

ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF FOOD INTAKE ON MOOD CHANGES IN PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS

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Abstract. Human food intake not only affects the physical, but also the psychological. The purpose of this study was to analyze whether there was an influence of food intake consumed on changes in mood or mood in Psychology students. The method used in this study was qualitative research with a basic research type where researchers collected data by interviewing 6 students of the Psychology Undergraduate Program at Nusa Cendana University. The results of the study found a significant influence on changes in mood or mood when consuming certain foods, especially foods that are liked. The conclusion of this study is that the food intake consumed by a person can affect changes in mood or mood, from good to bad or even vice versa. In addition, changing moods also have an impact on how a person will choose food to consume.

Keywords: Food intake, mood.

INTRODUCTION

Mood is a feeling that arises and is influenced by conditions or situations experienced by individuals, both the interaction process that occurs and the stimulus received, which ultimately affects how the individual thinks and acts. Mood is different from emotion, although mood is an emotional state. This is because mood is a combination of several specific emotions and generally expressions cannot show a person's mood.

Stress is one of the causal factors that can affect mood. The body will feel stressed when facing pressure, whether from the social environment such as friendship, relationships with partners, relationships with parents or pressure from work. Especially for students in early adulthood where individuals begin to feel that they have responsibilities that they must fulfill. Responsibility as a student is not only limited to actively attending lectures but also being responsible for the tasks given to them and completing them on time.

Early adulthood is a transition period from adolescence to adulthood, (Putri, 2018) where at the age of 18 to 40 years many changes occur both physically and psychologically. Allison (2010) stated that stressors (experiences that induce stress responses) that often occur in individuals aged 18-29 years are emotional responses that appear during the quarter life crisis phase and what will happen to individuals is anxiety, doubt, anxiety and frustration when determining their future. (Hurlock, 2006) This period is full of problems and emotional crises, changes in values, skills and self-adaptation to new things (Putri, 2018) so that they are more susceptible to stress. Globally, the prevalence of depression reaches 28.0%, 26.9% experience anxiety, 24.1% experience post-traumatic stress symptoms, 36.5% stress, 50.0% psychological pressure and 27.6% experience sleep problems. (Nochaiwong et al., 2021) Based on the 2018 Riskesdas data, the magnitude of emotional mental disorders in the population aged ≥15 years reached 9.8%, depression in the population aged ≥15 years was 6.1%. The number of depression patients according to the Central Java Provincial Health Office in the 3rd Quarter of 2022 showed 265 cases in Semarang City.

Sadness and happiness are two things that balance life, so as a healthy individual it is important to pay attention to these two things to stay balanced. However, despite having similarities as a balancer of life, both have different causal factors to appear. Happiness will arise when the individual's desires are fulfilled, while sadness will arise when expectations are not achieved. Happiness is a feeling that involves positive emotions, united in a deep feeling so that individuals give meaning to the purpose

of life and are able to show a positive mood, then negative emotions such as sadness can provide meaning so that individuals are able to appreciate happy moments. Meanwhile, mood is a series of feelings that are ephemeral, vary in intensity and duration for quite a long time and usually involve more than one emotion. A person's mood condition can have negative effects such as nervousness, stress, anxiety. (Rifani & Rahadi, 2021)

Food is a substance consumed by living things to obtain the necessary nutrients and to survive. Intake of certain foods can affect the production of neurotransmitters that play a role in emotional regulation. Tryptophan, an essential amino acid found in certain foods contributes to the synthesis of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin, known as the “happy hormone” plays an important role in improving mood (Duncan, 2019). Overall, food plays a crucial role in human physical and mental health and affects overall quality of life. A balanced diet can help maintain mood stability, increase energy and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. A person who has a bad emotional condition is at risk of developing behaviors that consume types of food that taste good and are dense in energy such as foods with high fat and sugar content (Flaskerud, 2015). According to several studies, the food consumed is not only as energy but can be a factor that can affect mood (mood) (Kaur & Van, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to analyze whether there was an influence of food intake consumed on changes in mood in students of the S1 Psychology study program at Nusa Cendana University, Kupang City. The author's hope regarding this study is that there will be an increase and awareness of the importance of paying attention to food intake related to psychological influences and not just physical influences, and being able to reduce the negative impacts of food that have an impact on health conditions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used by the author in this study is a qualitative method with a basic research type. Qualitative research aims to dig up information deeply and openly on various responses. This study tries to get people to express their thoughts on a topic without giving them many guidelines or directions (Perreault and McCarthy (2006:176).

