



Water Consumption Habits Among The Faculty of Social Science and Political Sciences Students at The University of North Sumatera

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ABSTRACT

Drinking water is an important part of maintaining body function and preventing health problems such as dehydration and kidney disease. However, this habit has not fully become a lifestyle, especially for students. This study aims to understand the habits, perceptions, and reasons for FISIP students at the University of North Sumatera (USU) in consuming water. This study used a qualitative method by collecting data through non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, literature studies, and documentation of six student informants and two medical expert informants. The results of the study showed diversity in the habits of drinking water consumption of student informants. Four of the six student informants consumed water according to WHO recommendations (2 liters/day), while the other two FISIP USU student informants consumed less than 2 liters/day. Student perceptions of water are positive, where FISIP USU student informants associate drinking water consumption with health benefits such as smooth digestion, kidney function, and concentration. The main reasons for FISIP USU student informants to consume water are health awareness, personal and family experiences, and social experiences. However, low taste preferences for water are still an obstacle to consumption behavior. This study shows the importance of ongoing education regarding healthy water consumption habits among students.

Keyword: Students, Health, Water, Perception, Habits

ABSTRAK

Konsumsi air putih merupakan bagian penting dalam menjaga fungsi tubuh dan mencegah gangguan kesehatan seperti dehidrasi dan penyakit ginjal. Namun, kebiasaan ini belum sepenuhnya menjadi gaya hidup, khususnya mahasiswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami kebiasaan, persepsi, dan alasan mahasiswa FISIP Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU) dalam mengonsumsi air putih. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan mengumpulkan data melalui observasi non-partisipan, wawancara mendalam, studi pustaka, dan dokumentasi terhadap enam informan mahasiswa dan dua informan ahli medis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan keberagaman dalam kebiasaan konsumsi air putih informan mahasiswa. Empat dari enam informan mahasiswa mengonsumsi air putih sesuai anjuran WHO (2 liter/hari), sementara dua informan mahasiswa FISIP USU lainnya mengonsumsi air putih kurang dari 2 liter/hari. Persepsi mahasiswa terhadap air putih ialah positif, dimana para informan mahasiswa FISIP USU mengaitkan konsumsi air putih dengan manfaat kesehatan seperti pencernaan yang lancar, fungsi ginjal, dan konsentrasi. Alasan utama informan mahasiswa FISIP USU mengonsumsi air putih ialah karena kesadaran kesehatan, pengalaman pribadi dan keluarga, serta



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pengalaman sosial. Meskipun demikian, preferensi rasa yang rendah terhadap air putih masih menjadi penghambat perilaku konsumsi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya edukasi berkelanjutan mengenai kebiasaan konsumsi air yang sehat dikalangan mahasiswa.

Keyword: Mahasiswa, Kesehatan, Air, Persepsi, Kebiasaan

1. Introduction

Water is a basic human body need that is very important to support various functions of organs in the body. Consuming enough water can help the body perform optimally, and can prevent various health problems such as dehydration, decreased concentration, and even chronic diseases such as kidney failure (Penggali et al., 2016).

Not all individuals realize the importance of consuming sufficient water according to WHO recommendations, namely 2 to 3 liters of water per day (Briawan et al., 2011). The low awareness of drinking water among teenagers and young adults has become a concern in Indonesia. Quoting the writing Merita et al. (2018), the THIRST study or The Indonesian Regional Hydration Study shows that the age groups of 15-18 years and 25-55 years are susceptible to mild dehydration due to lack of drinking water. This is further supported by the Report Riset Kesehatan Dasar (2018), which noted that 0.13% of teenagers aged 15-24 years suffer from chronic kidney failure, which is mostly caused by a lack of drinking water. Several previous studies have examined water consumption habits from various perspectives. Dayfi (2022), examined the drinking water habits of DIII Nursing students at Samawa University using a quantitative approach and found that the majority of respondents (68.6%) had a habit of drinking less water. Meanwhile, research by Wahyu Widianari & Daryaswanti (2023), found that visual education in schools can shape students' positive attitudes towards drinking water. Thus, before conducting interventions in the form of education, it is necessary to explore the habits of drinking water among students. To the author's knowledge, this research has never been conducted on FISIP USU students.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative method, using various practices such as interviews, field notes, and documentation to collect data. The informants of this study consisted of 6 FISIP USU students and 2 medical expert informants, namely dr. Boy and dr. Mimi.

