**Legal Protection of the Millennial Generation Against the Issue of Junk Food During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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**Abstract**

The millennial generation, as the nation's next-generation, needs safe food consumption and does not endanger their health and soul, even though in reality, the level of awareness of the younger generation to consume safe, quality, and nutritious food are still lacking because they prefer fast food because it is practical and tastes good regardless of the dangers that threaten fast food, namely in addition to being addictive, consuming too much fast food can cause complications, such as obesity or chronic diseases that can affect activities. This study aims to discuss legal protection for the millennial generation against the rise of fast food during the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacts the resilience of the nation's next generation. The research method uses a normative juridical method that uses secondary data as the primary data supported by empirical data, namely millennial consumers, and will be analyzed qualitatively. The study results showed that legal protection for the millennial generation already exists but is not optimal because the legal awareness of the millennial generation to the importance of consuming healthy and safe food is low, and there is no government alignment with healthy food management. Therefore, healthy food education is needed through social media, a millennial trend.

Keywords: Legal Protection, Millennial Generation, Junk Food, COVID-19 Pandemic
Introduction

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic in Indonesia at the beginning of 2019 or which was given a scientific name as COVID-19, has impacted humans' health problems. The COVID-19 pandemic has effects ranging from mild flu to severe ones equivalent to or even more severe than MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV (Kirigia et al., 2020), limiting people's daily activities.

Because the transmission of the pandemic was very fast, the Indonesian government then made policy rules for restrictions on traveling to and from countries included in the red zone of transmission during the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of these restrictions is to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19. This step follows several countries' policies (Dito Arditia, 2020). The policy rules for Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to the Implementation of Restrictions on Community Activities (PPKM) are indeed very difficult for community mobility, both socially and economically. However, this situation, on the other hand, actually makes the digitalization transformation more developed in all aspects of Indonesian people's life; this can be seen from the tendency to increase the way people socialize and communicate with people who switch to using digital media.

The change in people's lifestyles without exception also the millennial generation in using the internet, making them more choices in fulfilling their needs independently, even though the options made are often inaccurate and endanger their health, for example in choosing food products, especially fast food (junk food).

The millennial generation's choice of fast food is not only for heavy meals but also for snacks such as bread, cookies, cakes, contemporary coffee, soda, boba drinks (Kompas.com, 2020). Whereas based on research, consumption of fast food with high energy levels is one of the factors that can cause overweight or obesity (Ika Pamela, 2018). Fast food can increase the risk of several diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and blood fat disorders or dyslipidemia. In addition, fast food will also affect dental health for a long time. Fast food with high sugar content can cause dental caries or cavities (Octavia, L.I., 2018).

Risokesdas 2018 data shows that Indonesia has three nutrition-related problems (triple burden): stunting, wasting and obesity, and micronutrient deficiencies such as anemia. If detailed, it will be obtained data that 25.7% of adolescents aged 13-15 years and 26.9% of adolescents aged 16-18 years with short nutritional status. Then there are 8.7% of adolescents aged 13-15 years and 8.1% of adolescents aged 16-18 years with thin and very thin conditions. At the same time, the prevalence of overweight and obesity is 16.0% in adolescents aged 13-15 years and 13.5% in adolescents aged 16-18 years.

The data shows that teenagers or millennials have problems with nutrition. The emergence of nutritional problems occurs because of errors in determining or choosing food and beverage products. Nutritional problems that arise, which can be undernutrition or overnutrition, can undoubtedly increase susceptibility to disease, especially the risk of non-communicable diseases and infectious diseases such as COVID-19. Therefore, preventing the transmission of COVID-19 requires medicine or vaccines and, of course, the fulfillment of safe, quality, and healthy nutrition and nutrition, because good nutritional intake will undoubtedly increase the human body's resistance. Consumption of safe, quality, and nutritious food is essential in maintaining body resistance.
In a pandemic like today, the body's resistance becomes a person's strength as a preventive effort not to contract COVID-19. Nutrition and health issues are still the main things to fend off various problems with the spread of COVID-19. The nutrition and health problem is intended as a solution to anticipate the spread of COVID-19. Fulfillment of nutrition, safe quality nutrition, and good health for the millennial generation, of course, is very much needed and beneficial for the millennial generation to prepare them to grow up.

