

# Snacking hysteria: Communication motive behind excessive aci snack consumption

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## Abstract

This qualitative study explores the motives of alpha generation from elementary school students in Jatinangor District who consume excessive amounts of aci snacks. The paradigm used is interpretive with a qualitative approach. The research subject is the experiences of alpha generation, and the data collection techniques involve observation and in-depth interviews. The result shows that alpha generations have a high hysteria towards aci snacks, because of the affordable price, established habits, and social environmental influences. The consumption of aci is not only influenced by physiological needs (delay hunger) but also social and economic factors. Therefore, this phenomenon emphasizes the urgent need to build health literacy in the school environment and supported by family environment.

**Keywords:** Alpha Generation; Elementary School; Aci Snacks; Hysteria; Motives

## Introduction

This research conducted preliminary research at the State Elementary Schools (SDN) Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, SDN Sayang, and SDN Hegarmanah in Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The research process was conducted through observation and in-depth interviews with the alpha generation who buy and consume aci snacks before school, during school breaks, and after school. Based on the preliminary research results through in-depth interviews, they can consume aci snacks two, four, to six times a day, leading the alpha generation to admit that they are aci enthusiasts and have reached the stage of addiction to *aci*.

In these four schools, vendors selling *aci* snacks have been trading since 6:00 AM until just before school ends, so the habit of consuming *aci* snacks excessively is more commonly found and practiced by the alpha generation attending these four public elementary schools (SDN) than by the alpha generation from private elementary schools (SDS) in the Jatinangor District. According to the results of the preliminary research, SDS has regulations set by the school authorities that prohibit students from buying snacks outside the school and provide a canteen within the school under the supervision of the school authorities.

This research chose the alpha generation from SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, SDN Sayang, and SDN Hegarmanah as informants in this study because they have reached a hysterical stage with *aci* snacks, which must be consumed more than once a day, making *aci* a staple food rather than just a snack. In addition, in those four schools, there are also four to six vendors selling *aci* snacks, and they have been given the freedom to sell by the school authorities, making it even more accessible to the alpha generation.

*Aci* snacks are known for their overly salty, overly savory, and overly spicy flavors when sprinkled with various seasonings, such as balado seasoning, chili powder, seaweed seasoning, and other food additives. Additionally, *aci* snacks are a typical snack from the city of Bandung made from *aci* (Indonesia Travel, 2021) and have cultural, historical, and philosophical values that can represent Sundanese culture (Yasyi, 2020). Some of the *aci* snacks that are still popular to this day include *cireng*, which has been around since the 1970s in West Java, *cilok*, which became popular in the early 2000s, *cimol*, which started booming in the 2010s, and many other types of *aci* (Agusti, 2024). Cultural heritage and gastronomy tourism expert also mentioned that the first history of *cireng* being sold dates back to the 1970s, intended for elementary school children (Yasyi, 2020). Gita Anggita, a food scientist, stated that *aci* snacks sprinkled with colored spices certainly have a strong flavor and are high in calories. *Aci* is a type of minimally processed food, but if

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consumed continuously, it can certainly have a negative impact on children's health (author interview, 2024). Processed carbohydrates, such as sugar and starch, have a high glycemic index, thereby increasing the risk of obesity, type-2 diabetes, and other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) (Suárez et al., 2022). Children and adolescents who are obese tend to have diets that contain more calories, sugar, saturated fats, and refined carbohydrates compared to those with normal body weight (Zou et al., 2023). In addition to having a high carbohydrate content, the four types of *aci* sold in those four public elementary schools also have a low protein content, such as cilung which only has 8.41% protein content, cireng which only has 8.22% protein content, cimin which only has 3.29% protein content, and cimol which only has 1.34% protein content. However, protein is one of the main macronutrients needed by the body, including for the growth and development of the brain in children. According to previous research explaining that children who experience protein malnutrition will be affected by a decrease in IQ, learning difficulties, attention disorders, and delays in cognitive development (Chertoff, 2015).

Other research also indicates that the percentage of children's snacks in elementary schools containing hazardous chemicals such as borax, formalin, and rhodamine-B is still quite high (Paratmanitya & Aprilia, 2016). In addition, there is a relationship between a person's knowledge and attitude when choosing safe snacks at school (Santika, 2019). The reason someone chooses snacks is also influenced by their Socioeconomic Status (SES), and lower SES groups tend to consume unhealthy food more regularly (Rachmi et al., 2018), while there is a relationship between food consumption patterns and an individual's nutritional status (Khusniyati et al., 2016).

