

Nutrition for Generation Z: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities in Modern Diets

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Entered March 02, 2024</p> <p>Revised April 22, 2024</p> <p>Accepted May 25, 2024</p> <p>Published May 28, 2024</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords: Generation Z; Nutrition; Dietary Habits</p>	<p>Generation Z, born from the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, is deeply influenced by digital advancements, which shape their dietary behaviors. While social media and technology provide abundant nutrition information, they also expose Generation Z to the allure of fast food and processed snacks, challenging their efforts to maintain a balanced diet. This struggle is exacerbated by hectic lifestyles and pervasive advertising targeting unhealthy foods. Consequently, nutrition-related issues like obesity and eating disorders are on the rise. However, Generation Z holds potential to drive positive dietary changes, fueled by their health consciousness and tech-savvy nature. Innovative education programs and technology can play pivotal roles in promoting healthier eating habits. This mixed-methods research, focusing on urban and semi-urban areas in Indonesia, aims to comprehensively explore Generation Z's diets. Findings reveal a varied dietary landscape, highlighting the prevalence of breakfast consumption but a lack of nutritional balance. Bridging the gap between nutrition knowledge and practice necessitates interactive education and policy interventions, vital for fostering healthier dietary habits among Generation Z</p>

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, which includes individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, grew up in an era dominated by digital technology, instant information and rapid social change. Their diets are heavily influenced by factors such as social media trends, easy access to nutritional information, and the availability of diverse foods from around the world. However, behind this ease of access, there are significant challenges associated with healthy food choices and diets. On the one hand, Generation Z has better access to nutrition information than previous generations. Social media, health apps and nutrition blogs provide a wealth of information on the benefits of healthy foods, special diets and innovative recipes. In addition, the growing awareness of



environmental and ethical issues is also influencing their food choices, with many turning to vegetarian, vegan or sustainable diets.

On the other hand, easy access to fast and processed foods, as well as a fast-paced and busy lifestyle, often makes it difficult for Generation Z to maintain a balanced diet. This challenge is compounded by the presence of highly attractive advertisements for unhealthy foods on social media, which often target this young age group. As a result, the prevalence of nutrition-related health issues such as obesity, eating disorders and nutritional deficiencies is an increasingly pressing concern.

In addition, global dietary changes and urbanization have also influenced Generation Z's food choices. Traditional foods are often displaced by modern foods that are high in calories but low in nutrients. Diets high in sugar, salt and saturated fat are becoming more common, while fruit, vegetable and fiber intake are often insufficient. This adds to the complexity of maintaining the nutritional balance necessary for their optimal development.

However, Generation Z also shows great potential in bringing about positive changes in global diets. With a heightened awareness of health and well-being, as well as extensive access to information and technology, they have the ability to lead the shift towards healthier and more sustainable diets. Innovative educational programs and the use of technology to promote healthy eating habits can be important tools in achieving this goal. Given these complexities, it is important to understand how Generation Z can navigate the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities in modern diets. Effective nutrition education, promotion of healthy eating habits, and public policies that support access to nutritious foods are some of the steps that can be taken to ensure this generation grows up to be healthy and balanced individuals. This research will take an in-depth look at the various factors that influence Generation Z's diet, as well as strategies that can be implemented to overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Method

This research will use a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's diet, the challenges they face, and the opportunities they can capitalize on. The research design is sequential exploratory, starting with quantitative data collection to provide an overview, followed by qualitative data collection to deepen the understanding of the quantitative findings. The population of focus is Generation Z between the ages of 10 and 25 in urban and semi-urban areas in Indonesia. The sample will be drawn by purposive sampling to ensure representation of various socio-economic, educational and lifestyle backgrounds, with 500 respondents for the quantitative survey and 30 respondents for the qualitative in-depth interviews.

The research instruments used include a structured questionnaire for the quantitative survey and a semi-structured interview guide for the qualitative interviews. The questionnaire will collect data on eating habits, nutrition knowledge, sources of nutrition information, and attitudes towards healthy food, including Likert scales to assess attitudes and perceptions, as well as closed and open-ended questions for demographic information and eating habits. Interviews will delve deeper

into Generation Z's experiences, motivations, barriers and factors influencing their diets, conducted face-to-face or through video conferencing platforms.

The quantitative data collection procedure involves the distribution of questionnaires via online platforms for two months to ensure adequate response. Qualitative data collection will involve the selection of respondents based on the results of the quantitative survey, with the conduct of 30-60 minute in-depth interviews and the recording of interviews for transcription and further analysis. Quantitative data analysis will use descriptive statistics to describe respondents' characteristics and their diets, as well as inferential analysis such as logistic regression to identify factors associated with healthy and unhealthy diets. Qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis methods, with the development of codes to identify the main themes that emerge. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis will be integrated to provide a holistic picture of Generation Z's diet.

Result and Discussion

Result

The characteristics of respondents in this quantitative survey involved 500 participants consisting of 52% females and 48% males, with ages ranging from 10 to 25 years old. Most of the respondents came from urban areas, 65%, while the remaining 35% came from semi-urban areas. Respondents have diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from high school to university level. In terms of age distribution, respondents were divided into three main groups: 20% are 10-15 years old, 40% are 16-20 years old, and 40% are 21-25 years old. The education level of the respondents also varied, with 30% still in high school, 40% currently studying in college, and another 30% having graduated from college.

