Relationship between oral health status and masticatory performance with nutritional status in the elderly

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Abstract. The greatest component in the decay–missing–filled teeth index is tooth loss, which occurs mostly in the elderly. Tooth loss can affect the ability to chew food, resulting in a lack of nutritional intake. A cross-sectional study was performed at four community health centers in Central, South, and East Jakarta of 93 elderly (age ≥60) subjects who underwent intraoral examination, anthropometric measurement (body mass index [BMI]) and interview using the Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA). Of the subjects, 53.8% had ≥20 natural teeth and 55.9% were at risk for malnutrition. Correlation testing showed that the total number of natural, decayed, missing, and filled teeth and masticatory performance (p > 0.05) were not significantly correlated with nutritional status (BMI and MNA). There is no relationship between oral health status, masticatory performance, and nutritional status in the elderly.

1. Introduction

Indonesian people often experience oral problems. According to data from the Basic Health Research, the decay–missing–filled teeth (DMFT) index in Indonesians is 4.6, with values of decayed teeth (DT) = 1.6, missing teeth (MT) = 2.9, and filled teeth (FT) = 0.08 [1]. The MT index has the highest score among the three components, showing that MT is the greatest oral health problem for Indonesian people. In Indonesia, most patients with MT are elderly (≥65 years old according to the World Health Organization [WHO]) and have approximately 17 teeth per person.

Mastication is the process by which food is crushed and broken into pieces by chewing, and the pieces are eventually swallowed. In dentistry, the components of mastication consist of a masticatory performance, occlusal force, and chewing limit parameter [2]. Previous studies in some countries have demonstrated the effectiveness of several methods of measuring masticatory performance, using a food test. Foods used to assess masticatory performance should not have a sticky texture or be difficult to chew and contaminated by saliva. The food also should remain stable during storage at room temperature. Examples are gummy jelly tests, color-changing chewing gum tests, and tests using an artificial test food, such as Optosil dan Optocal.

The process of aging impacts various aspects of life. MT in the elderly can cause decreased masticatory function and affect food selection. The decreased masticatory function may lead to difficulty in chewing, which then causes decreased oral health status and affects food/nutrient intake...
The elderly face significant challenges in obtaining adequate nutritional intake. With age, the risk of decreased nutritional status in the elderly also increases.

Nutrition has an important role in health because good nutritional intake is important in maintaining and protecting health. Masticatory performance can influence the selection of food and determining the nutrients obtained. People who cannot chew comfortably tend to avoid high-fiber foods, such as bread, vegetables, fruit, and meat, which can lead to a lack of nutrients. If nutritional status is not well maintained, malnutrition can develop [4]. Untreated malnutrition can cause an increased incidence of disease, especially in the elderly.

Nutritional status in the elderly can be assessed through various methods. The body mass index (BMI) has an important role in representing nutritional conditions in general [5]. Ikebe et al. [3] reported that subjects with low masticatory performance tended to have a low BMI (<20 kg/m²).

Oral health problems in Indonesian elderly are dominated by difficulties with masticatory function due to various factors, such as MT, poor oral health status, and poor denture status. This causes a change in the food consumed, which affects nutritional status. We examined the relationship between oral health status, masticatory performance, and nutritional status in the elderly by considering some demographic factors, such as age and sex.

2. Methods
This cross-sectional study consisted of clinical examination, anthropometric measurement of height and weight, and a questionnaire regarding nutritional status. Data were collected from elderly subjects (age >60 years) at four community health centers in three municipal areas (Central, South, and East Jakarta) between September and October 2016. The population was obtained by the convenience sampling method. Indicators of mastication ability were analyzed using a chewing gum test tool (color-changing chewing gum).