There is previous research discussing elementary schools that create programs to improve health literacy for Generation Alpha or children of elementary school age. In Australia, there is HealthLit4Kids, a social enterprise that facilitates 84 teachers in five elementary schools through professional development over 12 months, enabling teachers to integrate health literacy with the subjects they teach (Peralta et al., 2021). Additionally, in Chicago, there is a special program initiated by members of the Suburban Chicago Elementary School Wellness Committee, which has developed an educational curriculum to reduce the consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (SSB) among elementary school students (Rauba et al., 2017). In Norwegian public schools, a subject called Food & Health is provided and is mandatory for students in elementary school aged 6-12 years, and in junior high school aged 13-15 years, with specific competency goals that each student must achieve (Beinert et al., 2021). Therefore, this indicates that schools are the right place to promote health literacy practices (Beinert et al., 2021). Before promoting health literacy practices in public elementary schools, researchers need to understand the in-order-to motive and because-motive of Generation Alpha at SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, SDN Sayang, and SDN Hegarmanah in Jatinangor District, Sumedang Regency, West Java, Indonesia, who have excessively consumed *aci* snacks. This research will explore their experiences as primary data in understanding the reality and tradition within communication that focuses on the individual's conscious experience, which is the phenomenological tradition (Morissan, 2021). Thus, this research wants to understand the in order to motive and because motive of Generation Alpha choosing *aci* as a snack at school and consuming it excessively.

## Method

The paradigm used in this research is interpretive, and the researcher acts as a subjectivist, as they employ a subjectivist approach and assume that knowledge is interpretive (Mulyana, 2020). This research uses qualitative approach and an inductive method (Creswell, 2018). This research uses a phenomenological method, and the reason for using this method is that the study in this research is centered on individual experiences in society related to what they experience and how they experience it in society (Bungin, 2023).

The data collection techniques used are observation and in-depth interviews (Mulyana, 2020). Additionally, this research will follow the procedures in phenomenological studies, which involve conducting in-depth interviews repeatedly with informants until reaching the saturated level, where no new information is found, indicating that the data collection process has reached the point of information redundancy (J. Gentles et al., 2015). As for the data analysis stages, this

research uses the Miles, Huberman, & Saldana model and applies it while the researcher is collecting data.

## Results and Discussion

### From feeling fullness to daily habit

During the observation process, the researcher found a student consuming *aci* snacks excessively, or more than once a day while at school. A student from SDN Cipacing II who often queues for *aci* snacks outside school said, "I like to snack on cimol with peanut sauce, it tastes good, fills me up, so I'm used to buying *aci* up to five times a day, because I don't have breakfast" (FB, February 2024). FB's statement is also in line with PR's statement, which said, "I don't have breakfast, so I eat fried tapioca and only eat rice when I get home, to avoid being hungry, I just eat a lot of *aci* snacks" (PR, February 2024). FB and PR are two students who bought *aci* with the intention of feeling full because they didn't have breakfast, so they consumed a large amount of *aci*. This is consistent with previous research that states that someone who skips breakfast is more likely to consume unhealthy and excessive amounts of snacks, and there are even findings from a meta-analysis explaining a positive relationship between skipping breakfast and the prevalence of overweight or obesity in the Asia-Pacific region (Rachmi et al., 2021).

The researcher also conducted an interview with RZ from SDN Cipacing I, who had consumed *aci* snacks three times that day and regularly made cimol a part of their breakfast. Here is the statement from RZ who shared his experience with the researcher: "I eat *aci* 2-3 times a day because it's cheap, so I can have it for breakfast, as a snack, and it really fills me up, but it makes me sleepy when I'm studying in class" (RZ, February 2024). RZ described the impact after eating *aci*, which could make RZ drowsy during class, thus preventing productive learning and absorbing knowledge from the teacher.

According to Schutz's phenomenological theory, to describe a person's entire action, it can be divided into two phases: the action in order to motive (um-zu-motiv), which refers to the future, and the action because of motive (weil-motiv), which refers to the past. Thus, the in order to motive or the goal conveyed by FB and PR above is their desire to feel full. RZ also mentioned that the motive for consuming *aci* 2-3 times a day at school is because *aci* can serve as a breakfast menu, a daily snack, and can be filling. Besides FB, PR, and RZ, there are also AR from SDN Cipacing II and SF from SDN Cipacing I who expressed that their goal or in order to motivate excessive consumption of *aci* is to feel full. Here are statements from AR: "*Ac*i is food that makes you full, maybe, so if you have *aci* for breakfast, you'll already be full, but then in the afternoon, you want *aci* again" (AR, February 2024) and from SF: "Want to feel full, because breakfast alone is not enough" (SF, February 2024).

Based on the researcher's observations, the researcher also found a student from SDN Cipacing II sitting at the front of the class, full after consuming cimol, and the facial expression indicated that he had snacked on *aci* in excessive amounts. According to Matarazzo (1984), one of the health behaviors that has a negative impact is the excessive consumption of food or snacks, especially if the food has minimal nutritional value, so this bad habit can disrupt health or is referred to as health impairing habits (Berry, 2004). However, the students at SDN Cipacing I and SDN Cipacing II already have a preference for the most liked *aci* snacks, which are mandatory to consume every day to meet their individual needs in order to motivate them. According to the journal titled "Food Familiarity Influence Food Preferences Among High School Students in Ogan Ilir District," which presented its research findings that the higher the level of familiarity a person has with food, the higher their preference for it (AS et al., 2020). Thus, the results of the tests and observations can confirm and strengthen the above research findings, which explain that the motivation possessed by the students of SDN Cipacing I and SDN Cipacing II towards *aci* snacks is because *aci* is filling and can serve as a snack and breakfast for them.

