

## **MAKASSAR'S PUBLIC HEALTH PERCEPTION IN THE TRADITION OF CONSUMPTION OF LALAPAN: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION**

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### **Abstract**

Culture and communication are two entities that form each other, where culture is learned through the process of communication, while communication reflects the cultural value system that lives in society. In this context, culture is not only understood as a habit, but as a social construct that is inherited across generations through family interactions, formal education, and informal learning such as folklore, local beliefs, and everyday practices. In the people of Makassar, the tradition of consuming lalapan is one of the expressions of eating culture that is full of health meaning, because this practice is not only related to the fulfillment of biological needs, but also represents local knowledge about the balance of the body and nature. The view of health in the local tradition is built through collective experience and disseminated through interpersonal communication between generations, especially in the family and community environment. These values are learned from an early age through the example of parents, verbal advice, and social reinforcement in daily life, thus forming the perception that lalapan is a symbol of a natural healthy lifestyle. This study aims to describe how the people of Makassar construct the meaning of health through the tradition of consumption of lalapan in the perspective of culture and health communication. The qualitative approach is used to explore people's subjective understanding of the concept of health, the process of inheriting the value of eating culture, and the role of communication in maintaining these practices. Through in-depth interviews and literature studies, this study found that Makassar's public health views are formed through a multi-layered social learning process, including informal learning, formal education, and internalization of cultural values through local narratives and collective customs. Thus, the tradition of consuming lalapan not only functions as a food practice, but also as a medium of health communication that strengthens cultural identity while maintaining the sustainability of local values in the face of modern social changes.

**Keywords:** Culture, Health Communication, Makassar Community, Lalapan Tradition, Health Views

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## INTRODUCTION

Humans are social creatures as well as cultured creatures; Therefore, the definition of "healthy" is never purely biological, but is always produced through the social interactions, language, values, and daily practices that live in the community. In the framework of modern health communication, culture is understood as a "field of meaning" that determines how people interpret health information, choose referral sources, and decide on prevention and treatment. Recent evidence shows that Indonesians' perceptions of health information are often influenced by family, friends, and social media networks, and go hand in hand with trust in traditional practices, so health communication strategies need to be culturally sensitive and cannot be standardized (Setianti et al., 2025). At this point, the relationship of communication culture is the key to reading traditional food practices not just eating habits, but a mechanism of inheriting health knowledge.

In the people of Makassar, the practice of daily eating including the consumption of fresh/raw vegetables as a complement to side dishes and chili sauce can be read as a food tradition that contains social values, identity, and interaction procedures. The study of Makassar's culinary confirms that ethnic food is not only an economic commodity, but also a symbol of cultural heritage that shapes the narrative of "authenticity" and modernity of the city (Syahrul et al., 2022). With this perspective, the consumption of fresh vegetables (which in Indonesian practice is often present as "lalapan") is not enough to be understood as a complementary menu, but rather as a cultural practice that has its own logic: how families teach children to choose food, how parents give health advice, and how communities interpret being fit through certain diets.

However, local food traditions are always negotiating with social change. The nutrition transition literature in Indonesia confirms that there is a shift in consumption from fresh food to modern/ultra-processed food, influenced by urbanization, lifestyle changes, and food system transformation. Analysis of national consumption patterns shows that the quality of the diet tends to decline along with the increase in the consumption of unhealthy foods and the decrease in healthy food consumption, especially in urban areas (Damián et al., 2022). Other findings based on the Indonesian Food Barometer also confirm that modernization changes eating behaviors (where to eat, how to serve, eat together, and eating habits), which ultimately increases susceptibility to the risk of non-communicable diseases. The context of Makassar as a big city in the Eastern Region of Indonesia is sociologically very relevant to read in this dynamic.

These changes in consumption patterns have an impact on the increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) which are strongly related to a low-fiber diet and high exposure to ultra-processed foods. Recent scientific evidence shows a consistent association between the consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPF) and an increased risk of obesity and various adverse health outcomes (Ghosh et al., 2023), and cohort evidence also corroborates the association of UPF with the incidence of hypertension (Musiawan et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, epidemiological studies on diet and hypertension place unhealthy food consumption as an important determinant, so that health promotion interventions based on eating behavior are becoming increasingly strategic. Thus, the tradition of consuming fresh/raw vegetables can be positioned as

a protective capital – but it still needs to be read critically, as the tradition itself faces the challenges of food safety and changing preferences of younger generations.

