

# The Importance of Personal Hygiene Care Among Preschool Children Through Health Education During Pandemic Covid-19

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## ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit the whole world has changed the life patterns of various sections of society, including children. They need to be given knowledge of hygiene to avoid getting infected. This study aims to identify the importance of personal hygiene care of preschool children through health education. The study design used a quantitative approach through the survey method. The research instrument used was a questionnaire. The sample consists of 85 preschool teachers in the state of Sabah. The study sample was randomly selected. The data of this study were analyzed descriptively based on frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study showed that the level of knowledge of Kindergarten children about the spread of COVID-19 is high, with a mean value of 3.00 for item 1 that is children have heard about COVID-19 and item 2 that is children know COVID-19 is dangerous. The findings also show that the level of knowledge of preschool children about early preventive measures to prevent COVID-19 is high, with a mean value of 3.00 on the 6th item that children know by wearing a face mask can prevent COVID-19. Findings of teaching and learning methods of teachers in health education for exposure in maintaining hygiene showed the highest value was 4.79 on the 2nd item which is teachers using video projection. The implications of this study are very useful for teachers and parents to know children's knowledge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also provided awareness to Early Childhood Education Institutions on the importance of health education and hygiene care to children

**Keywords:** Health education, personal hygiene, COVID-19

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When most countries in the world faced the Covid 19 pandemic crisis, society's life began to change. The previous lifestyle of being free to move became increasingly limited. Throughout this pandemic, personal hygiene is given serious attention. Wearing face masks, social imprisonment, and avoiding visiting crowded places as well as the use of hand sanitizer have become a thing and routine that needs to be followed. This personal hygiene should not only be done by adults but also children should be taught to maintain personal hygiene. Although they are said to be less at risk [1] but early exposure to health care should be introduced to them. This health care can be delivered through a variety of means. For preschool children, this element of personal hygiene has been included in the National Preschool Curriculum which is in the Pillars of Physical

Development and Aesthetics. Health education is necessary to increase the knowledge and awareness of students and becomes a necessity in the curriculum starting at the preschool level [2]. Therefore, teaching and learning using appropriate and flexible strategies are needed in addition to implementing health education to children [3]. Good health is important to help a child's early development such as physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social development.

Health education is defined as the development of individuals, groups, institutions, communities, and systematic strategies to improve health, habits, skills, and behaviors [4]. In this study, health education refers to the learning standards found in the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (KSPK) such as FK 5.1.1 that children can state how to maintain limb

hygiene properly, and FK 5.2.1 that children can show examples. ways to prevent disease transmission.

Good health and mental care can prevent diseases whether non -communicable diseases and infectious diseases or pandemics. Non -communicable diseases are epidemics that plague Malaysia today. For now, it is a burden to the health of the country. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), non -communicable diseases are mostly chronic diseases that cannot be spread from one individual to another. While for infectious diseases or pandemics is a biosocial phenomenon and it has existed since ancient times until now in any society like our country. It is either caused by infectious agents or toxic substances that are harmful to humans. For children, it is important to avoid such pandemics as they can be harmful and can cause death. Therefore, the importance of the role of an early childhood education teacher to prevent pandemics from happening to children

Children will be exposed to various symptoms of infectious diseases when they do not practice health care and personal hygiene. Examples of infectious diseases that occur in children are Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease, (HFMD) and the latest pandemic is COVID-19. COVID-19 or known as the coronavirus pandemic is a global 2019 ongoing coronavirus disease outbreak caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). A total of 317 COVID-19 positive cases were detected among children 12 years and under in Malaysia. Of the total cases, 112 cases were among children aged four years and below while 22 cases were among infants less than 1-year-old based on the Ministry of Health Malaysia. Covid-19 is a very dangerous infectious disease that can cause harm to sufferers and can lead to death. Some children do not know the early preventive measures to avoid COVID-19. Therefore, a teacher needs to know what can be done to prevent or prevent and control such infectious diseases through delivery in teaching and learning activities to children.

