merely an act of meeting dietary needs but is also tied to spiritual obligations, communal rituals, and symbolic practices that sustain cultural identity. Introducing traditional food to young children thus extends beyond the provision of balanced nutrition; it functions as an early pedagogical strategy for cultivating cultural appreciation, strengthening moral and religious values, and fostering a sense of belonging within a community.

Children who are familiarized with traditional food from an early age are more likely to internalize the cultural narratives, ethical norms, and religious commitments associated with these practices, thereby forming a holistic understanding of identity that integrates both physical and moral dimensions. Moreover, exposure to traditional food encourages children to appreciate biodiversity and local food systems, which play a critical role in maintaining sustainable consumption patterns (Rusdiana et al., 2025). Consequently, embedding traditional food education into early childhood settings, such as through family-based parenting programs and *early childhood education* curricula, not only promotes healthier dietary behaviors but also ensures the preservation of cultural heritage amidst the rapid influences of globalization and modernization (Alghozy & Sudarmilah, 2020; Handayani, 2003). Despite its importance, children's dietary habits in Indonesia present growing challenges. Research by Sekiyama, (2012) in rural West Java provides valuable insight into these issues. The study, conducted with 154 children aged 1–12 years, used a 3-hour food recall over seven consecutive days and revealed a high prevalence of growth problems, with 69.5% of children experiencing stunted growth and 35.7% less severe stunting. Among the 221 types of food consumed, 68 were categorized as snacks. Alarmingly, children who consumed snacks more frequently than average showed lower intake of carbohydrates and vitamin C, and higher snack consumption was associated with lower height-for-age z-scores (HAZ). These findings highlight the risks of excessive snack consumption and emphasize the need to replace low-nutrient snacks with foods that are more nutrient-dense. Considering that schools serve as a

daily environment for children, the study also recommended implementing proper school nutrition programs.

In this context, traditional food offers both nutritional and cultural solutions. Traditional dishes such as mung bean porridge, steamed cassava, black sticky rice, or local cakes are not only rich in nutrients but are also culturally familiar, making them highly suitable as alternatives to modern snacks. Introducing these foods during early childhood, which is often described as the golden stage of development, is crucial because habits established at this age are likely to persist into later life. By integrating traditional food into children's daily routines, educators and parents can help foster healthier eating behaviors while strengthening children's sense of cultural belonging and awareness of religious values. One promising strategy for such introduction is through additional food programs in Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions. These programs are designed to supplement children's nutritional needs, but they also hold educational potential. Providing additional food at school creates opportunities to teach children about discipline, hygiene, and appreciation of food diversity, while simultaneously ensuring that the meals offered align with cultural and religious expectations. The involvement of teachers, parents, and the wider community further enhances the program's impact, turning it into a comprehensive platform that bridges nutrition, education, and cultural preservation (Utami, 2020; Zulaiha, 2020).

However, despite the clear benefits, research focusing on the introduction of traditional food through additional food programs in ECE institutions remains limited, particularly in local contexts such as Tangerang Regency. This region, with its diverse cultural background and growing educational sector, provides fertile ground for exploring how traditional food can be integrated into supplementary feeding programs for early childhood. Yet, empirical studies that document strategies, challenges, and responses from children and parents are scarce. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by examining the introduction of traditional food through the provision of additional food in early childhood institutions in Tangerang Regency. Specifically, it aims to explore the strategies employed by schools, the responses of children, and the extent of parental and community support. The findings are expected to contribute both academically and practically, by providing evidence on how cultural heritage can be preserved while simultaneously promoting healthy eating habits among young children.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the introduction of traditional foods through supplementary feeding programs in early childhood education institutions in Tangerang Regency. The qualitative design was selected to provide an in-depth understanding of the processes, experiences, and perceptions of teachers, parents, and children involved in the program. The research was conducted in five Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions selected through purposive sampling. The selection considered the variation in supplementary feeding practices and the cultural as well as religious backgrounds of the institutions that reflect the diversity of Tangerang Regency. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews with teachers, school heads, and parents to capture their perspectives on the implementation of supplementary feeding and the types of traditional foods introduced. Participant observation was also carried out during feeding sessions to document children's responses, peer interactions, and teacher involvement. In addition, relevant documents, including food menus, teachers' daily notes, and educational materials related to traditional foods, were collected to support triangulation of the findings. Data analysis followed the Miles and

Huberman (Novikov & Novikov, 2013) interactive model, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved filtering and focusing only on information relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data were then organized and displayed in narrative descriptions, matrices, and diagrams to facilitate pattern identification. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified to ensure accuracy and depth of interpretation. To strengthen the rigor of the findings, data validity was assessed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests (Patton, 2002).