At the local level, the issue of fruit consumption and the nutritional status of adolescents is also evident in South Sulawesi. Studies in Makassar show that fruit consumption and physical activity are related to nutritional status, as well as indicating the complexity of determinants (total energy, sedentary behavior, modern diet) in urban settings (Goel et al., 2024). Meanwhile, research on adolescent girls in the Tanakeke Islands, South Sulawesi, shows that nutrition education based on behavioral theory can increase fruit and vegetable consumption, which emphasizes the importance of designing health messages that are appropriate to socio-cultural contexts and community conditions (Indriasari et al., 2026). This means that "eating vegetables" is not only an issue of food availability, but also an issue of communication, norms, and the formation of inherited habits.

However, the consumption of raw/fresh vegetables has a risk dimension that should not be ignored, especially related to hygiene, sanitation, and residues of agricultural chemicals. Research in Indonesia shows a relationship between food safety knowledge, seller hygiene, and Salmonella contamination in raw fields (Irianti et al., 2022). Other studies have shown that the sanitation problem of vegetable plants that have the potential to be contaminated with worm eggs/soil-transmitted helminths under improper washing conditions (Pramana, 2022), and there is also evidence linking the habit of washing raw vegetables/vegetables with certain parasitic infestations (Fadillah et al., 2024). In terms of pesticide residues, residue testing research on vegetables showed findings of residue contamination in some samples even though they were still below certain thresholds, confirming the importance of food safety governance from upstream to downstream (Dunijaji & Suter, 2021). Therefore, research on the tradition of eating fresh vegetables in Makassar society must be placed on two sides at once: the potential health benefits and the need for food safety literacy.

In the perspective of health culture and communication, eating traditions are not just "what is eaten", but "how health knowledge is shaped and passed down". The literature on culture-based health communication emphasizes that the effectiveness of health messages increases when it resonates with local values, colloquial language, social authority (community figures), and people's life experiences (Indriasari et al., 2024). Even in the context of contemporary health promotion, local culture can be a "bridge" to negotiate modern practices not as ornaments, but as a framework of meaning that directs community compliance and acceptance (Qalby et al., 2025). Thus, the tradition of eating fresh vegetables in the people of Makassar is not only a topic of nutrition, but also an important arena to see how "healthy" is produced through family communication, social stories, shared practices during meals, and informal knowledge that lives between generations.

Departing from this argument, the research "Makassar Public Health Perception in the Tradition of Plantar Consumption: Cultural Perspective and Communication of Plantar Health" is relevant to uncover: (1) how the people of Makassar interpret the concept of healthy in the tradition of eating fresh vegetables, (2) how the process of communication in the home, community, and public space inherits these health beliefs, and (3) how the tradition negotiates with modern challenges such as food ultra-

processing, lifestyle changes, and food safety risks. This focus is important because it provides a scientific basis for health promotion design that does not impose a single model, but harnesses the power of local culture while strengthening food safety literacy to keep traditions adaptive, safe, and relevant.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Cultural Function*

Culture is a system of values, knowledge, and social practices that govern how humans adapt to their environment. Samovar et al. (2014) explained that culture is composed of various elements of life, such as food, shelter, work, social systems, and life goals, all of which function to help humans maintain their survival. The essence of culture is to provide adaptive guidelines for individuals to be able to live in harmony with their physical and social environment.

Triandis emphasized that culture functions to improve the ability of community members to adapt to certain ecological contexts through a set of knowledge that is inherited collectively (Angesti, 2025). In other words, culture provides a "cognitive map" that guides humans in making daily decisions, including in choosing diet and maintaining health.

Sowell also places culture as a mechanism of social efficiency, which is a means to transmit valuable experiences across generations so that humans do not always need to learn from their own mistakes (Samovar et al., 2014). The inheritance process occurs through enculturation, which is the process of learning culture from an early age, both consciously and unconsciously. Bates and Plog assert that all patterns of human behavior – including how we interpret food, disease, and health – are shaped through this process of enculturation.