Teaching Health education is very important given to children as a basis for the knowledge of personal hygiene. According to the Disease Control Division of the Ministry of Health Malaysia, children are very vulnerable or easy to get infections. They have never been exposed to many types of germs. Thus, their body resistance through antibodies has not been formed yet. In addition, the activities performed by children make them more vulnerable to germs, compared to adults. ” Therefore, the way the disease is spread or the cause of the disease needs to be known so that children can avoid being infected. The current Covid-19 crisis is a shock to all. Therefore, the importance of health education to children to help children know the causes or ways of the spread of pandemics to prevent pandemics such as COVID-19.

The use of strategies and techniques in teaching must be appropriate to ensure that it is interesting and gives understanding to children. Based on a study conducted [5], teaching about health by preschool teachers is less effective because teachers lack knowledge and do not use appropriate teaching methods or techniques, inappropriate language use, and less attractive media. Before educators or teachers start teaching, educators need to have knowledge and understanding of a lesson first so that children can learn well [6]. Therefore, teachers need to have good knowledge and use effective and appropriate teaching and learning methods in health education to provide exposure in maintaining the hygiene of kindergarten children. The content of the National Preschool Standard Curriculum (NPSC) states that teachers need to be wise to use various teaching, and learning strategies that suit the level of development, needs, abilities, talents, and interests of a child so that learning becomes more effective and meaningful [7]. Therefore, this study was conducted to answer the following research questions through an online survey:

- i. Identify the knowledge of preschool children about the spread of COVID-19.
- ii. Identify the knowledge of preschool children about the early preventive measures of COVID-19.
- iii. Identify teaching and learning methods of teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Studies have shown that COVID-19 can cause respiratory tract infections and gout spectrum from the common cold to severe pneumonia [8]. According to further researchers, when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, then the virus can be spread through droplets from the nose or mouth of the infected person. Others can also become infected with the virus when touching objects or surfaces contaminated with COVID-19. As a preventative measure against COVID-19, citizens or communities should remain at home, work from home, limit movement outside the home, wear nose and mouth masks (masks), wash hands regularly, and maintain social distance (social imprisonment).

In studies that have been conducted, shows that children gained knowledge about the spread of COVID-19 and the importance of washing hands using soap under running water in the right way for the early prevention of COVID-19 through animated video slideshow [9]. Later, children also gained knowledge on how or early preventive measures against COVID-19 by washing hands using soap through a fun handwashing method. The initial preventive measure found in this study was to wash hands properly using soap. While for

the teaching and learning method that is done is the fun handwashing method.

A study was conducted using a storybook as a method to introduce COVID-19 to children. According to researchers, storytelling is one of the methods of educating or teaching children with many stimuli that can help children's development. Storytelling is the act of telling something that tells or narrates about an event and is delivered orally to impart experience and knowledge to others [10]. Through one of the objectives of my study which is to identify the teaching and learning of teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene, it can be concluded that storytelling is one of the teaching and learning methods that can be used by teachers to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene and prevent COVID-19.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

*3.1 Research design*

The design of this study uses a quantitative approach through the survey method. The sample in this study involved 85 kindergarten teachers in Sabah. The questionnaires were evaluated and validated by experts in content and language. The researchers revised the updated questionnaire based on the expert's feedback. Researchers conduct pilot studies so that negative risks, questionnaire structure and also grammatical errors can be reduced, and they can gain useful experience [11].

*3.2 Instrument*

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The constructed questionnaire consists of four parts, namely Part A: Background of Respondents, Part B: Identifying the level of knowledge of preschool children about the spread of COVID-19, Part C: Identifying the level of knowledge of preschool children about early prevention measures COVID-19, and, Part D: Identify teaching and learning methods of teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene. In section A, there are four items for obtaining teacher information. While sections B, C and D contain ten items. For parts B and C, there are three levels of three-point options, namely "yes", "not sure" or "no". While part D has five levels of choice in the form of a five-point Likert scale between 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The interview questions were related to the children's knowledge of Covid-19.