Qualitative research is a type of research that produces findings, where the findings cannot be achieved by statistical measures or other means of quantification or measurement. This type of research can be used to study social life, history, behavior, etc. (Strauss and Corbin (Cresswell j, 1998: 24).

Based on the understanding of the experts above, it can be concluded that qualitative research is a type of research used to understand phenomena that occur in the environment or are experienced by research subjects and focuses on how humans understand their experiences and perspectives.

1.1. Data collection technique

The data collection technique in qualitative research is by conducting interviews. The author chose to conduct interviews in order to obtain in-depth information related to the phenomenon being discussed. In this study, the researcher collected information from 6 (six) selected sources.

1.2. Research Informants

The author uses purposive sampling technique to determine the informants in this study. Purposive sampling technique is one of the techniques for determining informants by selecting informants based on the needs and criteria required in this study. The selected students are odd semester students, namely semesters 1, 3, and 7 who are currently studying for a Bachelor of Psychology at Nusa Cendana University, totaling 6 people, namely:

1. CL and E are 1st semester students of the Psychology Study Program
2. RU and SM are 3rd semester students of the Psychology Study Program
3. GB and ICS 7th semester students of Psychology Study Program

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, the author can describe the perception of psychology students about food intake and mood changes. In this study, the author found different perceptions among psychology students about the relationship between food consumed and how to handle insignificant mood changes. The author concluded 5 (five) important points as follows:

1.1 The relationship between food intake and mood

ICS, as a 7th semester student said that food has an important role in life. According to ICS if the body does not eat and does not have enough energy to be active, it risks less than optimal work results. Here are the results of the interview

"I think a bad diet can cause anxiety. Because when we have a bad diet, our energy is automatically not optimal. So we tend to experience stress because the lack of energy affects the results of work in college. If you want to work on assignments, if you haven't eaten, you will feel weak, so that diet actually increases stress and anxiety."

In the results of the interview above, the author sees that ICS considers that diet has an important influence on daily activities and will be the cause of feelings of stress and anxiety. This is because ICS's confession explains how the body's condition if it does not have enough food reserves results in poor performance in completing college assignments and then affects the results. Apart from ICS, other informants from semester 1 (one) also have the same opinion.

"I think so, because when we consume food that is unhealthy for our physical health, it may affect our health and will hinder our daily activities."

In the results of the interview, E has the same understanding as ICS that food has an effect on health and will be an obstacle when the food consumed is unhealthy, resulting in hampered activities. When activities are hampered, feelings of stress arise more easily because of pressure, then the mood worsens. This is due to the feeling of being burdened by unfinished work.

"I think so, because if our eating patterns are irregular, it can make us feel anxious." SM, a 3rd semester informant also had the same answer that when food is not consumed regularly it will cause feelings of anxiety. Feelings of anxiety are a form of mood characterized by nervousness, worry or restlessness, often a response to stress and are a natural reaction of the body. However, if this happens excessively and is disturbing it will develop into an anxiety disorder.

1.2 Perception of preferred foods

Some foods have a special appeal to a group of people, often because of the taste, aroma, or memories associated with them. Some people have the same favorite foods because of cultural factors, personal preferences, or childhood experiences. Food can create feelings of nostalgia and trigger the production of serotonin, a hormone that plays a role in feelings of happiness, helping when the mood is bad.