In the context of Makassar society, the function of culture is evident in traditional eating practices that are passed down between generations. The tradition of consuming fresh vegetables as a complement to side dishes and chili sauce is not just a culinary habit, but an expression of adaptive values towards the natural environment of South Sulawesi which is rich in local food sources. This eating culture is also a means of inheriting health knowledge based on collective experience.

### *Humans and the Environment*

Humans are an integral part of the ecosystem and cannot be separated from other environmental elements. Human survival depends heavily on the balance of the mutual relationship between man and nature. Irianto (2013) explained that human domination of the environment can produce three possible environmental qualities, namely deterioration, sustainability, or improvement. Therefore, humans have an ecological responsibility to maintain harmony with their environment.

The relationship between humans and plants, animals, and microorganisms is interdependent. Without the existence of other living beings, man cannot sustain his life. This ecological awareness is reflected in traditional food practices that utilize natural products directly, including the consumption of fresh vegetables as part of a daily diet.

From a public health perspective, the social environment also has a great influence on individual behavior. Family, community, and local norms shape eating habits and food preferences. Recent research shows that changes in the social environment due to urbanization are driving a shift in consumption patterns from fresh foods to ultra-processed foods, which has an impact on an increased risk of non-communicable diseases (Nurhasan et al., 2024; Febriana et al., 2024). This condition shows that the human-environmental relationship is not only ecological, but also sociocultural.

### ***Health Culture and Communication***

Health communication is the process of conveying, exchanging, and forming meanings about health in certain socio-cultural contexts (Hardiyono et al., 2026). The meaning of healthy is not formed individually, but is constructed through social interactions that take place within the family and society. The perception of the Indonesian people towards health information is greatly influenced by the nearest social network, so that interpersonal communication has a dominant role compared to formal sources.

The culture-based health communication approach emphasizes that health messages will be more effective if they are aligned with local values, everyday language, and people's life experiences (Al Husain, 2020). Within this framework, the tradition of eating becomes a symbolic communication medium that transmits healthy values implicitly through shared practice, parental advice, and habituation from an early age.

Thus, health communication does not only take place in clinical spaces or mass media, but is also present in domestic activities such as cooking and eating together. The tradition of consuming lalapan in the people of Makassar can be understood as a form of informal health communication that instills the perception that natural foods contribute to the fitness of the body.

### ***Eating Culture and Consumption Behavior***

Eating culture reflects social identity as well as an adaptive response to natural conditions. Studies on ethnic food in Makassar show that local culinary practices not only function as a fulfillment of biological needs, but also as a symbol of togetherness

and cultural heritage (Nas et al., 2025). The consumption of fresh vegetables in local traditions is part of a diet that is relatively high in fiber and micronutrients.

However, modernization brings new challenges. Increased consumption of ultra-processed foods has been shown to be associated with obesity, hypertension, and metabolic disorders (Rachman et al., 2023). Studies in South Sulawesi also showed that low fruit and vegetable consumption correlated with adolescent nutritional status (Ansar et al., 2024). This indicates the need to reinvigorate healthy traditional food practices through a cultural approach.

### *Construction of Healthy Meaning in the Tradition of Eating Lalapan*

The meaning of healthy in society is not shaped by medical science alone, but by collective experience that is passed down across generations. The tradition of eating lalapan in the people of Makassar represents local knowledge about the balance of the body and nature. These values are learned through family habits, social stories, and daily practices, so that they become part of cultural identity.

In the perspective of health communication, this tradition serves as a means of informal education that shapes preventive behaviors toward disease. However, the practice of consuming raw vegetables also needs to be accompanied by food safety literacy, considering the risk of microbial contamination and pesticide residues (Irianti et al., 2022; Duniaji & Suter, 2021). Therefore, this study positions the tradition of eating lalapan as an important arena to understand how the people of Makassar construct the meaning of health while negotiating with modern challenges.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive descriptive design, which aims to deeply understand the health views of the Makassar community in the tradition of consumption through the perspective of culture and health communication. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore subjective meanings, social experiences, and the process of inheriting health values that live in the community (Sahabuddin et al., 2023). Qualitative research places the researcher as the main instrument that interacts directly with informants in their natural environment, so that social reality is understood based on the perspective of the cultural actors themselves (Sugiyono, 2017).