Data processing and analysis were done using Software SPPS Statistics v.16 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The data processed were presented in the following forms: (1) analysis of frequency distribution from subjects, (2) comparative analysis using the χ² test to determine the proportion between sex and individual perception of oral health with nutritional status category based on the Mini Nutritional Assessment (MNA) questionnaire, and (3) correlation analysis using Spearman's test to determine the relationship between the frequency of consuming sweet foods and beverages with dental caries, MT, FT, and the DMFT index, as well as the relationship between age, number of permanent teeth, and chewing gum score with nutritional status based on the MNA questionnaires.

3. Results
The 93 study subjects included 62 females (66.7%) and 31 males (33.3%) from Central Jakarta (Gambir District Health Center, n = 7 and Menteng District Health Center, n = 25), South Jakarta (Cilandak District Health Center, n = 34), and East Jakarta (Pasar Rebo District Health Center, n = 27; Table 1).

| Demography variables | n  | %   |
|-----------------------|----|-----|
| Sex                   |    |     |
| Male                  | 31 | (33.3%) |
| Female                | 62 | (66.7%) |
| Age                   |    |     |
| 60–69                 | 61 | (65.6%) |
| ≥70 years             | 32 | (34.4%) |
Oral health status was evaluated using two instruments (WHO form and WHO questionnaire). Of the 93 patients, four (4.3%) were edentulous, whereas 89 still had teeth. The average number of permanent teeth in these 89 subjects was 18.9 ± 8.1 (Table 2).

Table 2. Number of permanent teeth in 93 subjects

| Number of teeth | n (%) |
|-----------------|-------|
| None            | 4 (4.3) |
| 1–9             | 14 (15.1) |
| 10–19           | 25 (26.9) |
| ≥20             | 50 (53.8) |

Table 3 shows subjects' oral health status. Mean incidence of bleeding on probing per person was 8.9, 9.9, and 9.5 teeth in males, females, and overall, respectively. Average DMFT index was 15.6 ± 8.1. This score was included in the high category based on the WHO classification.

Table 3. Oral health status in 89 subjects

| Males (30) Average (SD) | Females (59) Average (SD) | Total Average (SD) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Sum of permanent teeth  | 18 (9.6)                  | 19.4 (7.3)        | 19 (8.1)          |
| Bleeding on probing     | 8.9 (6.8)                 | 9.9 (5.4)         | 9.5 (5.9)         |
| DT                      | 2.9 (2.8)                 | 3.9 (3.4)         | 3.6 (3.3)         |
| MT                      | 12.6 (9.3)                | 10.8 (7.5)        | 11.4 (8.1)        |
| FT                      | 0.5 (1.4)                 | 0.6 (1.9)         | 0.7 (1.7)         |
| DMFT                    | 16 (9.4)                  | 15.4 (7.4)        | 15.6 (8.1)        |

Nutritional status was evaluated using BMI measurement and MNA questionnaire (Table 4). Mean BMI score for the 93 subjects was 24 ± 4.1, which was considered the normal weight category.

Table 4. BMI scores in 93 subjects

| BMI category | Males (n = 32) (%) | Females (n = 61) (%) | Total (n = 93) (%) |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Underweight  | 9.4                | 8.2                  | 8.6               |
| Normal weight| 56.2               | 50.8                 | 52.7              |
| Overweight   | 34.4               | 29.5                 | 31.2              |
| Obese        | 0                  | 11.5                 | 7.5               |

MNA scores consisted of three classifications: malnourished (total score, <17), risk of malnutrition (total score, 17–23.5), and normal nutritional status (total score, 24–30). Average total MNA value in the 93 subjects was 22 ± 3.2 (Table 5).