The process of selecting FISIP USU student informants was carried out after the researcher observed several FISIP USU students for approximately one month. The informants were not simply selected, but asked several questions to prospective informants, such as *"Do you bring a drinking bottle to campus every time? Are you willing to be interviewed about your daily drinking water consumption habits?"*. When prospective informants agreed to be interviewed, the researcher immediately placed the informant's name into the list of informants in this article. In this article, the names of FISIP USU student informants are disguised by mutual agreement between the informant and the researcher. Unlike the selection of FISIP USU student informants, medical expert informants were selected based on the researcher's personal closeness.

The data collection techniques used in this study are non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, literature studies and documentation. Non-participant observation is a research method that is carried out by observing a behavior or phenomenon without participating directly (Hasanah, 2017). Non-participant observation was conducted from a distance by the researcher on several prospective informants of FISIP USU students as previously explained. After non-participant observation was conducted and the researcher received approval from prospective informants of FISIP USU students to be interviewed, the researcher and prospective informants of FISIP USU students made a schedule to conduct in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain deeper information and understanding from the interviewees about the problem being studied (Yona, 2014). In-depth interviews were conducted with informants from FISIP USU students via

zoom and Whatsapp calls. When the information provided by FISIP USU student informants was lacking, the researcher rescheduled the schedule to conduct interviews with informants directly or face-to-face. In-depth interviews with medical expert informants were conducted via Whatsapp calls, this was due to the distance between the medical expert informants and the researcher. Data collection was also carried out by conducting literature studies and documentation. Literature studies were conducted by searching for literature to add data that could support and strengthen primary data, namely the results of in-depth interviews. Documentation was carried out by documenting several photos, such as photos of the research location, evidence of in-depth interviews online, and voice recordings during in-depth interviews.

In this study, data analysis was conducted through three stages. First, the researcher used source triangulation to verify information from informants of USU FISIP students on the benefits of drinking water with information provided by medical experts on the benefits of drinking water viewed from a health perspective. Source triangulation is a test of data from several sources of informants whose information will be obtained (Nurfajriani et al., 2024). Second, the data that has been collected through the previous data collection technique is then presented descriptively in the form of a narrative which has been classified based on the themes that emerged in the field findings, such as the drinking water consumption habits of FISIP USU student informants, the perception of FISIP USU student informants towards drinking water, and the reasons why FISIP USU student informants consume water. Finally, the three researchers draw conclusions or verify by rechecking the data that has been analyzed with the existing field findings.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Drinking Water Habits

Drinking water habits among FISIP USU student informants show diversity. Based on the results of in-depth interviews, it was found that FISIP USU student informants have drinking water habits that are influenced by various factors, such as personal preferences and their knowledge about the benefits of drinking water. The field findings also show that the drinking water consumption habits of FISIP USU student informants are divided into 3 categories, namely routine consumption habits, consumption habits based on activities, and non-routine consumption habits. Routine consumption habits and consumption habits based on activities are grouped into the habit of drinking water of 2 liters per day based on the category of the amount of water consumed, while non-routine consumption habits are grouped into the habit of drinking water of less than 2 liters per day.

FISIP USU student informants who are in the 2 liters of water consumption per day section are informants who have a high preference for water. Of the 6 FISIP USU student informants, there are 4 informants who are in the 2 liters of water consumption per day section. The first is informant Fazri, he has a habit of drinking 2 liters of water per day because he has a high preference (likes water), because according to him water is very important water and the healthiest water to consume every day, he even has times when he will drink water. Informant Fazri said,

“In the morning, I usually wake up with 2 to 3 small glasses, then at 10 am I'm thirsty again and drink 2 more glasses, at noon after taking a shower or if I'm thirsty I drink 2 more glasses, then before eating I drink a glass first, a small glass, then after eating I drink 2 to 3 more glasses of water. I usually use a small glass that is 200 or 250 ml. So if you add it up, it's more than 2 liters, but I don't know exactly how much”.