Conceptually, this research is based on an interpretive paradigm, which views social reality as the result of the construction of meaning through human interaction. Therefore, the focus of the research is directed at how the people of Makassar interpret the concept of health, practice the tradition of eating lalapan, and communicate these values in their daily lives. This approach is in line with the character of qualitative

research that emphasizes context, process, and holistic understanding of social phenomena (Hayes in Mulyana, 2007).

The location of the study was determined in the Makassar City area, South Sulawesi, with the consideration that this area represents the meeting between local traditions and the influence of food modernization. The research informants consist of the main informants, namely members of the Makassar community who actively carry out the tradition of consuming lalapan in their daily lives, as well as key informants who include community leaders and individuals who are considered to understand the practices of the local eating culture. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, based on the criteria of direct involvement in eating traditions, life experiences in the Makassar environment, and the ability to provide information relevant to the focus of the research.

The data collection technique was carried out through in-depth interviews and literature studies. The interviews were used to explore the informants' views on the meaning of health, the reasons for maintaining the tradition of eating lalapan, and the process of inheriting these values between generations. Literature studies are used to strengthen conceptual analysis related to culture, health communication, and food consumption patterns. The data obtained were then analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn, emphasizing the relationship between field findings and theoretical frameworks.

The validity test of the data was carried out by the source triangulation technique, which is comparing the results of interviews between informants and matching them with literature findings. This triangulation aims to increase the credibility of the data and ensure that the researcher's interpretation is not one-sided. Thus, the results of the study are expected to be able to provide a comprehensive picture of the construction of the meaning of Makassar's public health in the tradition of consumption of lalapan as a cultural practice that continues to adapt in the midst of social changes.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

### *1. The Tradition of Consuming Fresh Vegetables as a Cultural Practice of Eating in Makassar*

The results of the study show that in the daily life of the people of Makassar, the consumption of fresh vegetables as a complement to side dishes and chili sauce is still part of the family diet, although it is not always called terminologically as "lalapan" as in Sundanese culture. This practice generally comes in the form of raw or semi-cooked vegetables served with fish, animal protein-based side dishes, and Makassar's signature chili sauce. For the community, the presence of these vegetables

is understood as a complement that "enhances" food, both in terms of taste and body balance.

This view does not appear suddenly, but is the result of cultural inheritance that lasts across generations. The informant mentioned that since childhood they have been accustomed to eating fresh vegetables by their parents, especially in the context of eating together at home. The custom is not conveyed through formal instructions, but through example, repetition, and habituation in the family routine. This is in line with the view of Samovar et al. that culture functions as an adaptive system that is learned through the process of enculturation, either consciously or unconsciously, through daily interactions in the immediate social environment.

In the context of Makassar, this eating tradition is also influenced by geographical conditions and the availability of local food sources, especially vegetables and seafood. The combination of fish side dishes with fresh vegetables is understood by the public as a "complete" diet that provides energy while maintaining body fitness. Thus, the practice of consuming fresh vegetables is not only a culinary habit, but an expression of cultural adaptation to the natural environment and human biological needs.

## ***2. Enculturation and Inheritance of the Meaning of Health in Makassar Families***

Field findings show that the family is the main arena in the process of inheriting the meaning of health related to the consumption of fresh vegetables. Parents, especially mothers, play a central role in determining food menus while instilling an understanding of foods that are considered good for the body. Children learn about "healthy food" not through medical definitions, but through direct experience: what is provided at the dinner table, what parents recommend, and what is associated with a strong body or rarely being sick.

This process reflects what Bates and Plog refer to as the cultural character that must be studied. Makassar children are slowly internalizing family eating habits as part of their identity. The consumption of fresh vegetables is not seen as a health obligation, but as a "way of eating people at home". In the long run, this pattern shapes preferences and habits that carry over into adulthood.

In addition to informal learning in the family, some informants also mentioned the strengthening of formal institutions such as schools, through health lessons or teachers' recommendations on the importance of eating vegetables. However, this formal learning tends to be reinforcer, not the main former. The strongest meaning of health is built through family interaction and eating together, which shows that health communication in Makassar society is more effective when it takes place interpersonal and contextually.

### **3. *Culture as Communication: Eating as a Medium of Conveying Health Values***

In the perspective of cultural communication, the results of this study affirm the principle that culture is communication and communication is culture. The tradition of eating in Makassar families not only serves as an activity to meet biological needs, but also as a medium of symbolic communication. Through the practice of eating together, the values of health, togetherness, and life balance are transmitted without having to be explicitly spoken.