RZ's statement above can identify the reason or motive for RZ eating *aci* 2-3 times a day at school, which is because it is cheap. Based on the researchers' observations at SDN Cipacing I and SDN Cipacing II, all the *aci* sold around those schools are priced within the reach of the students, ranging from Rp1,000.00 to Rp5,000.00. There was a study conducted in West Java which found that 81.5% of children's pocket money ranged from Rp1,000.00 to Rp5,000.00, 13.3% of children's

pocket money ranged from Rp5,500.00 to Rp10,000.00, 2% of children's pocket money ranged from Rp11,000.00 to Rp20,000.00, and 1.8% of children's pocket money was more than Rp21,000.00 (Hadi et al., 2022). The higher the amount of pocket money received by children, the greater their purchasing power to buy snacks at school, because they have the freedom to choose the type of snacks they want. However, they do not pay attention to whether the food has balanced nutrition or not (Inamah et al., 2023). RZ is one of the alpha generation who does not pay attention to the content in *aci* and continues to consume it excessively for the sake of its low price. This is because RZ does not have a good level of literacy regarding the limits of consuming foods or snacks like *aci*, which, based on the results of the Central Lab of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, is classified as a type of food with an unbalanced nutritional content, making it unsuitable as a breakfast menu and daily snack.

Because of the motive or reason FB consumes *aci* excessively is because it tastes good, and here is FB's statement: "Because its texture is soft and it tastes good in the mouth." "If I don't eat *aci*, it feels like something's missing in my mouth" (FB, February 2024) and PR also mentioned a similar reason, and here is PR's statement, "Yeah, it's addictive, and my friends also told me that this *aci* snack is delicious." Then it really is delicious, delicious, delicious, that's why I became addicted" (PR, February 2024). Both statements from FB and PR can be representative because of the motives of Generation Alpha at SDN Cipacing I and SDN Cipacing II, where the reason for consuming excessive amounts of *aci* is because of its delicious taste.

Based on the results of the observations conducted by the researcher, it was seen that Generation Alpha, while eating *aci*, had happy expressions and indicated that *aci* has a good taste. The researcher even entered classrooms during school breaks. The researcher found plastic wrappers filled with spices as flavoring for *aci* and saw five empty *aci* wrappers on the table of one of the students from SDN Cipacing I, thus the observation results can support the statement from FB and PR that their motive or reason for consuming *aci* is because of its good taste.

Unlike AR from SDN Cipacing II who said that the motive for consuming *aci* snacks was because of friends, and here is AR's statement: "Friends told me, cimin snacks are delicious, when I tried them, they were really good, so I kept eating them" (AR, February 2024). According to previous research, to improve health knowledge or health education among children, it should already be present when they enter early education age, namely before kindergarten and elementary school, so that Generation Alpha has the cognitive ability to assess the types of snacks that can meet the body's nutritional needs. With the hope that they will not be easily persuaded by their peers who also have a low level of health knowledge (Senol & Senol, 2023).

Based on the researchers' observations at SDN Cipacing II, they noted that among the Alpha generation, friends encourage each other to buy *aci*, although some of them consume *aci* snacks at school because their parents buy them breakfast before class. One such example is SF from SDN Cipacing I, who shared his experience, saying that he regularly ate *aci* every morning because of his parents, especially his mother. SF stated, "When I was in third grade, I often brought noodles and eggs, and sometimes got cireng. My mother liked to buy *aci* every morning for breakfast" (SF, February 2024). According to previous research explaining the role of a mother in West Java, Indonesia, when making decisions regarding the types of food to be consumed by children aged 0-12 years, the research findings indicate that one of the factors considered by a mother when choosing food for her child is the Social Economic Status (SES). Lower SES groups are more likely to consume unhealthy foods, such as instant noodles, due to financial issues, while higher SES groups place more emphasis on halal and nutritional value when selecting food or snacks for their children (Rachmi et al., 2018). Therefore, SF's mother can be categorized as a mother with low Social Economic Status (SES), as she provides SF with *aci* as a substitute or accompaniment to staple food at school.

Another statement from SF regarding the motive or reason for always buying *aci* is that it has become a habit that must be done every day when at school, and here is SF's statement: "Eating *aci* at least once while at school, because it has become a habit that cannot be left behind." "If I don't eat *aci*, I feel like something is off. Especially since *aci* is delicious, it fills me up, because I don't have breakfast at home" (SF, February 2024). In addition, SF's statement was also agreed upon by FB, PR, RZ, and AR, who said that snacking on *aci* at school has become a habit that must be done

every day. According to previous research, to build the habit of consuming fruits and vegetables, children at school should be more frequently exposed to Fruits and Vegetables (FV) advertisements, because advertisements are a proven method that can influence children's eating behavior. If they are more frequently exposed to advertisements for HSFS (High Salt, Fat, Sugar) foods such as fast food, cereals, candies, and others, these children are at risk of consuming HSFS foods and becoming obese. Therefore, advertising strategies can be modified and used by educators or school authorities at SDN Cipacing I and SDN Cipacing II to persuade children to consume nutritionally balanced foods (Oke & Tan, 2022).