Good nutrition and nutrition are the foundation for every individual to reach their maximum potential. The millennial generation demands fulfilling nutritional needs to achieve full growth potential because nutrition and growth are integral. Therefore, if nutritional problems arise in the millennial generation, it will undoubtedly cause a decrease in academic potential a reduction in work capacity and productivity now and in the future. This aligns with the current direction of health development which focuses on promotive and preventive efforts. These efforts are considered to provide a broader and more efficient health impact from an economic perspective, especially in welcoming the 2045 Golden Generation.

Based on the above, it is appropriate for the millennial generation to get correct, precise, and accurate knowledge and information about food products, especially fast food that is safe, quality, and healthy. The problems discussed in this study will first discuss why the millennial generation is interested in fast food products during the COVID-19 pandemic and what forms of legal protection for the millennial generation against the dense junk food circulating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The problems that will be discussed are used to answer the purpose of this study, namely to find out and analyze the provision of legal protection for the millennial generation against the rise of junk food circulating in society today.

Research Method

This research is descriptive with normative juridical research, supported by empirical data. The primary data used is secondary data in primary, secondary, and tertiary legal materials obtained through library research and document studies to obtain actual and comprehensive data. Primary data in the form of in-depth interviews are used to explore legal protection for the millennial generation against the rise of junk food during the COVID-19 pandemic to obtain actual, reliable, and comprehensive data. The interview was conducted on 100 respondents, namely those categorized as millennials. This study will analyze all data using an interactive descriptive analysis method. This analysis is used to get an overview of legal protection efforts for the millennial generation against the rise of junk food during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results can be used as a guide for the development of further research. In conducting interactive descriptive analysis, the researcher moves between data collection and presentation. Each data collection stage is analyzed to ensure data deficiencies can be immediately identified so that this analysis continues until the data collection stage is complete.

Discussion

A. The millennial generation's interest in junk food during the COVID-19 pandemic

Recently, the world has been shocked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, which is said to be able to spread quickly from one human to another. This has caused WHO to set this
virus to be a pandemic status, a disease that has spread rapidly to various regions. A pandemic does not show how vast the area is but how fast the transmission process is. To anticipate the process of spreading, the government has also taken various actions that are advised to all levels of society. One of them is social distancing, where people are prohibited from gathering in crowds and even to keep themselves from being infected; without exception, millennials are also advised to maintain a minimum distance of one meter from other people. This causes millennial activities to go out of the house to be limited. Social distancing also affects the economic market system of demand for an item.

Currently, market demand for goods that support this pandemic has increased sharply, such as masks, hand soap, gloves, hand sanitizers, and fast food and junk food are no exception. Junk food is a term that describes foods that are unhealthy and have little nutritional value. Junk food is high in fat, salt, and sugar also low in fiber (WHO, 2011). Junk food is another word for foods that have limited amounts of nutrients. Foods included in this type are potato chips that contain a lot of salt, candy, sweet desserts, fried fast food, and soda drinks or carbonated drinks (Anggraini, 2013).

Some types of junk food often found include (Vinsensia, 2011): 1) Foods with preservatives such as food stored in cans, noodles sold in packages, and cans. All foods of this category are certainly dangerous because of their preservatives. 2) Foods containing high levels of salt and MSG, such as snacks. This type of food is suitable and delicious for a snack. However, because it contains high levels of salt and artificial flavors, it will inevitably affect a person's health both in the short term and long term. 3) Foods that contain high fat, such as meat in burgers. 4) Foods that contain soda, such as soft drinks and lots of chicken skin, are sold in fried chicken and others.

The demand for junk food during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased and spiked up to 3 times than usual. This is because the process of serving junk food is fast and uncomplicated. In addition, this COVID-19 pandemic has brought changes to the lives of young people/millennials, and this is interesting to discuss. Many teenagers or millennials use their free time to access the internet and do other inactive activities. Even though they have other daily activities, they still take the time to determine the food they want to order to enjoy. These millennials spend a lot of their free time eating snacks. In other words, the impact of COVID-19 has increased the opportunities for teenagers not to do physical activity because they use the available time to complete school assignments online, access the internet, and consume snacks.