**4. FINDINGS**

**4.1. Level of Knowledge of Preschool Children About the Spread of COVID-19**

Findings for the level of knowledge of preschool children about the spread of COVID-19 can be seen in table 1. The findings show that the highest mean value is with a mean value of 3.00 for item 1 that is children

have heard of COVID-19 and item 2 that is children-children know COVID-19 is dangerous. Item 7 i.e. children who knew contact could cause COVID-19 infection had a moderate mean of 2.88. The 8th item that children know the symptoms of COVID-19 has the lowest mean value of 2.62.

Table 1. *Level of knowledge of preschool children about the spread of COVID-19*

Item	Percentage %			Min	Sd
	No	Not Sure	Yes		
Children have heard of COVID-19.	-	-	100	3.00	0.00
Children know COVID-19 is dangerous.	-	-	100	3.00	0.00
Children know COVID-19 can be transmitted and spread	1.2	4.7	94.1	2.93	0.30
Children know COVID-19 is a subtle germ and cannot be seen with the naked eye	2.4	7.1	90.6	2.88	0.39
Children know about how COVID-19 is infected.	5.9	11.8	82.4	2.76	0.55
Children know COVID-19 can stick to objects or surfaces.	8.2	12.9	78.8	2.71	0.61
Children know contact can cause COVID-19 infection.	1.2	7.1	91.8	2.91	0.33
Children know the symptoms of COVID-19.	9.4	18.8	71.8	2.62	0.65
Children know what personal hygiene is.	3.5	1.2	95.3	2.92	0.39
Children know how to keep themselves clean	5.9	10.6	83.5	2.78	0.54

**4.2. The Level of Knowledge of Preschool Children About the Early Preventive Measures Of COVID-19**

Table 2 shows the findings for the level of knowledge of preschool children about Early preventive measures to prevent COVID-19. The highest mean value is the 6th item that children know by wearing a face mask can prevent COVID-19 which has a mean of 3.00. A moderate mean value is the 3rd item which is

how children know how to maintain hand hygiene. which has a mean value of 2.88. The lowest mean value is the 8th item which is that children know how to maintain social distance with children who have a mean value of 2.45.

Table 2. level of knowledge of preschool children about Early preventive measures to prevent COVID-19

Item	Percentage %			Min	SD
	No	Not Sure	Yes		
Children know how to avoid or prevent COVID-19.	9.4	10.6	80	2.71	0.63
Children know hygiene is important to prevent COVID-19	3.5	-	96.5	2.93	0.37
Children know how to keep their hands clean.	4.7	2.4	92.9	2.88	0.44
Children know how to wash their hands using soap and water the right way.	3.5	5.9	90.6	2.87	0.43
Children know how to use hand sanitizer.	2.4	2.4	95.3	2.93	0.33
Children know wearing a face mask can prevent COVID-19.	-	-	100	3.00	0.00
Children know with social incarceration can prevent COVID-19	9.4	10.6	80.0	2.71	0.63
Children know how to maintain social distance with friends	22.4	10.6	67.1	2.45	0.83
Children know sitting at home can prevent COVID-19.	3.5	2.4	94.1	2.91	0.39
Children know that avoiding going to crowded places can prevent COVID-19.	8.2	14.1	77.6	2.69	0.61

4.3. Teaching and Learning Methods Used by Teachers in Health Education To Provide Exposure In Maintaining Hygiene

Table 3 shows the findings for the teaching and learning methods used by teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene. The findings of the study showed that the highest mean value was for item 2, namely teachers using video projection with a mean value of 4.79. The moderate mean value is the 4th item which is the teacher using the approach of learning through play which has a mean value of 4.64. Item 1 which is the teacher using a storybook or e-book has the lowest mean value which is a mean value of 4.32.