According to Alfred Schutz's phenomenological theory, the main task of phenomenological analysis is to reconstruct the world of human life as it is actually experienced by them (Kuswarno, 2009). This research has described how the in order to motive and because-motive of the informants (Table 1) explain their goals and reasons for consuming a large amount of *aci*.

Table 1. In Order To Motive and Because of Motive of Students at SDN Cipacing I and II towards *Aci* Snacks

In Order To Motive	Because of Motive
To achieve a feeling of fullness	Because it is cheap or has an affordable price
For breakfast	Because of the delicious taste of the <i>aci</i>
For daily snacks	Because of a friends
	Because it was given by mother
	Because it has become a daily habit

Source: Researcher, 2024

### Between Sense of Happiness and Addiction

In addition to observing the activities of students at SDN Sayang who were buying and consuming *aci*, this research also used a different method compared to when they conducted observations at SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, and SDN Hegarmanah I, namely giving pocket money to three female students, and all the pocket money given was used to buy cimol sprinkled with spicy salty seasoning by the female students from SDN Sayang. After buying cimol, they invited their friends to sit together to eat cimol while chatting during the school break. Here is an image that can represent the social activity of Generation Alpha consuming cimol together with their friends.



Figure 1. Female students from SDN Sayang are consuming Cimol

Source: Researcher Documentation, 2024

While they were consuming cimol, the researcher interviewed one of the students named UZ, and she explained her reason for buying cimol, saying, "I often buy cimol, so when I get my allowance, the first thing I think about is cimol, so I just buy cimol, even though I'm currently coughing, but it's okay" (UZ, February 2024). However, based on the results of testing by the Central Laboratory of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, cimol has the highest

carbohydrate content at 63.70% compared to protein, water, fat, and ash content. According to previous research discussing how processed carbohydrates, such as sugar and starch, have a high glycemic index, which can increase the risk of obesity, type-2 diabetes, and other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) (Suárez et al., 2022). Thus, the school authorities can educate the vendors selling *aci* around the school to use safe ingredients with balanced nutrition, so that if consumed by the students of SDN Sayang, it does not pose a risk of them developing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the future.

The researcher also asked UZ why he often buys *aci*, and here is UZ's statement: "The reason I keep eating *aci* is because I just have this urge to eat *aci* all the time." If there are no *aci* vendors, I would definitely be sad because *aci* is the only snack with a strong, delicious, savory taste that makes you full. So, when it's break time, I definitely think about *aci* and buy *aci*. Then, there is a feeling of happiness after eating *aci*" (UZ, February 2024).

UZ's statement above can illustrate how the motive or reason he often buys *aci* is because he has become dependent on it. UZ also assumes that *aci* is a type of snack that has a strong, delicious, and savory taste, so every time the school break begins, *aci* is the first type of snack that comes to mind. Additionally, from UZ's statement above, it was also found that the motive or purpose for buying *aci* includes achieving a feeling of fullness and enhancing happiness, so the more *aci* consumed, the happier he becomes. However, UZ also described the effects felt after consuming *aci*, which include pain in certain parts of the body, and here is UZ's statement: "If it's the stomach, it sometimes hurts if I eat too much *aci*, if it's the throat, it also sometimes hurts if I eat too much *aci*, because I have tonsils and it feels sore when I wake up" (UZ, February 2024). Even so, the experience of feeling pain after consuming too much *aci* did not make UZ stop eating *aci*, and here is UZ's statement: "I hope *aci* will always be available, I want to try *aci* everywhere, even though different places have different tastes." But I still want there to be *aci* everywhere! (UZ, February 2024), so this statement shows that UZ's motive is already fully dependent on *aci*. According to this research, the pain experienced by UZ can serve as a basis for educating UZ and other Alpha generation members who are indicated to consume excessive amounts of *aci* at school. This is because, referring to the definition of health literacy by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the above research findings, it shows that UZ has a low level of health literacy (Lenggogeni & Yeni, 2023). Additionally, according to previous research, individuals with low health literacy levels are also likely to be less capable of making health-related decisions, such as excessive consumption of *aci* snacks, which could potentially worsen their health in the future (Ditiharman et al., 2022).

The researcher interviewed FQ, who is a student at SDN Sayang, because based on the researcher's observations, FQ routinely buys *aci* during school break time, even though FQ said that *aci* is not one of his favorite snacks at school. Here is FQ's statement: "*Aci* is not my favorite snack, I buy *aci* because my friends invite me, but I also eat *aci* so I won't be hungry, so I can focus on studying" (FQ, February 2024). Thus, the reason or motive for FQ buying *aci* is influenced by interactions with peers who also buy *aci* snacks at school, which affects his actions to do the same, even though the purpose or goal of buying *aci* is to stave off hunger, so he can focus on studying at school.