This, of course, can cause new problems that can occur in adolescents. The nutritional status that happened during the pandemic resulted from changes in the habits of previous adolescents, especially in eating habits. It turns out that the millennial generation's choice fell on fast food to meet their needs, as revealed from an Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) study revealed that some young people and children have turned to fast food (junk food) and sweets to cope with bad moods during the COVID-19 pandemic (Republika.co.id, 2021). The results of Amaliya's research (2021) show that adolescent diets also consume snacks during the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent boredom. Respondents consumed these snacks three times a day at 15.00-18.00 WIB. The type of snack food that respondents often consume is salty snack food (such as chips and fried foods), with a percentage of 35%. Below will also display a table of food choices for the millennial generation.
Based on the table above, it can be seen that from 30 respondents, the results obtained that the majority of the food characteristics selected by respondents when using online-based food ordering services during the COVID-19 pandemic were junk food as much as 60%, others (containing more than 1 characteristic of food) as much as 26%. The least is healthy food, as much as 14%.

Based on the table above, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be concluded that the millennial generation consumes more junk food than healthy food. However, suppose you look closely, apart from the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires everyone to stay away from crowds and carry out their activities from home. In that case, it turns out that the millennial generation's interest in junk food products is influenced by several factors, as discussed below.

### a. Peer Influence

The influence of peers for teenagers, who are currently referred to as the millennial generation, is enormous because it is driven by a high sense of solidarity between them. This, of course, also affects the way they choose the food products they consume, such as a study conducted by Nusa that the invitation of peers is one of the factors that influence teenagers in choosing junk food and fast food compared to other foods (Nusa, A.F.A. & Adi, A.C., 2013). In another study, peer invitations were also the cause of the high consumption of fast food in adolescents, even though these adolescents knew the potential dangers of consuming fast food for health. Teenagers prefer to eat with their peers than eat at home, which causes teenagers to have bad eating habits (Mustikaningsih, D., Hartini, T.N.S. & Syamsiatun, N.H. 2015).

### b. A junk food restaurant is a comfortable place to hangout

A relaxed and comfortable restaurant or place to eat, with an attractive layout, equipped with free wi-fi, is usually a gathering place for family or friends, this is the main attraction for the millennial generation to enjoy fast food (Septiana, P., Nugroho, F.A., & Wilujeng, C.S. 2018). The convenience of the place and the complete facilities needed by the millennial generation make fast food restaurants a choice of gathering places but sometimes also a place to do school or college assignments. This causes the frequency of fast food consumption in the millennial generation to be high. Based on this, a comfortable place becomes one of the attractions for consumers to eat at fast-food restaurants. Apart from being a comfortable place, the strategic position of the restaurant also affects the high consumption of fast food among teenagers, such as the location close to their school (Mustikaningsih, D., Hartini, T.N.S. & Syamsiatun, N.H. 2015). Close or long distances do not affect respondents not to eat fast food because their primary reason is to get a comfortable place (Nusa, A.F.A. & Adi, A.C. 2013).
c. **Fast and Practical Service**

The millennial generation is interested in choosing fast food because their time is limited, so speed and practicality influence people to consume it (Khairiyah, E.L. 2016). Fast food is also the choice of parents who have a lot of busyness. Fast food because the process of making it using a machine so that it is fast, always available, and looks clean (Setyawati, V.A.V. & Rimawati. 2016). This speed and practicality are the reasons the millennial generation chooses fast food regardless of quality and food safety.

d. **Fast food brand**

A brand is also a factor that influences someone in consuming fast food. The millennial generation tends to consume food with a well-known brand or brand as self-expression in association and becomes a prestigious event. The thing that is becoming a trend in today's millennial generation is taking selfies at restaurants with fast food brands that can only be shown to their friends through social media. This indicates that they have visited and eaten at restaurants with that brand.

e. **Advertisement**

Advertising is a promotional media for business actors to offer the products they have so that business actors make advertisements in such a way both in terms of appearance and the frequency of displaying these ads, mainly through social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, where social media is also familiar to the millennial generation. This, of course, also has a significant influence on the millennial generation, so they choose to consume fast food.