Another informant, Nita, revealed that she also really likes water and drinks it regularly every day, but she does not count the exact amount of water she drinks. She said,

“I don't think so, 2 liters is just more. When I drink, I don't use a glass, but I use a 1.5 liter kettle. Because I feel that if I use a glass a few times, I won't be satisfied, but if I use a kettle, I can drink so much, so I'm satisfied drinking water. Then in one day I can finish those 2 kettles, they're 1.5 liters, so that's more or less.” 2 to 3 liters, yes,

but I can't count for sure. When I drink that much, I feel like I'm peeing so often that I'm afraid why I'm peeing so much”.

No different from Nita, informant Tama admitted that he consumes enough water every day and according to the recommended standards. However, he did not calculate the exact amount of water he drinks in a day. Informant Puri also revealed that he has a high preference for water.

On the other hand, there are 2 informants from FISIP USU students who are included in the informant group with a water consumption of less than 2 liters per day. This is due to their lack of interest and liking for water itself.

Students in this group have a low preference for water, so they only drink water when they feel thirsty. However, informants in this category still feel that the amount of water they drink in a day is sufficient. Like informant Vika, she doesn't like plain water because it tastes bland. She said that *“I drink very little plain water, less than 2 liters, that was because I don't like plain water because it has no taste, and after that I often forget and am lazy to get plain water”*, she explained. Although she consumes less than 2 liters of plain water per day, Vika said that she feels that the amount of water she drinks is enough.

Unlike informant Vika who doesn't like plain water because it tastes bland, informant Luna doesn't like plain water because it tastes bitter, she said *“I don't really like it, because I'm someone who gets sick easily and often takes medicine. That's why I can imagine that plain water tastes bitter”*, explained Luna. According to Luna, the bitterness of plain water has an impact on the amount of plain water she drinks in a day, Luna also revealed the amount of water she drinks. She said,

“The amount of drinking per day using a glass, usually I drink a small glass, at most 5 to 10 glasses, I don't know if it's enough for health or not, but because I only drink when I'm thirsty, so that's enough. I also think it's not according to the recommendation, I also learned about the recommendation from the internet, from high school. I just pretend to drink 2 liters because I only drink when I'm thirsty. Then when I just wake up, usually 1 glass of tea, 1 glass for tea is about how much, 250 or 300 milliliters, if for sports maybe 1 big bottle, maybe finish the 2 liters”.

The results of the discussion above show that the habit of drinking water among informants of FISIP USU students is very diverse. This diversity shows the influence of personal preferences towards water itself. Most of the informants of FISIP USU students showed their preference for water and made it a drink that must be drunk every day according to the recommendations that have been set, while a small number of other informants only consumed water when they felt thirsty because they did not like the taste of water which was bland and bitter. This is in line with research Ranteallo (2014), who found that even though students have positive knowledge and attitudes towards water, they still choose to consume other drinks that have flavors. This shows that individual preferences for water greatly influence a person's water consumption habits. So it can be concluded that the biggest factor in the water consumption habits of FISIP USU students is their preference for water itself.

3.2 Student Perceptions of Plain Water

Perception is the process by which individuals understand and interpret the information they receive. Quoting Bimo Walgito (2008: 70) in writing Jayanti & Arista (2019), perception is not just a passive process in receiving stimuli, but an active mechanism in which a person selects, organizes, and interprets information based on experience, knowledge, and social environment. In this study, the perception of informants of FISIP USU students towards drinking water can be interpreted as their understanding of the benefits, functions and importance of drinking water in everyday life. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with informants of FISIP USU students, it was found that their perception of drinking water was generally positive. Quoting Robbins (2002: 14) in writing Putri

& Ardoni (2018), Positive perception is an individual's understanding of a particular object with a positive view so that it can be perceived properly.

Most of the informants from USU FISIP students stated that they consider water as the main body need that must be met every day. All informants from USU FISIP students also stated that since they were little, they had been introduced and taught to always drink water and not drink drinks that have coloring and flavoring. Nowadays, they realize that water is very important for maintaining body health, such as helping the metabolism process, increasing concentration, and preventing chronic diseases such as kidney failure and damage to other organ functions. Several informants from USU FISIP students said that they often experience difficulty concentrating when they do not consume enough water, one of them is informant Fazri. Informant Fazri admitted that when he lacks water, he becomes less focused. Fazri also said, *"If I don't drink enough during college, I become unfocused, have a headache, and feel sleepy. The solution is, I ask permission to go out to buy water"*, he explained.