Table 5. MNA scores in 93 subjects

| MNA Category          | Males (n = 32) (%) | Females (n = 61) (%) | Total (n = 93) (%) |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Malnourished          | 6.2                | 4.9                  | 5.4               |
| Risk of malnutrition  | 46.9               | 60.7                 | 55.9              |
| Normal nutritional status | 46.9               | 34.4                 | 38.7              |

No relationship was found between oral health status (including the remaining number of teeth, DT, MT, and FT) and BMI categories. For data analysis, MNA categories were classified into two categories (normal nutritional status and risk of malnutrition/malnutrition). The $\chi^2$ test was performed.
to determine the difference in sex and self-perception of oral health according to MNA categories. Spearman's correlation test was performed to determine the relationship between age, number of permanent teeth, oral health status, and colored changing chewing gum score with MNA categories (Table 6). The results showed no significant association of any of these variables with nutritional status (MNA in two categories).

**Table 6. Relationship between oral health status variables and MNA categories**

| Variables                           | Normal (n = 36) | Risk of malnutrition/malnourished (n = 57) | p score |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------|---------|
| Age                                 | 66.7 ± 5        | 68.5 ± 6                                 | 0.2‡    |
| Sex                                 |                 |                                          | 0.2     |
| Male                                | 15 (41.7%)      | 17 (29.8%)                               |         |
| Female                              | 21 (58.3%)      | 40 (70.2%)                               |         |
| Sum of permanent teeth              | 18.4 ± 9.8      | 18 ± 8.2                                 | 0.5‡    |
| Number of teeth                     |                 |                                          | 0.9‡    |
| 1–9                                 | 9 (25.7%)       | 5 (9.3%)                                 |         |
| 10–19                               | 5 (14.3%)       | 20 (37%)                                 |         |
| ≥20                                 | 21 (60%)        | 29 (53.7%)                               |         |
| Bleeding on probing                 | 8.8 ± 6.4       | 9.3 ± 5.9                                | 0.6‡    |
| DT                                  | 2.9 ± 2.6       | 3.8 ± 3.6                                | 0.3‡    |
| MT                                  | 12.4 ± 10       | 12.3 ± 8.4                               | 0.7‡    |
| FT                                  | 0.6 ± 1.6       | 0.7 ± 1.7                                | 0.8‡    |
| DMFT                                | 15.9 ± 9.8      | 16.7 ± 7.8                               | 0.4‡    |
| Color-changing chewing gum score    | 6.8 ± 2.4       | 6.9 ± 2.4                                | 0.9‡    |
| Self-perception of gum health       |                 |                                          | 0.9     |
| Satisfied until very satisfied      | 14 (38.9%)      | 23 (40.4%)                               |         |
| Not satisfied until very dissatisfied | 22 (61.1%)    | 34 (59.6%)                               |         |
| Self-perception of teeth health     |                 |                                          | 0.8     |
| Satisfied until very satisfied      | 13 (36.1%)      | 22 (38.6%)                               |         |
| Not satisfied until very dissatisfied | 23 (63.9%)   | 35 (61.4%)                               |         |

*χ² test results

*Spearman's correlation test between categories.

### 4. Discussion

This study was conducted in October 2016 on 93 active elderly subjects in different areas of DKI Jakarta Province who did not live in social institutions. Dental examinations were performed according to the WHO examination standards and included the number of remaining teeth, DMFT score, and periodontal tissue examination. Of the independent elderly examined, 53.8% still had ≥20 teeth. In 2008, De Marchi et al. [21] reported that most independent elderly (44.3%) examined in Brazil had no permanent teeth and only 23% had more than eight teeth. In four subjects aged ≥80 years, the average number of remaining teeth was 15. The average number did not reach the target set by the WHO (at least 20 teeth at age 80) [22,23].

The DMFT score in our study was 1.6, which was lower than the DMFT rate according to RISKESDAS in 2013 (18.9 for the age group ≥65 years) [1]. MT showed the highest proportion of DMFT scores, with an average of 11.4 teeth per individual. This number was low compared with the data of RISKESDAS (17.1) [1]. This is due to the characteristics of the subjects, which are independent elderly with good general health condition, so they still have enough remaining teeth.
Nutritional status in this study was assessed using BMI measurements categorized on the basis of WHO classification and MNA questionnaires. The MNA questionnaire was used because it combines anthropometric measurements, including BMI measurements, physical and psychologic condition assessments, and individual views on nutritional status. This questionnaire was filled via interview method, so that the intention of each question could be well understood by the subject. Mean BMI score for the 93 subjects in this study was 24, which included overweight categories. Average total MNA score was 22 ± 3.2.