ICS, when asked about how the condition of a bad mood when consuming food that is liked feels there is a change for the better. Here is the full statement,

"When I eat food that I like, of course my mood becomes better because I feel happy when I can eat that food."

From the interview results, ICS said that the mood that was initially bad would improve and feel happy when they could consume the food they liked. In addition to ICS, several other informants from different semesters also expressed similar opinions when given the same question.

"Yes, it's often like that, often when you're not in a good mood, when you eat food you like, your mood can immediately change."

SM's statement above also confirms the answer from the previous informant. The author sees a tendency for the same behavior when feeling in a bad mood, namely by consuming favorite foods.

"Yes. The mood becomes happier, more joyful after consuming foods like that, such as sweet. When consuming sweet foods our mood becomes better, happier, more joyful and can carry out daily activities with enthusiasm."

Eating sweet foods as a type of food that can help improve a bad mood. Sweet foods are believed to reduce a bad mood, although they have negative impacts on health if consumed excessively.

"I feel that my mood is very happy and I am very happy when I eat food that I like because it is related to things that I like"

The same opinion was expressed by RU, according to him, things that are liked will create a positive mood such as feelings of joy and happiness.

1.3 What We Eat and Bad Mood

There are several factors that influence a person in choosing food. Broadly speaking, they are grouped into three determinants, namely, individual characteristics, food and environment. Individual characteristic determinants include age, gender, education level, and psychological conditions (Azrimaidaliza, Purnakarya, 2011). Individuals with bad moods have different habits when choosing food compared to usual. CL said that he tends to choose food to consume according to his feelings, when his mood is in a bad condition, he will randomly choose food to consume, here is his complete statement,

"When I'm in a bad mood, I usually pick and choose my food. If I want to eat chicken, then I will eat chicken and have no desire to eat anything else. I also often eat nuts, which is also good for restoring my mood. It's different when I'm sick. When my stomach hurts, I have difficulty eating even though I have the desire to eat."

The author captures the meaning of CL is, the choice of food consumed is not only influenced by the factor of food that is liked, because in certain circumstances, physical conditions affect the food that will be consumed by a person. For example, when sick, even though CL is a picky eater, he will consume food that can be accepted by the body. In addition, CL chooses food that will have positive benefits when consumed, such as nuts when in a bad mood.

"I think irregular eating patterns will make us feel anxious. I choose foods that make me feel good like sweet foods like ice cream and cakes."

According to SM, sweet foods are foods that she will consume when she is in a bad mood. When the mood is not good and affects changes in eating patterns, it is called emotional eating. The types of food that are widely consumed during emotional eating are sweet and fatty foods (Relationship between stress levels and excessive added sugar consumption behavior in adolescent girls, 2021)

"When I'm in a bad mood I still look for food that has high nutritional quality"

In contrast to the previous informant, in choosing food when in a bad mood, RU still prioritizes food that has high nutritional quality so that it has a positive impact on physical health.

"Yes, when the mood is not good, sweet foods have an influence, but when the mood is not good, I eat less often".

GB has the same view as SM that mood is a benchmark in choosing the food to be consumed, even though he rarely eats when he is in a bad mood.

"The food I consume when I'm in a bad mood is food that contains cheese, for example cheese slices or cheese cake. Basically anything that contains cheese or something sweet like chocolate and candy. I think when you consume sweet food it gives you a lot of energy, when you consume enough sugar. But I'm the type of person who when I'm in a really bad mood I have no appetite. So for 2-3 days I don't consume anything except mineral water."

Finally, ICS himself has a similar view, he will choose sweet foods but still emphasizes on sufficient sugar consumption. Certain tastes have positive incentive values, for example, sweet, salty, and fatty as tastes that are favored by most people. In the sweet taste is usually the characteristic of foods that are rich in vitamins and minerals and are usually high-energy. Conversely, bitter which is often associated with toxins is a taste that is usually disliked by most people. Each individual has the ability to learn certain taste aversions and preferences (Clourd, Meunier-Salatin, & Val-Laillet, 2012).