This shows that the informants of USU FISIP students are aware of the importance of consuming enough water as one way to keep the body optimal. This is in line with various literatures that state that water can help maintain body balance. In addition to helping the metabolic process in the human body, consuming enough water can also help humans maintain body balance, focus and concentration, and reduce the risk of dehydration in the body (Sunandar et al., 2022).

Another informant from USU's FISIP student stated that consuming enough water can smooth their digestive system. One of the informants who stated this was informant Puri based on his experience, he said,

"What I feel the most is definitely that my digestion is smooth, like I said earlier, because if my digestion is not smooth I get bored. I think why haven't I pooped today, oh that means I haven't drunk enough, so I drink a lot".

The statement of informant Puri who stated that by consuming enough drinking water makes the digestive system run smoothly is in line with the statement made by Dr. Mimi. He stated that one of the dangers of not consuming enough water is digestive problems, for example difficult and hard bowel movements to urinary tract infections. This is also in line with the writing Purnama et al. (2024), which states that one of the roles of water in the body is in the digestion process which starts from the formation of saliva to the stage of breaking down food so as to prevent difficulty defecating or constipation.

In addition, several other USU FISIP student informants also linked the benefits of water to kidney health. One informant who stated this was informant Vika. Informant Vika had a social experience where her neighbor suffered from kidney failure due to lack of drinking water. The incident experienced by her neighbor made informant Vika realize that water is very important for the body, especially for kidney function. Informant Vika said,

"I've also heard, and in my village, because he rarely drinks water his kidneys are damaged. I know this from gossip from the neighbors, they said it's because he doesn't like drinking water, likes drinking thousands of flavors that's why he has kidney disease".

Although the perception of FISIP USU student informants towards water tends to be positive, not all students show consistency in their water consumption behavior. Several informants admitted that even though they know the benefits of water, they still often choose other drinks such as coffee, sweet tea, and other flavored drinks. These informants are informants Vika and Luna. This is based on their low preference for water. Informants who have a low preference for water are examples that show a gap between perception and consumption behavior.

Actually, the habit of drinking water has been formed since FISIP USU student informants were small. This habit was formed through the teachings of their parents at home. They were taught

to drink water, by providing knowledge that water is good for the body, not other drinks. However, as they get older, FISIP USU student informants are increasingly familiar with many types of drinks that divert their taste to the taste of the drink itself, such as informants Vika and Luna. They admit that they don't like water because it tastes bland and bitter, therefore they prefer sweet drinks. They even admitted that the amount of water they drink in a day is not up to 2 liters, even though they feel that the amount of water they consume is enough.

The difference between perception and action shows a gap between knowledge and behavior of drinking water. This is in line with research conducted by Az-Zahra et al. (2024), which shows that the positive perception held by respondents towards the benefits of drinking water does not reflect consumption behavior in accordance with recommendations due to factors, namely habits and the influence of the daily environment. Similarly, in this study, all student informants knew that drinking water was healthier than other drinks, but different taste preferences provided a gap between perception and drinking water consumption behavior.

3.3 Reasons Why Students Drink Water

Drinking water habits among FISIP USU students are influenced by several reasons, such as health awareness, personal and social experiences, and self-awareness. This study found that the main reasons FISIP USU students consume water are for health reasons and reasons to fulfill the body's basic needs, namely thirst.

A) Health Reasons

Almost all informants stated that the main reason they consumed water was to maintain their health. This awareness arose from various different backgrounds, ranging from personal experiences, family influences to self-awareness.

a. Personal and Social Experiences as Health Reasons.

Several informants linked drinking water with their own experiences of illness or a history of illness in their family. For example, informant Tama, who had an experience of illness due to lack of water, explained,

“The reason for drinking water is definitely health because we also, probably already know in general what water is for, what are its benefits like what I mentioned earlier. So health is prioritized. Then uh what, I was once told to drink a lot of water because at that time I had a sore throat, so my mother advised me to drink water. My mother knows where it came from, I don't know either, but if something happens I always tell my parents about my complaints. Then in order to prevent uh disorders in the digestive system, we have to diligently consume water. So we prevent first, then treat it. To be healthier, avoid disease”.