Correlation testing of oral health status in each BMI category revealed no relationship between oral health status (including the number of remaining teeth, DT, MT, and FT) with BMI category. This finding is consistent with that of Adiatman et al. [5] who studied dependent elderly in nursing homes in 2012 and found no relationship between the remaining teeth and BMI category. However, in 2003 Marcehes et al. [4] demonstrated a relationship between the number of remaining teeth and BMI score in independent elderly in the United Kingdom.

When the MNA was classified into two categories (normal and risk of malnutrition/malnourished), Spearman’s correlation test of age and the χ² test of sex showed no correlation of age, sex, and number of permanent teeth with the MNA categories. This result was similar to that of El Hélou et al. [24] in 2014, who found no relationship between age, sex, and nutritional deficiencies. In 2013, Adiatman et al. [5] demonstrated no relationship between the number of remaining teeth and MNA. In 2014, Melia [25] also found no relationship between tooth loss and nutritional status (using the MNA categories).

In this study, masticatory performance was measured using color-changing chewing gum. This method is easy and effective for evaluation of masticatory performance. Chewing gum has advantages as a test for masticatory performance because it simulates natural and stable chewing [14]. Spearman correlation test results showed no relationship between masticatory performance and nutritional status in elderly in this study. This result was similar to that of Ikebe et al. [3] in an independent elderly population in Japan in 2006, who found no relationship between occlusal pressure or mastication ability and nutritional status as measured using BMI [3]. Earlier studies performed by Shakina [26] in 2014 reported no relationship between masticatory performance or tooth loss and nutritional status measured by BMI [26].

The WHO examination questionnaire included questions about self-perception of teeth and gum health, dichotomizing each perception as (1) satisfied until very satisfied and (2) not satisfied until very dissatisfied. The χ² comparative test showed no relationship between self-perception of teeth and gum health and nutritional status in the elderly in our study. However, in 2012, Kshetrimayum et al. [27] found a relationship between self-perception of oral health and nutritional status in dependent elderly; that is, subjects who had a bad perception or were not satisfied with the state of dental health also had a low MNA score.

Our findings indicated that poor oral health status does not affect food intake in the elderly. Some subjects with few teeth still pay attention to food intake and choosing the type of food to be consumed. Some of them say they will choose soft or easy-to-chew foods.

This study had several limitations, namely, the proportion of male-to-female sex and also the proportion of ages were not balanced. Most subjects were 60–69 years old. Also, not enough sociodemographic data existed, including economic and educational levels, and no data existed on the history of food and systemic diseases suffered. Besides, examination of masticatory performance using chewing gum was the only visual method used and we did not stick gum to the glass plates. The number of strokes in patients with teeth and those using dentures also was not distinguished. Further research is needed with larger sample size and more demographic socioeconomic factors, such as economic and educational status. Many subjects who have lost their teeth and do not use dentures are at risk for malnutrition. Therefore, more massive education is needed to always maintain oral health and food intake with adequate nutrition for the elderly.

5. Conclusion
On the basis of our results with several variables of oral health that can affect the nutritional status of the elderly, we concluded the following: (1) The average age of 93 elderly subjects (≥60 years) in DKI Jakarta was 67.8 years, with the largest proportion aged 60–69 years (65.6%). (2) There was no
relationship between number of DT, MT, FT, and number of periodontal problems with nutritional status in the elderly. (3) There was no relationship between masticatory performance and nutritional status of the subject. (4) Statistically, there was no relationship between age, sex, and self-perception of dental health and gums with nutritional status of the elderly.

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