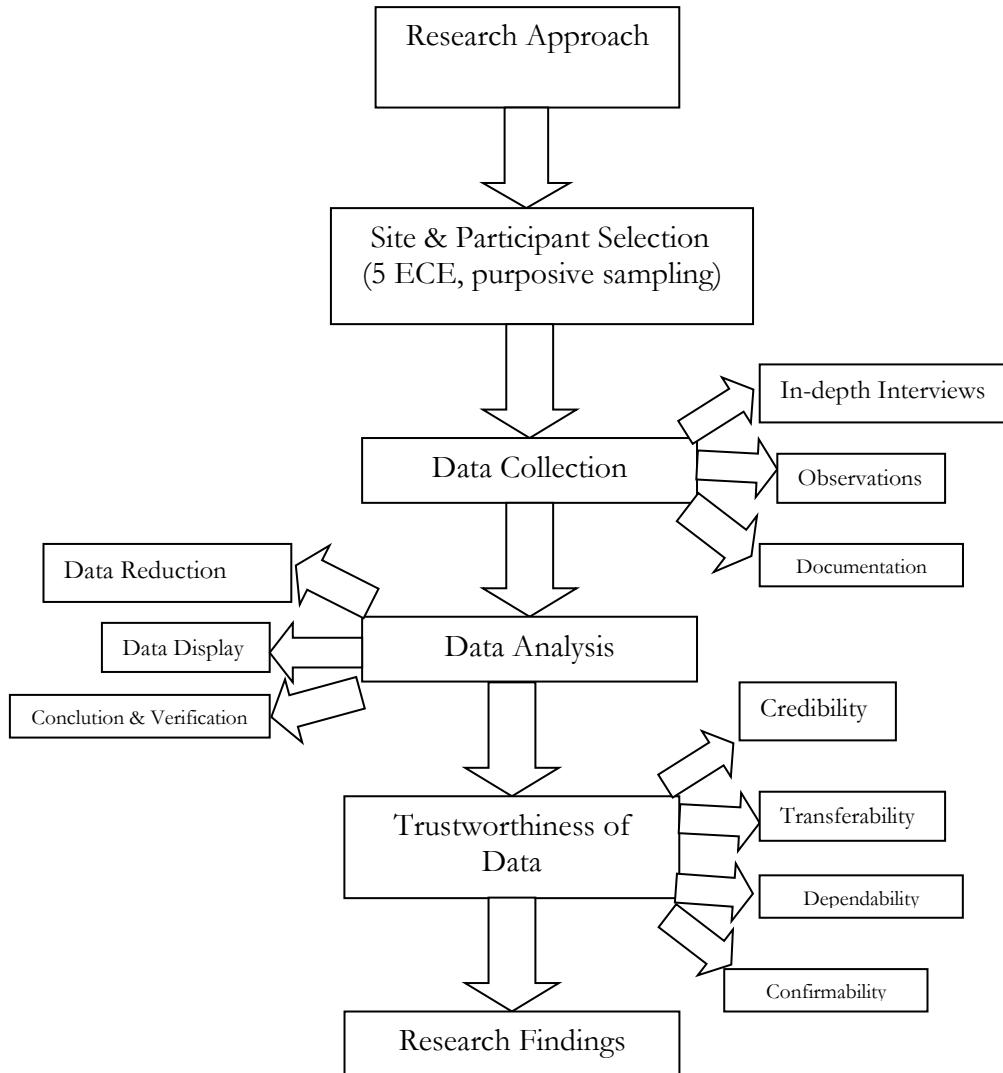


Figure 1. Research Procedure Flowchart

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Introducing Traditional Food in ECE Institutions

The findings revealed that each ECE institution in Tangerang Regency had a unique way of introducing traditional food through supplementary feeding programs. Some schools incorporated food into weekly learning themes, while others scheduled it biweekly to accompany specific cultural events. Teachers played an active role by telling stories about the origin of the

food, encouraging children to ask questions, and explaining the ingredients in simple language. This approach created a link between daily eating practices and cultural identity. These findings echo (Lestari et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2023), who emphasized that food-related activities in ECE can serve as effective media for cultural learning.