Table 3. Teaching and learning methods used by teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene

Item	Percentage %					Min	SD
	SD	DNA	DA	A	SA		

Teachers use story books or e-books	1.2	-	11.8	40	47.1	4.32	0.78
The teacher uses a video presentation	-	-	1.2	18.8	80	4.79	0.44
Teachers use hands-on activities	-	-	3.5	35.3	61.2	4.58	0.56
Teachers use learning-through-play approach	-	1.2	7.1	18.8	72.9	4.64	0.67
Teachers use singing techniques	-	-	3.5	25.9	70.6	4.67	0.54
Teachers use the storytelling method	-	2.4	8.2	29.4	60	4.47	0.75
Teachers use demonstration techniques	-	-	4.7	20	75.3	4.71	0.55
Teachers use posters on how to keep clean	-	-	8.2	23.5	68.2	4.60	0.64
Teachers ask parents to teach children at home	-	-	7.1	17.6	75.3	4.68	0.60
Teachers use simulation techniques	-	-	10.6	25.9	63.5	4.53	0.68

5. DISCUSSION

The results showed that the children had a high level of knowledge about the spread of COVID-19 and were exposed to the knowledge about the spread of COVID-19 [12]. Family members have a responsibility to explain and impart knowledge of COVID-19 to children. As such, family members play an important role in conveying accurate information or knowledge about the spread of COVID-19 and providing moral support to children. It also showed that children were exposed to the spread of COVID-19 from family members such as parents and siblings while at home.

The results also showed that children were already exposed to the knowledge of the early preventive measures of COVID-19 and the children also had a high level of knowledge about the early preventive measures of COVID-19. The findings of this study are in line with other studies which stated that there are 56.5% of children know how to wash their hands properly according to WHO recommendations, while 43.5% of

children do not know how to wash their hands properly [13]. Who stated that there are 56.5% of children know how to wash their hands properly according to WHO recommendations, while 43.5% of children do not understand or know how to wash their hands. This indicates that children have a good knowledge of the early preventive measures of COVID-19

Finally, the results show that the most appropriate teaching and learning method for teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene is that teachers use video projection. The findings of this study further strengthen that children know how to wash their hands using soap through video watching activities or video screening methods [14]. The video shows an interesting animation showing how to wash hands using soap in the right way according to the advice or recommendations of WHO and UNICEF. This shows the use of appropriate methods such as interesting videos that are animated videos that interest children to learn. Children's knowledge will also increase about maintaining the hygiene by washing hands with soap. So it can be concluded that the method of using video projection is suitable for use by teachers in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene to children.

This study has implications for children's learning. Children should be further exposed to some of the knowledge of which children are less or unaware of the spread of COVID-19 and the early preventive measures of COVID-19 in children's learning. For example, knowledge of the symptoms of COVID-19 and knowledge of the mode of infection of COVID-19 need to be disclosed in children's learning to have a high level of knowledge about the spread of COVID-19. In addition, children also need to be exposed to knowledge on how to maintain social distance with friends while in kindergarten. This is because it was found that children have less knowledge about this knowledge based on the findings of the study.

In addition, the implications for teacher teaching. Teachers need to use appropriate and effective teaching and learning methods to provide exposure to maintaining hygiene to children. For example, teachers can use video projection as a method of teaching and learning in health education to provide exposure in maintaining hygiene. Teachers play an important role in teaching and giving exposure to children to maintain hygiene and prevent COVID-19. Next, against the parents. Parents need to play a role in teaching and exposing children at home about the spread of COVID-19 and early prevention measures of COVID-19. Parents are the closest people to children and the people who spend the most time with children. Finally, the implications for Early Childhood Education institutions. Early Childhood Education Institutions such as TASKA, TADIKA, and Preschool need to be aware of the

importance of health education and hygiene care to children. This is because health education and hygiene care are important for the early prevention of COVID-19.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Overall, health education and hygiene care are very important for children to prevent COVID-19. In general, the study has achieved all three objectives that have been set and answered all the research questions that want to be answered. Quantitative methods were used to achieve the objectives and answer research questions related to the importance of health education and hygiene among children in Sabah during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With health education teaching conducted by teachers, teachers can provide exposure to children about the knowledge of COVID-19 dissemination and COVID-19 preventive measures through hygiene care. In addition to hygiene such as washing hands with soap, wearing a face mask and maintaining social distance are also COVID-19 preventive measures. Teachers need to use teaching methods or strategies that are interesting and appropriate for the teaching and learning process. Based on the findings of the study through questionnaires, teachers need to be aware of the importance of teaching health education in hygiene care to provide exposure to children about the spread of COVID-19 and COVID-19 preventive measures.

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