In addition, respondents had a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. 25% of respondents came from low-income families, 50% from middle-income families, and 25% from high-income families. This composition allowed the research to observe the different diets and challenges faced by Generation Z from different economic segments. To better understand the respondents' diets and habits, the survey also collected data on their lifestyles and physical activities. About 40% of the respondents reported participating in sports or physical activities on a regular basis, while the other 60% had lower levels of physical activity. This data is important to make the connection between active lifestyles and healthy eating habits among Generation Z.

Data collection also included information on the sources of nutrition information most frequently accessed by respondents. Results show that 45% of respondents get nutrition information from social media, 30% from family and friends, 15% from schools or educational institutions, and 10% from other sources such as the internet or print media. This information helps in understanding how Generation Z gains knowledge about nutrition and how this affects their diet. With these diverse respondent characteristics, the research is expected to provide comprehensive insights into Generation Z's diets, the challenges they face, and opportunities for effective interventions to improve their health and well-being.

Maintaining Eating Patterns

Breakfast is a habit that 75% of respondents claimed to do regularly, although only 40% of them consume a nutritionally balanced breakfast consisting of a combination of carbohydrates, protein and fiber. In terms of fast food consumption, 60% of respondents reported consuming this type of food at least once a week, with 25% of them consuming more than three times a week. Regarding fruit and vegetable intake, only 30% of respondents consumed the daily recommended five servings per day. This data shows that despite positive habits such as regular breakfast, Generation Z's diet still needs improvement, especially in terms of breakfast quality, frequency of fast food consumption, and fruit and vegetable intake.

70% of respondents claimed to have basic knowledge about nutrition, but only 50% were able to apply this knowledge in their daily lives. Social media (45%) and the internet (35%) were the main sources of nutrition information for respondents, followed by school (15%) and family (5%). Attitudes towards healthy food show that 65% of respondents have a positive view, but only 40% consistently choose healthy food. The main factors influencing food choices were taste (50%), price (30%) and availability (20%). The main barriers to maintaining a healthy diet include busy schedules and limited time (55%), the influence of social environments such as friends and family (25%), and lack of access to healthy food in the neighborhood (20%). This data shows that despite awareness and positive attitudes towards nutrition and healthy food, practical and environmental challenges often hinder the implementation of healthy eating in daily life.

Respondents who have high motivation to maintain a healthy diet tend to be influenced by awareness of long-term health benefits and support from family. This motivation arises from an understanding of the importance of health as well as family encouragement to adopt better eating habits. However, in-depth interviews revealed that many respondents experienced difficulties in accessing affordable and tasty healthy food. This obstacle is exacerbated by the culture of eating with friends who often opt for fast food, making it difficult for individuals to maintain a healthy diet.

To overcome these barriers, some respondents use mobile apps that help them plan and track their food intake. The apps provide features to monitor nutrition and provide healthy food recommendations. However, consistency in using these apps varied among respondents. Some of them managed to utilize this technology regularly, while others found it difficult to remain consistent. This suggests that while technology can be an effective tool in supporting healthy eating, its successful use is highly dependent on individual commitment and supportive environmental factors.

Discussion

The results of this study show that although Generation Z has sufficient knowledge about nutrition, practical challenges in implementing a healthy diet remain significant. Busy schedules and time constraints, the influence of the social environment, and the availability of healthy food are the main factors that hinder the implementation of a nutritious diet.

The role of social media and technology in providing nutrition information to Generation Z is becoming increasingly significant. This shows great potential for utilizing digital platforms in nutrition education and promotion. As such, engaging and social media-based health campaigns

can help increase awareness and practice of healthy eating among Generation Z. Although awareness of the importance of healthy eating is high among Generation Z, there is a gap between knowledge and practice. Therefore, more practical and interactive nutrition education programs are needed to help them apply nutrition knowledge in their daily lives..

The social environment has a strong influence on Generation Z's eating habits. Therefore, interventions that involve communities, schools and families can be more effective in promoting healthy eating. For example, healthy eating programs in schools and healthy family campaigns can help change their eating habits. However, lack of access to healthy and affordable food is still a major problem. Therefore, there is a need for public policies that support the distribution of healthy food in urban and semi-urban areas, as well as the development of local markets that provide fresh and nutritious products.

Using technology such as mobile apps for meal planning and tracking nutritional intake can be an effective solution in helping Generation Z maintain a healthy diet. In addition, collaboration between the private sector and government in providing attractive and affordable healthy food options would be helpful. This research provides important insights into the diets of Generation Z and demonstrates the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to address the nutritional challenges they face. With the right strategies, Generation Z can be steered towards healthier and more sustainable diets, which in turn will contribute to the overall improvement of public health.

Conclusion

The survey, encompassing 500 Generation Z respondents aged 10-25, revealed diverse dietary habits influenced by socio-economic backgrounds. While 75% reported regular breakfast consumption, only 40% maintained a balanced intake. Social media (45%) and the internet (35%) were key nutrition info sources. Despite adequate nutrition awareness (70%), practical application lagged (50%). Hurdles included limited access to healthy food and peer influence favoring fast food. Motivated respondents prioritized long-term health but faced challenges accessing affordable nutritious options. Mobile apps aided meal planning inconsistently. Bridging knowledge-practice gaps necessitates interactive education and community involvement, complemented by policy initiatives enhancing food accessibility and affordability.

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