Not much different from informant Puri who has experience of illness in her family due to lack of drinking water consumption is a strong motivation for her to drink water regularly. Puri said,

“In my opinion, drinking lots of water can help bowel movements become smooth and also minimize kidney disease. Because there is an experience in the family, since I was little I was told to drink water continuously, because my family history has kidney disease, my grandmother died from kidney dialysis. So since I was little I was told to try to drink water, so I was scared, drink water later my grandmother will have kidney disease”.

On the other hand, there is informant Vika who consumes water for health reasons based on social experience. Informant Vika is someone who has a low preference or does not like water but still consumes water because she is aware of the negative impacts of colored and flavored drinks. This awareness was obtained by her through social experiences that took place in her residential environment. Informant Vika said:

"Because of health reasons, even though I don't really like drinking water, it's impossible for me to drink ice every day, empty ice and flavored ice aren't good for my health, so even though I drink a little water a day, at least I drink water. Don't just drink empty ice, drink colored water because it's not good for your health, for your kidneys, like the gossip from my neighbor who has kidney disease because she doesn't drink enough water. Besides, if I keep drinking ice, I'll get a cough, a runny nose, and colored water isn't good for my kidneys either. That's why I keep drinking water even though it's a little. My friends often advise me to drink a little, so I keep drinking water even though it's a little".

Informant Vika also admitted that the amount of water she drinks is still below the amount recommended by WHO. However, she feels that the amount she consumes is sufficient. Based on the reasons explained by informant Vika, it shows that health reasons based on social experience can be a motivating factor for someone to consume water more regularly.

b. Self-Awareness of the Importance of Maintaining Health

Some informants consume water based on their own awareness without any encouragement from others. For example, informant Nita has a personal awareness of the importance of drinking water. She naturally likes water and feels its benefits in soothing her throat. Informant Nita said,

"Alhamdulillah, the reason is purely because of my awareness of the importance of water, because I really like water ... When I haven't touched water, it feels like my throat feels like it doesn't feel good. If I'm given water, it feels relieved. Another reason I drink water is because I'm afraid of kidney disease," explained Nita.

Similar to informant Nita, informant Fazri also stated that water is very important for the body, this shows his awareness of the importance of water for the body.

B) Reasons for Fulfilling Basic Needs (Thirst)

In addition to drinking water because of thirst, there are informants from USU FISIP students who drink water purely because of physiological needs. This was shown by informant Luna. According to Luna, drinking water is not entirely because of health awareness, but only because of thirst. Luna said,

"The reason is because of thirst, at most because my mother told me to, if that can't be denied. Then when I have a fever, my parents tell me to so that the fever goes down quickly. I feel that because when we drink a lot of water, we urinate more, so I feel, I don't know, like it's lighter. Plus, the price is cheaper," explained Luna.

The findings of the field from in-depth interviews with informants of FISIP USU students showed that the majority of FISIP USU student informants consumed water for health reasons, either based on personal experience, family history of illness, self-awareness, or social experience. A small number of others consumed water because of the body's needs such as thirst. In general, these reasons indicate that the practice of drinking water among students is not only a habit, but also a social practice influenced by experience, health values, and social relations and the surrounding area.

4. Conclusion

The habit of drinking water among FISIP USU student informants has actually been taught by their parents since childhood. As they get older, their knowledge of drinking water increases little by little. Until now, the habit of drinking water among FISIP USU student informants is no longer because of teachings from their parents, but because of knowledge, perception, and taste preferences.

Although most FISIP USU student informants have a positive perception of drinking water and its health benefits, not all of them show appropriate consumption behavior. Four out of six FISIP USU student informants have routine consumption habits and consumption habits based on activities because they are aware of the importance of drinking water for body hydration, while the other two FISIP USU student informants have irregular drinking water habits because they do not like the bland and bitter taste of water. The main reason FISIP USU student informants consume water is because of health, which is to maintain body health, although not all FISIP USU student informants consume water according to WHO recommendations, and other reasons are personal or family experiences of kidney disease due to lack of drinking water.

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Conflict of Interest

None to declare

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