1.4 Busy Activity Schedule

Responsibilities as students in fulfilling academic tasks and organizational activities cause busy and dense activity schedules. Often delaying or skipping meal times in order to fulfill student tasks causes irregular eating patterns and risks health problems due to inadequate nutrition. In addition, poor eating patterns due to busy activity schedules can risk the production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine which have an important role in regulating emotions. Other negative impacts also arise when poor eating patterns occur, namely an imbalance of good bacteria in the intestines so that it can damage the gut brain axis and have a negative impact on mood.

The 3rd semester informant in this study, SM, agreed that there was a change in eating patterns when having quite busy activities, either due to lectures or other daily activities.

"For eating patterns to change when busy, yes. Eating patterns sometimes tend to be irregular when studying or having quite busy activities. And that will make my mood less good"

SM revealed that eating patterns can be influenced by dense activities and can affect mood. The same statement was conveyed by ICS.

"The schedule of lectures and activities from outside is quite busy and it quite disrupts my eating schedule. Where when I have a busy schedule sometimes I forget to eat at certain times. So, I can only eat once at night when all activities are finished. And that sometimes quite disrupts my mood because in a hungry condition doing activities that may drain energy is quite heavy".

In the interview results, ICS felt that he had quite a busy schedule so he would eat at night when all the activities for the day were finished. This disturbed his mood because he had to do activities while hungry. However, unlike E, he felt that there was no difference in eating patterns when he had a busy schedule and there was no influence between the lecture schedule and eating patterns, here is his full statement.

"As for the meal schedule, it is as usual, it does not change because of the lecture schedule and there is no impact on daily activities."

The author concludes that changing eating patterns do not always occur in students even though the interview results state that there are changes when they have a busy activity schedule. However, it is certain that when there is a change in eating patterns, there is an influence on mood.

1.5 Advice on the Importance of Food Intake

At the end of the interview, the informants provided several suggestions regarding food intake so as to have a stable mood during the study period.

"I think it is important to maintain a diet because as students, our activities are not only studying on campus, but there are other activities outside campus. Maintaining a diet is very important to keep our physical condition stable and fit, also by maintaining a good diet helps us live the world of lectures and activities outside campus better. "

E expressed his opinion about the importance of maintaining a diet so that data can carry out activities smoothly because of a fit physical condition. The same thing was conveyed by ICS who felt that it was not only diet that was important but also what was consumed.

"Yes, I think students need to pay attention to their meal schedules to keep their emotions stable during their studies as well as the types of food they consume while studying. Because in addition to avoiding existing diseases, again academic stress can cause stomach acid, and if exacerbated by irregular eating patterns, it can cause the disease to recur. And also as an additional motivation to study, you can eat sweet foods that make your mood happy so that doing assignments can be made easier and enjoyable."

ICS mentioned one of the medical disorders that are often experienced and occur in students, namely Gastric ulcers (gastric ulcers / gastric ulcers / gastric ulcers / "stomach pain"), which is the first medical disorder classified as psychosomatic (a medical disorder where psychological factors are the main reason). Gastric ulcers are said to be a disease caused by H. Pylori bacteria that damage the stomach wall. However, in reality, this bacteria alone is not convincing enough to be the only factor in the emergence of this disease, another fact was found when stressors can produce Gastric ulcers in laboratory animals so it was concluded that another factor that causes Gastric ulcers is people who live in stressful situations. This is in line with the advice given by ICS.

CONCLUSION

Food and mood have a complex relationship and have effects that can be explained through biological and psychological mechanisms. Intake of certain foods can affect the production of neurotransmitters that contribute to emotional regulation. In addition, some ingredients in certain foods also produce tryptophan, an amino acid that plays a role in the synthesis of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is the "happy hormone" in improving mood (Duncan, 2019). The pleasant memories that underlie a favorite food give rise to emotional nostalgia, which are some of the reasons why consuming favorite foods is an option to improve mood.

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