When parents provide fresh vegetables at every meal, it becomes a nonverbal message that natural foods are considered important for the body. Children learn to "read" this message through observation and imitation. This process is in line with Edward T. Hall's view of culture as something that is often "unconscious" because it is so inherent in everyday life.

The results of the study also show that the meaning of healthy in Makassar society is not separated from the experience of the body. Informants often associate the consumption of fresh vegetables with a body that feels light, rarely sick, or smooth digestion. This perception forms the cultural legitimacy of the eating practice, so that the tradition is maintained even though modern diets are increasingly accessible.

### **4. *Negotiating Local Eating Traditions with Food Modernization***

Although the tradition of consuming fresh vegetables still persists, the results of the study show that there is a strong negotiation between traditional diets and the influence of food modernization. The informant mentioned that fast food and processed foods are now increasingly consumed, especially by the younger generation, for practical and lifestyle reasons. However, in many Makassar families, the modern food has not completely replaced the traditional menu, but rather side by side with it.

This negotiation is evident in everyday practice, where fresh vegetables are still served even if the side dish or main menu follows a modern pattern. This shows that there are efforts to maintain the cultural identity of eating in the midst of social change. However, modernization also brings consequences in the form of a decrease in the frequency of meals together and a reduction in food processing time at home, which has the potential to weaken the process of cultural health value inheritance.

These findings are in line with the literature on nutritional transition in Indonesia that shows a shift from fresh foods to ultra-processed foods, especially in urban areas. In the context of Makassar, the tradition of eating fresh vegetables can be seen as cultural capital that has the potential to protect the community from the negative impact of modern diets, if it continues to be maintained and strengthened through culturally sensitive health communication.

## 5. *Food Safety Literacy and the Challenges of Consuming Fresh Vegetables*

The results of the study also revealed the partial awareness of the people of Makassar on the issue of food safety in the consumption of fresh vegetables. Some informants are aware of the importance of washing vegetables thoroughly before consumption, but understanding of pesticide residues and organic food standards is still limited. Price and availability factors are the main obstacles in choosing organic food, especially for families with middle to lower economic levels.

Organic vegetables are still perceived as expensive and exclusive products that are easier to find in modern markets than traditional markets. This condition causes most people to continue to rely on non-organic vegetables, with mitigation strategies in the form of repeated washing or soaking. These findings show that healthy eating traditions are not always accompanied by adequate food safety literacy.

In the context of health communication, this condition confirms the importance of an educational approach that does not negate local traditions, but instead reinforces them with contextual scientific knowledge. The tradition of consuming fresh vegetables in the people of Makassar can be a strategic entrance for culture-based health promotion, as well as a means of increasing awareness about food safety without damaging deep-rooted cultural practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the tradition of consuming fresh vegetables as part of the diet of the people of Makassar is not just a culinary practice, but a cultural expression that contains health values and is inherited across generations through the process of interpersonal communication in the family and community. The meaning of healthy is formed not primarily through formal education, but through daily habits, parental examples, and social interactions that take place in domestic spaces, thus making eating the main medium of culture-based health communication.

The results of the study confirm that health communication in Makassar society takes place implicitly through the practice of eating together, providing family menus, and narratives of body experiences associated with the consumption of fresh vegetables. This process shapes the collective perception that natural foods contribute to body fitness, good digestion, and physical endurance. Thus, the tradition of eating serves as a symbolic communication channel that transmits health knowledge without having to go through formal medical messages.

In the midst of food modernization and increasing consumption of processed foods, the tradition of consuming fresh vegetables still survives as cultural capital that has the potential to protect people from the negative impacts of modern diets.

However, this study also found that there are limitations in food safety literacy, especially related to pesticide residues and access to organic food, which shows the need to strengthen more contextual and culturally sensitive health communication.

Overall, this study concludes that culture-based health communication has a strategic role in maintaining healthy eating practices in the Makassar community. The tradition of consuming fresh vegetables can be positioned as an effective entry point for health promotion programs, with an approach that respects local wisdom while strengthening the scientific knowledge of the community. The integration of cultural values, family communication, and public health education is key to maintaining the sustainability of healthy food practices in the midst of ongoing social changes.

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