f. **Low price**

Low prices and large portions offered by fast-food products affect consuming fast food. In addition, the existence of discount offers through a thrifty package strategy provided by fast-food restaurants has turned out to be an attraction for the millennial generation to buy and consume fast food. The purchase of fast food products undoubtedly follows the amount of pocket money given by parents to their teenage children.

g. **Good taste**

The public generally likes fast food and junk food, including teenagers, because they think they have good taste (Pratiwi, 2018). Teenagers who are used to eating fast food believe that fast food is easy to get and has an excellent taste to arouse appetite (Mustikaningsih, D., Hartini, T.N.S. & Syamsiatun, N.H, 2015). Factors that cause fast food to have a good taste are due to the high content of oil, salt, and sugar, as well as the presence of monosodium glutamate (MSG), fat and addictive substances, are added, and this causes addiction to the delicious and savory taste regardless of the dangers that threaten behind the delightful flavor. If you pay attention if you overeat junk food, it will harm your health, including:

a. **Nutritional Deficiency**

Processed foods are deficient in nutrients compared to fresh foods. In some cases, synthetic vitamins and minerals are added to fast food to compensate for the nutrients lost during processing. These synthetic nutrients are certainly unhealthy compared to natural nutrients from fresh food. Therefore, if you often eat processed foods, you will get little vitamins, so that it can cause nutritional deficiencies and get sick easily.
b. **Causes of Constipation**

Junk food also does not contain fiber and, on average only contains fat. This is because the fiber contained in junk food is usually lost during processing. Fiber is essential for human digestive health because the fiber consumed will facilitate digestion. Without an adequate amount of fiber, of course, you will be very prone to constipation.

c. **Leads to Obesity**

Junk food is often high in unhealthy fats due to its processing using seed oil and vegetable oils easily hydrogenated into trans fats. Vegetable oils are very harmful, especially when added to meats already high in fat content. Vegetable oils contain omega-6 fatty acids, which can promote oxidation and inflammation in the body if consumed in excess.

d. **At the risk of serious illness**

Junk food is usually loaded with added sugar. Consuming too much sugar can be dangerous because it can interfere with metabolic processes. Excess sugar consumption can lead to insulin resistance, high triglycerides, increased levels of harmful cholesterol, and increased fat accumulation in the liver and abdominal cavity. As a result, a person who consumes excessive amounts of sugar is at high risk of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and cancer.

e. **Addiction**

Consciously or not, consuming junk food or other fast food can be addictive. It was launched from Medical News Today; preservatives contained in fast food trigger dopamine release in the brain of someone who eats it. That is why someone who often eats fast food can become addicted to continue eating it.

Because of the various impacts caused by frequent consumption of junk food for the millennial generation, as research conducted by Zulfa (2011), then it is appropriate if the millennial generation as the nation's successor has the knowledge and is aware of the health of his own body because getting and obtaining health is the right of every citizen which is protected and regulated by law.

B. **Forms of Legal Protection for Millennial Against the Rise of Junk Food Circulating During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Legal protection is an act that protects legal subjects as supporters of the rights and obligations in carrying out various legal actions. The law was created to regulate the rights and obligations of legal subjects and serves as an instrument of protection for legal subjects. It can also be interpreted as a place of refuge from everything that threatens. The law is used to protect the interests of human life (Sidharta, 2006). So, the law functions to protect human interests (Sudikno, 2013).

If you pay attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from the need for drugs and supplements to support health, namely a healthy condition, both physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially that allows everyone to live socially and economically productive as regulated in Article 1 point 1 of the Law No. 36 of 2009 concerning Health, of course, healthy food is also the primary need of a human being to survive the attack of the virus.

Healthy food is the right of every citizen (the right to food) which has been recognized internationally as one of the fundamental rights of humankind. Therefore, the state is obliged to provide adequate food, both in quantity and quality, for the entire community to meet a decent standard of living. The regulation of healthy food is as regulated by Law Number 18 of 2012 concerning Food (Food Law) which emphasizes that the fulfillment of basic needs
for healthy food is part of human rights guaranteed in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as a component basis for realizing the quality of Indonesian people.