Besides UZ and FQ, the researcher also found KRN, a student from SDN Sayang, who, based on the researcher's observations, has consumed *aci* four times during school break, starting from snacks like cimol, cireng, cilung, and cilor. Based on the results of the researcher's interview with KRN, she said, "I buy a lot of *aci* snacks because I don't have breakfast, and even if I do have breakfast, I still feel hungry and need *aci* to really feel full" (KRN, February 2024). Therefore, the because of motive or reason KRN consumes *aci* in excessive amounts is because she does not have breakfast, while the in order to motive or goal of KRN is to feel full after eating *aci*. Additionally, KRN also mentioned, "I already had meatballs at the school canteen during recess, but I still buy two servings of *aci* to feel full longer until I get home from school" (KRN, February 2024). From this statement, the researcher can infer KRN's goal or in order to motive for consuming *aci* in excess, which is to provide a longer-lasting feeling of fullness. In fact, KRN once said that *aci* can be a side dish when eating rice as the in order to motive or the reason for always eating *aci*, and here is KRN's statement, "I make *aci* a companion to eat rice!" (KRN, February 2024).

Based on the observation results, the researcher found students from SDN Sayang who were chewing while playing with *aci* in their mouths and interacting with each other. The activity also shows that *aci* has a chewy texture, so the researcher interviewed a student named PTR, and PTR said this, "If you think about it, *aci* is like slime, you can stretch it and it just makes you happy" (PTR, February 2024). Similarly, a student from SDN Sayang named XVR stated, "*Aci* is delicious, chewy, like slime, that's what makes me often buy *aci*" (XVR, February 2024). Thus, the results of the interviews with PTR and XVR reveal the in order to motive and because of motive of those who frequently consume *aci*. The in order to motive or purpose of PTR consuming *aci* is to trigger a feeling of happiness after enjoying *aci*, which has a shape like a slime toy and can be stretched, while the because of motive or reason XVR often buys *aci* is because of the delicious taste of *aci* and its chewy texture like a slime toy.

In addition to PTR's statement above, PTR also shared the reason or motive behind his enjoyment of consuming *aci*, and PTR has expressed his thoughts and feelings both non-verbally and verbally through the following statement, "It just feels happy, because eating *aci* is really delicious and suits my taste, so this is the food I like!! Basically, I'm just really happy when I find the type of *aci* I want and it tastes just the way I like it, the saltiness is just right, the savoriness is just right, the texture is just right, the chewiness, the crispiness is also just right, so yeah, I'm just really happy!!" (PTR, February 2024). Therefore, the motive or reason PTR enjoys consuming *aci* is because of the delicious taste of *aci* and *aci* is a type of snack that suits his taste. In addition, the in order to motive or purpose of PTR eating *aci* is to achieve a feeling of fullness, and here are two statements from PTR that represent the in order to motive: "...and if it makes me full, it's because after breakfast I eat *aci*." (PTR, February 2024) and the second statement is "Eating just one *aci* is already filling, for example, eating *cireng*" (PTR, February 2024). Based on the results of the *cireng* sample test at the Central Laboratory of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, *cireng* is a type of snack that has a high carbohydrate content, which is 51.18%. Therefore, if children consume *cireng*, they will certainly feel full, but *cireng* does not have a balanced nutritional value according to the lab test results.

This research continue to explore the responses of students from SDN Sayang, who are informants in this study, regarding their motives or reasons for regularly consuming excessive amounts of *aci*. Here is the statement from UZ from SDN Sayang: "Delicious, savory, basically delicious!" (UZ, February 2024), the statement from FQ is, "Delicious, savory, chewy, the seasoning is good!" (FQ, February 2024), the statement from PTR is, "What I feel when I eat *aci* is, it's just delicious!" (PTR, February 2024), so these three statements can represent the underlying motives or reasons why they often buy and consume *aci*.

UZ once told the researcher that he did not want to stop eating *aci* because of the variety of *aci* snacks, and here is UZ's statement: "Yes, because there are many variations, so it's not easy to get bored eating *aci*" (UZ, February 2024). Similarly, XVR's statement explains his reason for not wanting to stop, because he is addicted to continuously buying and eating *aci*, and here is XVR's statement: "At first, I wanted to stop, but then I saw a street vendor selling *cimol* or *cimin*, and I bought some and got addicted again" (XVR, February 2024). Therefore, the statements from UZ and XVR can also indicate the motive or reason for their consumption of *aci*, which is because *aci* has many variations and can be addictive.

Thus, the motives or goals of the students at SDN Sayang because they are influenced by peers, and this reason inherent with previous research which states that peer influence does not have a significant relationship with the level of food preference among adolescents (AS et al., 2020). Other reasons include not having breakfast, the delicious taste of *aci*, the chewy texture of *aci*, the savory nature of *aci*, the tasty *aci* seasoning, the appetizing appeal of *aci*, the variety of *aci*, and the fact that *aci* can trigger addiction or cravings (Table 2).