Types of Traditional Food Provided

The supplementary feeding programs used menus dominated by traditional foods familiar to the community of Tangerang Regency, including yellow pumpkin pudding, *lupis ketan*, cassava with banana, *jojorong*, sweet potatoes, and black sticky rice porridge. These foods were selected not only for their nutritional value but also for their affordability, availability, and compliance with halal principles. As illustrated in **Picture 1**, “Mata Roda” is an example of a traditional food menu provided to children, accompanied by simple preparation steps that teachers or parents could replicate. Such practices resonate with (Fahmida et al., 2014) who argued that school meal programs using local foods enhance both nutritional intake and cultural transmission.



Picture 1.
An Example of a halal traditional food menu and how to make it

Table 1. Introduction of Traditional Food Through Supplementary Feeding in ECE Institutions in Tangerang Regency

ECE Institution	Forms of Introduction	Types of Traditional Food Provided	Children's Response
A	Weekly supplementary feeding integrated with thematic learning; storytelling by teachers.	Yellow pumpkin pudding, cassava with banana.	Children asked about ingredients; enjoyed tasting.
B	Biweekly feeding; parents involved in preparation and explanation.	Lupis ketan, joorong.	Children liked sweet flavors; hesitant with sticky texture but encouraged by teachers.
C	Daily menus shared with parents; interactive snack-time discussions.	Rice cakes, boiled sweet potatoes.	Children enthusiastic; linked school food with home experiences.
D	Cooking demonstrations before meals.	Black sticky rice porridge, steamed cassava.	Children participated actively; compared with modern snacks.
E	Collaboration with community; used traditional utensils.	Kue cucur, klepon.	Children excited with hands-on experiences; peer influence encouraged tasting.

Children's Response to Traditional Food

Observation results confirmed that children showed enthusiasm when introduced to traditional foods. As seen in **Picture 2**, children were eager to taste *lupis*, a traditional glutinous rice dish. While sweet foods were favored, some children initially hesitated to try unfamiliar textures. With encouragement from teachers and peers, most of them eventually tasted the dishes. This supports (Fináncz et al., 2023), who found that repeated exposure and positive role modeling significantly influence children's willingness to try new foods.



Picture 2.
Picture of Children who try a traditional food “Lupis”

Parental and Community Support

Parents welcomed the program as a valuable way to preserve local food traditions while promoting children's nutrition. They often contributed by sharing recipes or ingredients, and some directly joined the preparation process. As shown in Picture 3, collaboration with the local community further enriched the program, providing authentic cooking experiences and access to traditional utensils. These findings align with (Ningsih, 2020), who emphasized that parental and community involvement is key to sustaining early childhood nutrition programs.



Picture 3.
Prenatal Participation and community Collaboration

Challenges and Opportunities

Although the program gained strong support, challenges persisted, including ensuring consistent halal compliance, maintaining food hygiene, and diversifying menus to prevent monotony. Resource limitations also affected the frequency of feeding activities. However, these challenges open opportunities for strengthening collaboration among schools, parents, and local communities. This reflects the call of (Sekiyama, 2012) to replace low-nutrient snacks with culturally relevant and nutrient-dense alternatives, thereby improving both children's growth and their cultural awareness.

Formation of Healthy Eating Patterns

The introduction of traditional food through supplementary feeding programs contributes significantly to the formation of healthy eating patterns in early childhood. Healthy eating patterns are not limited to supporting physical growth but also influence children's mental well-being and learning capacity. Teachers play a vital role in this process by acting as role models and providing children with knowledge about healthy food choices and nutritional principles (Lastiana & Mayra, 2024). Through daily interaction, teachers can stimulate children's curiosity, encourage them to try a variety of foods, and instill an appreciation for balanced nutrition.

The traditional foods selected for supplementary feeding are generally nutrient-dense, containing carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fats, and fiber essential for optimal growth and development. A diverse diet that provides complete nutrition ensures children's energy needs are met and supports overall health (Palupi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the integration of halal principles guarantees that the food consumed is safe, permissible, and aligned with religious values, thereby reinforcing both physical well-being and moral education.

