

Sesame Street program improves development for children in Indonesia: study

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Children exposed to Jalan Sesama, an Indonesian version of the children's television show Sesame Street, had improved educational skills and healthy development, according to a study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Over a 14-week period, the children who had the greatest exposure to Jalan Sesama improved significantly in literacy, mathematics, early cognitive skills, safety knowledge and social awareness, compared to those with no or low exposure to the program. The study is available online in advance of publication in the *International Journal of Behavioral Development*.

"I was amazed with how much television young children in Indonesia watch," said Dina L.G. Borzekowski, EdD, the study's lead author and associate professor in the Bloomberg School's Department of Health, Behavior and Society. She continued, "Mostly the shows children were seeing were of adult nature or dubbed episodes of Sponge Bob Squarepants and Scooby-Doo. In contrast, Jalan Sesama was created in Indonesia for Indonesian children. With this study, we present evidence that when a culturally and age-appropriate show is offered, it can change the lives of preschoolers. Our data show that 4, 5, and 6 year olds learned important and healthy messages."

Using a randomized experimental research study design, Borzekowski and co-author Holly K. Henry, a current doctoral student at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, examined the effect of a 14-week intervention on 160 children in Pandeglang District of Indonesia's Banten Province. The children, ranging in age from 3 to 6 years, were

questioned on their knowledge and skills at the beginning and conclusion of the 14-week intervention. In addition to showing improvement in literacy, mathematics and early [cognitive skills](#), the study found that children with the greatest exposure to Jalan Sesama performed best of any of the study groups, even after adjusting for baseline scores, age, gender, parents' education, and exposure to other media.

Jalan Sesama is produced by the Sesame Workshop with funding from the United States Agency for International Development. The program uses live action, puppetry (traditional and new), and animation to deliver relevant lessons on literacy, mathematics, safety, culture, environment and other subjects. Among the special Muppets™ made for this specific show are Jabrik, a problem-solving and creative white rhino and Tantan, an environmentally-conscious orangutan.

A similar study was done by Borzekowski of Kilimani Sesame, a Tanzanian version of Sesame Street. In that study, published in July 2010, Borzekowski found that children with greater exposure showed more gains in cognitive, social and health outcomes than those with less exposure. Specifically, children who were more receptive to the Kilimani Sesame content had higher scores on tests of literacy and primary math skills, greater ability to describe appropriate social behaviors and emotions, and knew more about malaria and HIV/AIDS.

Provided by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health

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