Table 2. In Order To Motive and Because of Motive of Students at SDN Sayang towards *Aci* Snacks

In Order To Motive	Because of Motive
To achieve a feeling of fullness	Because they have become dependent on <i>aci</i>
To enhance the feeling of happiness	Because <i>aci</i> has always been the first

In Order To Motive	Because of Motive
To delay hunger so that you can focus on studying at school	choice Because of friends influence
To provide a longer-lasting feeling of fullness	Because I didn't have breakfast
To be a side dish when eating rice	Because of the delicious taste of the <i>aci</i>
To trigger a sense of happiness	Because of the chewy texture of the <i>aci</i> Because the <i>aci</i> is savory Because of the delicious <i>aci</i> seasoning Because <i>aci</i> can stimulate the appetite Because <i>aci</i> has many variations Because <i>aci</i> can trigger addiction or a feeling of craving

Source: Researcher, 2024

### Social Interaction versus Teacher Influence

This research conducted observations at SDN Hegarmanah I and found four *aci* snack vendors who had been selling around the school since 6:00 AM WIB. Based on the researchers' observations, SDN Hegarmanah I does not provide a canteen within the school, so the students at SDN Hegarmanah I buy food or snacks from outside the school, which are located behind the school and among the residential areas with poor environmental conditions.

During the observation process, the researcher interviewed RZQ, as he admitted to being a fan of *aci* snacks and could consume *aci* three to four times a day, even after having breakfast at home. RZQ often buys cilok, cireng, and cilung during school break time, and here are the results of the researcher's interview with RZQ: "I already had breakfast at home, but at school, I still eat *aci*... three to four times a day and cilung is my favorite snack. That's why, the cilung vendor is always surrounded by my friends, and often when we get back from school, the cilung stock is already sold out. So we often fight over buying cilung hehehe" (RZQ, February 2024).

Based on RZQ's statement above, the cilung vendor always has the longest queue, making it the most popular among the students at SDN Hegarmanah I. However, based on the test results at the Central Lab of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, cilung has the highest water content at 63.06%, carbohydrate content at 21.77%, protein content at 8.41%, fat content at 5.08%, and ash content at 1.67%. Foods that contain a lot of water can cause a feeling of fullness or bloating in the stomach, so cilung consumed by students at SDN Hegarmanah I can give a sensation of bloating, especially if cilung is consumed in excess. This is in accordance with the researchers' observations at SDN Hegarmanah I, where the researchers found a student who, after eating *aci*, appeared to feel bloated and lacked energy, even though he had already had cilung three times and had to continue the learning process after the school break ended.

The researcher interviewed a student named ZK, and he explained his reasons for consuming three cilung during school break. Here is ZK's statement: "At school, the snacks are not very varied; there are only *aci* snacks. Moreover, *aci* is cheap, only a thousand rupiah for one stick of cilung, so I can save money and save up." Yeah, even though after eating cilung I feel bloated and lazy" (ZK, February 2024). Thus, from that statement, the researcher can understand the because of motive for ZK consuming cilung excessively, which is because the snacks around the school are less varied and predominantly consist of *aci*. Additionally, because *aci* is inexpensive, the in order to motive or purpose for ZK buying cilung at the price of Rp1000.00/cilung is to minimize daily expenses and save the remaining pocket money. The researcher continues to explore ZK's experiences to understand the motive or purpose behind ZK's excessive consumption of cilung, and here is ZK's statement: "If I eat something else like rice... it doesn't lift my mood." But, once I have some *aci*, aaahh, my mood is fulfilled" (ZK, February 2024), so ZK's goal in eating *aci* is to improve his positive mood.

Based on the researcher's observations at SDN Hegarmanah I, the researcher observed the teachers inviting their female students to buy snacks outside the school during the school break. After that, the female students and the teachers sit together while chatting and enjoying the *aci* snacks. The results of this observation can be validated through an interview between the researcher and a student named NYL from SDN Hegarmanah I, who said, "For example, if a teacher says,



'Who wants to join in buying cireng?' then I join, my friend joins, and eventually, we all want to follow the teacher to buy and eat *aci*" (NYL, February 2024). NYL's statement can indicate the motive or reason why NYL regularly consumes *aci* at school, which is caused by the teacher as the party playing a role in continuously forming the habit of snacking on *aci*. However, according to previous research that has proven that teachers play an important role in shaping positive habits among students to consume healthy foods, such as eating vegetables when at school, and health education will be easier to implement in schools if teachers can provide encouragement or motivation to children (Chinchanachokchai et al., 2022). However, based on the results of observations and interviews, the teachers at SDN Hegarmanah I actually persuade their students to consume *aci*, which, according to test results from the Central Lab of Padjadjaran University, Bandung, Indonesia, is a type of food that contains little nutrients and fiber and cannot meet the complete nutritional needs of each child.

In order to explore the motive or purpose behind NYL's excessive consumption of *aci*, the following statement can be examined: "*Ac*i is like my staple food, because it makes me full, even though I often feel sleepy, weak, and unfocused when studying in class" (NYL, February 2024). Thus, the purpose of eating *aci* is to feel full, even though NYL experiences negative effects on the body, such as drowsiness and weakness, which can cause NYL to be unfocused in class or lack the energy to absorb the knowledge provided by the teacher. Additionally, from that statement, another motive or reason for NYL can also be found, which is that *aci* has become like a staple food for her. NYL also shared her experience with the researcher, as she once had a stomach ache after consuming *aci* that had a sour taste, yet NYL continued to consume the *aci* until it was finished, and the reason or motive was because she had become addicted to *aci*.