Cultural Education and Religious Values

Beyond nutritional benefits, the supplementary feeding program serves as a medium for cultural and religious education. Children are introduced not only to the taste and appearance of traditional food but also to the cultural heritage and religious values embedded in it. Menu preparation, procurement of ingredients, and cooking processes were all adjusted to comply with Islamic halal standards. Halal food, as defined by (Farkhan Tsani et al., 2021), encompasses permissibility in substance, processing, and sourcing. Teachers and principals ensured this by selecting halal-labeled ingredients, maintaining cleanliness during preparation, and responsibly using school funds designated for the program. Observations and interviews confirmed that such practices strengthened children's awareness of religious principles while reinforcing respect for cultural traditions (Latif, 2018). This dual role of food as nourishment and as a transmitter of values makes supplementary feeding in ECE institutions a strategic approach to early character building (Lestari & Utami, 2023).

The Importance of Support and Cooperation

The success of introducing traditional food through supplementary feeding programs in Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions cannot be separated from the active support and cooperation of multiple stakeholders. Teachers and parents, in particular, play pivotal roles in ensuring that the program runs effectively and achieves its intended goals. Parents are recognized as the first educators in a child's life, as they establish the foundation of children's education and development from home. Their direct involvement in school-based nutrition activities provides continuity between what children learn at school and what they experience in their daily family environment. This alignment reinforces healthy eating habits, cultural appreciation, and religious values introduced through supplementary feeding.

In practice, parental involvement manifested in various ways across the institutions studied. Some parents contributed food ingredients, ensuring freshness and quality; others participated in the cooking process, often sharing family recipes that reflected local cultural traditions (Kim & Brand, 2023). Even simple acts, such as encouraging children at home to try and appreciate traditional foods served in school, proved to be highly effective in sustaining positive habits (Kurniawaty, 2022). Previous studies confirm that parental participation significantly influences children's acceptance of healthy eating practices (Lismayanti et al., 2021; Nurhayati, 2021; Ratningsih et al., 2021). Teachers also played a central role as facilitators and role models (Williford et al., 2013). They not only prepared and distributed the food but also explained its cultural background and nutritional value to children (Lestari et al., 2023). Through storytelling and interactive discussions, teachers

were able to create a meaningful learning experience around food, linking nutrition with character education (Vretudaki, 2022). This aligns with the holistic role of ECE teachers, who are expected to nurture children physically, cognitively, and socio-emotionally (Her & Kim, 2018).

Beyond teachers and parents, community collaboration further strengthened the program. Local communities provided traditional cooking utensils, local food ingredients, and in some cases, resource persons who demonstrated traditional cooking techniques. As shown in Picture 3, such cooperation offered children an authentic experience of cultural practices while supporting schools logistically (Utami, 2020). This community participation enriched the program, making it more than just a feeding activity but also a cultural preservation effort. These collaborative practices are consistent with the *Regulation Of The Minister Of Health Of The Republic Of Indonesia Number 66 Of 2014*, 2014 which emphasizes the responsibility of schools to conduct health monitoring, provide nutrition education, and build partnerships with families and communities. By working together, ECE institutions, parents, and communities can address practical challenges such as limited financial resources, menu monotony, and the need for consistent halal compliance (Ping et al., 2018). Ultimately, cooperation among these stakeholders ensures that the introduction of traditional food is sustainable, impactful, and deeply rooted in both educational and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of introducing traditional food through supplementary feeding programs in Early Childhood Education (ECE) institutions in Tangerang Regency. The findings demonstrate that traditional food can be effectively introduced in various forms, ranging from routine feeding sessions, integration into thematic learning, storytelling, and collaborative activities involving parents and communities. The types of food provided, such as lupis ketan, jojorong, yellow pumpkin pudding, cassava with banana, and other local snacks, not only fulfilled children's nutritional needs but also served as a medium for cultural and religious education. Children's positive responses indicated high enthusiasm and curiosity toward traditional food, suggesting that these programs can foster healthy eating habits while nurturing cultural identity and early understanding of halal values. The active involvement of parents and community members further strengthened the program's implementation, though challenges such as limited resources, maintaining food variety, and ensuring consistent halal compliance remain. Overall, the introduction of traditional food in supplementary feeding programs provides a dual benefit: it supports children's optimal growth and development while also preserving cultural heritage and instilling values of health, discipline, and religiosity from an early age. Strengthening collaboration between schools, families, and communities is crucial to address challenges and sustain the program. Future initiatives should focus on diversifying traditional menus and developing innovative learning strategies to ensure that the richness of local food culture continues to play an integral role in early childhood education.

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