Healthy food can be obtained if the food product is safe and suitable for consumption, meaning that food does not contain the possibility of biological, chemical, and other contaminants that can interfere, harm, and endanger human health and do not conflict with the religion, belief, and culture of the community.

The implementation of Food Safety is carried out to protect the people from consuming safe food for their health and mental safety. This is in the opinion of Satjipto Rahardjo, which states that the law protects human rights that are harmed by others and that protection is given to the community so that they can enjoy all the rights granted by law (Satjipto Rahardjo, 2000). Human rights are the formation of society, the result of cultural construction. Human rights exist because of human rights. Human rights are part of human rights.

Furthermore, to ensure that the available food is safe and suitable for consumption, food safety must be implemented along the food chain, starting from the production (cultivation) stage, harvesting, processing, storage, distribution, circulation until it reaches the consumer. Production activities or processes to produce safe food for consumption along the food chain are carried out by applying safe food requirements.

Therefore, it is proper for everyone who produces and trades food to have an obligation to meet safety standards, including provisions regarding: a. Food Sanitation, b. Food Additives, c. Genetically Engineered Food Products, d. Food Irradiation, e. Food Packaging, and f. the use of other materials and food quality standards in the form of essential characteristics of Food Quality according to the type of food in normal conditions based on organoleptic, physical, composition, and/or Food Nutrient content. The Food Quality Standards can be determined by preparing the Indonesian National Standards (SNI).

In addition to that, food safety and quality standards must be guaranteed. Before being circulated, any processed food produced domestically or imported for retail trade-in packaging must have a distribution permit, except for certain processed foods produced by home industries. In this regard, the government is obliged to carry out supervision so that if there are people who violate this, they will be subject to administrative sanctions in the form of: a. fine; b. temporary cessation of activities, Food Production, and/or Food Distribution; c. withdrawal of Food from Food Circulation by producers; d. compensation; and/or e. license revocation.

The provision of sanctions for people who violate is intended as preventive legal protection which aims to prevent problems or disputes from occurring. The legal protection carried out by the government in the form of preventive legal protection, according to the author, has not been fully implemented.

Opinions given by the community can help the government to establish legal protection in the form of legislation. In the author's problem in this paper, the millennial generation as consumers needs to express their objections about buying and selling junk food online during this COVID-19 pandemic. The legal protections provided by the government has not fully discussed safety, quality standards, and distribution permits for junk food products, especially in the Consumer Protection Act, because the objections given by the community can be used
as a reference for the government to make regulations according to what the community wants.

In addition to preventive legal protection, the government also provides repressive legal protection in the form of law enforcement for anyone found guilty. Suppose the millennial generation feels that fast-food business actors have harmed them. In that case, the millennial generation can complain to the Consumer Dispute Settlement Agency (BPSK) is regulated in Article 49 of Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection. BPSK is an agency formed by the government to resolve consumer disputes outside the court. This non-litigation dispute resolution is a form of repressive legal protection from the government, although currently, many BPSKs are suspended. Legal protection for consumers is vital, so the regulation in some of these laws needs to be further analyzed by the government to strengthen regulations regarding consumer protection, especially in the sale of junk food that does not meet food safety and quality or does not have a distribution permit that sold online.

Conclusion

During this COVID-19 pandemic, many millennial generations have chosen junk food products because junk food is fast in serving and tastes good even though it contains many harmful ingredients for the body that the millennial generation is not aware of. Therefore, the government provides legal protection for generations as the nation's next-generation for the fulfillment of food consumption that is safe and does not endanger health and life through various regulations such as Law No. 12 of 2018 concerning Food, Government Regulation No. 86 of 2019 concerning Food Safety and Law No. 8 of 1999 concerning Consumer Protection. The government makes these regulations intending to provide legal protection both preventively and repressively. This legal protection is critical, so the regulation in some of these laws needs to be analyzed further by the government to strengthen the regulation regarding consumer protection, especially in the sale of junk food that does not meet food safety and quality or does not have a distribution permit.
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