Besides RZQ, ZK, and NYL, there is also FRL, a student from SDN Hegarmanah I, who shared his reason for consuming excessive amounts of *aci*, saying, "So, in my mouth, I just want to find *aci* food because *aci* is too delicious and I just want to chew on the chewy *aci* and play with the *aci* in my mouth, it feels ticklish." If there are no cilor, no cireng, my mouth feels like it has no companion. That's why it's really sad if there's no one selling *aci* in front of the school" (FRL, February 2024). Thus, the motive or reason FRL often eats *aci* is because of the delicious taste, the addiction to eating *aci*, and *aci* has become a top-of-mind food for FRL. In addition, FRL also said this, "When I was in first grade, I saw my friends gathering around the *aci* vendor, and then my friend said, 'Rel, come here... join us for a snack,' so I tried it and it was delicious, and I've been eating *aci* ever since" (FRL, February 2024), so another motive or reason is because friends invited her to eat *aci*. In fact, buying and eating *aci* can be a means of socializing for FRL, and here is FRL's statement: "So, usually I eat *aci* during break time, and I can still finish it while chatting with my friends" (FRL, February 2024). Therefore, the motive or purpose for FRL eating *aci* is to interact with her friends at school.

Not only FRL said that *aci* can be a means to build social relationships with friends at school, but there is also VCN, a student from SDN Hegarmanah I, who said the same thing, "It's fun! can snack on *aci* together, can gather at school, in the classroom, while eating *aci* and chatting with friends" (VCN, February 2024), therefore, the motivation or purpose of VCN eating *aci* is to engage in social activities with friends at school. In fact, VCN said that the purpose of eating *aci* is to stay healthy, and here is VCN's statement: "Like to be healthier, so I can pursue my dreams." That's why I want to keep eating *aci*" (VCN, February 2024). Thus, in order to motivate or achieve that goal, it can indicate that VCN has a low level of health literacy. According to previous research, a person's health literacy level can be influenced by external factors, two of which are educators or teachers and friends (Lenggogeni & Yeni, 2023).

Because of the motive or reason VCN consumes *aci* excessively at school is due to the family environment, and here is VCN's statement: "My family really loves *aci* and always stocks it at home, so I started eating it and liking it too, and then it continued to snacking on *aci* at school!" (VCN, February 2024). According to the WHO, one of the factors that classify health literacy is internal factors, including health habits within the family or immediate environment (Lenggogeni & Yeni, 2023). Therefore, the research can confirm the interview results with VCN, that the motive or reason VCN has the habit of excessively eating *aci* snacks at school is due to the *aci* snacks habits that have become a culture in VCN's family environment. Therefore, in addition to educating

children, it is also necessary to educate their families about healthy and balanced food choices and to reduce the consumption of high-calorie and low-nutrient foods to prevent obesity and the risk of other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the future (Zou et al., 2023).

Researchers continue to explore VCN's answers regarding the motive or reason VCN excessively buys *aci* snacks at school, and here is VCN's statement: "*Aci* 100% affects my life!" Because it makes you addicted, and it's really delicious, once you eat it, you just want more" (VCN, February 2024). Thus, the motive or reason is that *aci* can make VCN addicted and the taste of *aci* is delicious. Even the following statement can illustrate VCN's level of dependence on *aci*, which is, "I want to try eating vegetables and fruits, but *aci* still has to be there" (VCN, February 2024). Therefore, VCN, who is trying to regularly eat vegetables and fruits, still wants to continue eating rice.

Thus, the motive or purpose of the students at SDN Hegarmanah I consuming a large amount of *aci* is to minimize daily expenses so that the remaining pocket money can be saved, because the *aci* sold at SDN Hegarmanah I is affordable, priced at Rp1000.00/*aci*. Additionally, *aci* can build a positive mood, provide a feeling of fullness, facilitate interaction or social activities with friends at school, and with the hope that after eating *aci*, they can have a healthy body. Because of the motive or reason why the students at SDN Hegarmanah I eat *aci* is because the snacks around the school are less varied and are mostly dominated by *aci*, in addition to the fact that *aci* is affordable or cheap, because they are invited by teachers, because *aci* is assumed to be a staple food, because they are already addicted to *aci*, because of the delicious taste of *aci*, because *aci* has become top of mind when they choose snacks at school, because they are invited by friends, and because the family environment has a habit of consuming *aci*. Here is a table that can illustrate the overall in order to motive and because of motive of RZQ, NYL, ZK, FRL, and VCN, who are students from Hegarmanah I.

Table 3. In Order To Motive and Because of Motive of Students at SDN Hegarmanah I towards *Aci* Snacks

In Order to Motive	Because of Motive
To save pocket money, so that the remaining pocket money can be saved	Because the availability of food or snack options at school is lacking in variety
To build a positive mood	Because <i>aci</i> is affordable or cheap
To achieve a feeling of fullness	Because of teacher influence
For social interaction	Because <i>aci</i> can replace staple foods
To have a healthy body	Because I'm already addicted to <i>aci</i> Because of the delicious taste of the <i>aci</i> Because <i>aci</i> has already become top of mind Because of friends influence Because of the family environment

Source: Researcher, 2024

This research focuses on examining the experiences of Generation Alpha in society, specifically what they experience and how they experience it in society (Bungin, 2023). This is because they are entering early adolescence and will experience significant physical, cognitive, and psychological changes in the future. According to the review article titled "Eating Behaviour of Indonesian Adolescents: A Systematic Review of the Literature," which has outlined that behaviors acquired during adolescence often persist into adulthood, the risk of health issues such as obesity will continue into adulthood. Therefore, adolescence is an important time to instill healthy eating behaviors, as they are more adaptive to new changes compared to other age groups (Rachmi et al., 2021).

Healthy food is food that should have balanced nutrition, such as carbohydrates, protein, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. However, according to the test results of four samples of *aci* snacks sold at SDN Sayang, SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, and SDN Hegarmanah I in the Jatinangor District, they do not have balanced nutrition; instead, they have high carbohydrate levels and low protein levels. According to previous research, children who experience protein malnutrition will be affected by a decrease in IQ, learning difficulties, attention disorders, and

delays in cognitive development (Chertoff, 2015). Additionally, the *aci* they consume also has a high carbohydrate content, which can contribute to weight gain and insulin resistance in children and potentially lead to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the future, one of which is obesity (Zou et al., 2023). Therefore, by understanding the in order to motive and because-motive, schools can combat it by implementing health literacy in the school environment.

In several developed countries, health literacy or health education has begun to be implemented in the basic education environment, such as schools in Chicago, Illinois, United States, which have programs to minimize the intake of sugary drinks consumed by elementary school children through the education curriculum (Rauba et al., 2017). In Catholic schools in Australia, health and physical education subjects have been implemented for children in grades 7-10 in primary schools (Peralta et al., 2021). In Catholic schools in New South Wales, Australia, the IMOVE program has been implemented, contributing to the development of health literacy through classroom teaching (Jensen et al., 2016). Other research also explains how the Food & Health Education (FH) subject implemented in public schools in Norway can enhance children's knowledge about healthy eating patterns (Beinert et al., 2021). Thus, to persuade the alpha generation not to consume excessive amounts of *aci* snacks, health literacy can be applied through the education curriculum, by collaborating health literacy with subjects that children will study in class, and by integrating health literacy into the classroom teaching process, with the hope that the alpha generation can have knowledge regarding the limitations of consuming *aci* snacks.

This research has provided a scientific basis for improving children's health literacy, and previous studies have suggested an educational approach to reduce carbohydrate consumption (Suárez et al., 2022). Another study presents communication strategies using storytellers who play a role in conveying health messages to children (Dida et al., 2023). According to Nutbeam, the concept of health literacy has three levels, including functional or basic health literacy, interactive health literacy, and critical health literacy (Peralta et al., 2021). Thus, to achieve the highest level of health literacy, it is necessary to establish a two-way communication pattern between teachers and students, supported by parents at home (Widodo et al., 2023). Therefore, the strategies from previous research can be replicated or modified to educate students at SDN Sayang, SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, and SDN Hegarmanah I to minimize *aci* consumption.

The theoretical reflection in this research is to explore the because of motive aimed at understanding the past reasons of Generation Alpha that cause them to snack and consume *aci* continuously, and to explore the in-order-to motive of Generation Alpha to understand their desired goals when consuming *aci* excessively. Thus, theoretical reflection can show that the excessive consumption of *aci* by Generation Alpha is not only due to individual behavior and sudden decisions, but also the result of habits, social experiences, social meanings, and preferences influenced by the past and future goals.

The implication in the field of communication is to build intergenerational communication, namely between parents and children, which can influence consumption habits. For example, parents can persuade their children to consume healthy snacks and equip them with healthy food to take to school. Additionally, this research can serve as a basis for utilizing social media to promote a culture of healthy snacks using language that is easily understood by Generation Alpha.

### Conclusion

The implementation of health literacy in school environments is a strategic step to address the habit of excessive *aci* consumption. Various developed countries have shown that the integration of health literacy into the education curriculum can provide a better understanding of healthy eating patterns. Similar efforts can be implemented in elementary schools by adopting an approach that involves teachers, parents, and the community in shaping habits of consuming healthier snacks or foods for children.

The implications of this research encompass the fields of communication, social, cultural, and health. In the field of communication, effective communication between parents, teachers, and students is necessary to educate and foster habits of consuming healthier snacks or foods. In the social and cultural field, understanding the food preferences of Generation Alpha can serve as a basis for designing more effective intervention strategies. Meanwhile, in the field of health, this

research emphasizes the importance of monitoring children's consumption patterns and the need for healthy snack campaigns and more intensive nutrition education at SDN Sayang, SDN Cipacing I, SDN Cipacing II, and SDN Hegarmanah I.

By understanding the motives behind the consumption of *aci* in depth, schools and parents can play an active role in guiding children to adopt healthier eating patterns. The implementation of sustainable health literacy in schools can be a long-term solution in building habits of consuming snacks or foods that are rich in nutrients, have balanced nutrition, and are safe for daily consumption by generation alpha.

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