

BALANCED NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR TODDLERS

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Abstract

Mandalahaji Village, located in Pacet Sub-district, lies in the eastern part of Majalaya, Bandung Regency. Based on a preliminary study, the main issue faced by the community is nutrition-related problems. This community service program aims to provide both solutions and education to address these issues, with the goal of controlling the impact and health risks, thereby offering added value to the community. The implementation stages include a preliminary study and site survey, identification of community problems, a pre-implementation phase through network building with partners and stakeholder involvement, implementation of education and community empowerment with local cadres, as well as program evaluation and sustainability management. The results of the program show the delivery of nutrition education and the establishment of a sustainable network of local cadres. This structured community service activity can serve as an alternative solution to the community's problems through the continuous involvement of stakeholders.

Keywords: Balanced Nutrition, Education, Toddlers

INTRODUCTION

Nutrition is the process in which the body utilizes consumed food proportionally through digestion, absorption, distribution, storage, metabolism, and elimination of unnecessary waste. This process functions to sustain life, support growth, maintain normal organ function, and produce energy. Nutritional status is considered good or normal when there is a balance between the body's nutritional needs and food intake. In other words, the amount of energy and nutrients consumed corresponds to the body's needs and is proportional to the energy expended. Imbalanced nutrition may lead to problems such as undernutrition, malnutrition, or overnutrition.

The Global Nutrition Report emphasizes that current efforts to improve nutrition problems focus on intake. Inadequate intake is one of the main factors causing nutritional issues in Indonesia, closely related to limited food availability in both quantity and quality. Food diversity is considered an important factor in fulfilling macro- and micronutrient requirements. Therefore, the government issued the 2024 Ministry of Health Regulation on Balanced Nutrition Guidelines for Pregnant and Lactating Mothers.

The toddler period is known as the golden age, as during this time children experience

rapid physical growth and significant cognitive, social, and emotional development. Nutrition plays a crucial role in supporting these processes since fulfilling energy, macro-, and micronutrient needs in a balanced manner determines the quality of a child's growth and development. Nutritional deficiencies during toddlerhood can have serious consequences, including growth retardation, decreased immunity, and impaired brain development, which in turn may affect learning ability and intelligence in the future (Aliah Istiqomah, Kristin Masmur S, Ribby Aurellia Amali, 2024).

The balanced nutrition guidelines consist of food and drink arrangements adjusted to daily body needs, both in terms of quality and quantity, while adhering to principles of food variety, physical activity, clean living behavior, and regular weight monitoring (Ahmad et al., 2023). Commonly used visual media to communicate these guidelines include the *Balanced Nutrition Pyramid* and *My Eating Plate* (Nusu, 2019). The pyramid consists of four layers resembling a cone, conveying healthy eating messages—where the higher the layer, the less the consumption should be. The top layer reminds people to limit sugar, salt, and fat intake. Meanwhile, *My Eating Plate* illustrates food portions per meal, with 50% consisting of carbohydrates and protein, and the other 50% consisting of fruits and vegetables.

Mothers' eating patterns and knowledge significantly influence toddlers' nutritional status, while education level shows no direct correlation; mothers with poor knowledge and eating habits are at higher risk of having undernourished children (Arda, Lalla and Suprpto, 2023). Balanced nutrition education has been proven effective in increasing mothers' knowledge of toddler feeding patterns. Good knowledge can prevent incorrect feeding practices, thereby reducing the risk of stunting. Therefore, health education for parents, especially mothers, needs to be carried out regularly using various media and methods to prevent nutrition-related problems, including stunting, from an early stage (Candra, Sumirta and Dewi, 2024). Nutrition counseling has also been shown to improve mothers' knowledge of toddler feeding, which has the potential to improve child feeding behavior and nutritional status (Nababan and Suryani, 2022).

Increasing nutritional awareness can be implemented through Communication, Information, and Education (CIE) programs, specifically designed to expand community knowledge about nutrition. The use of supporting media as an information delivery tool makes the material easier to understand. One effective medium is print media, as it combines text and colorful images that can capture readers' attention. Such media include leaflets, brochures, posters, modules, magazines, or pocketbooks.

Mandalahaji Village, Pacet Subdistrict, is part of Bandung Regency, located south of Majalaya. The topography consists of undulating uplands in the upper Citarum area. Mandalahaji Village is located in the eastern part of Pacet Subdistrict. In Mandalahaji Village, particularly in Loa Hamlet, RW 11, there are several health problems, such as stunting in children, pregnant women with Chronic Energy Deficiency (CED), and low community awareness of nutrition. Moreover, based on toddler weighing data in February 2025, there were 33 toddlers with very underweight (2.28%), 186 toddlers underweight (12.85%), 87 toddlers with severely short stature (6.01%), and 319 toddlers with short stature (22.05%). These figures show that nutrition problems among toddlers remain a significant issue in Mandalahaji Village, especially in Loa Hamlet, RW 11. Therefore, more

optimal intervention and nutrition education efforts are required.

Based on this description, it is necessary to conduct a community service program aimed at implementing balanced nutrition guidelines education as one of the efforts to prevent stunting and to increase mothers' knowledge in monitoring their children's growth and development.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The implementation method of this community service activity includes the following steps:

1. Preparation

The activity begins with a survey to analyze the location designated for community service. The team prepares educational materials related to balanced nutrition and develops the required media for education.

2. Counseling Session

The counseling activity is carried out according to the predetermined schedule, starting with an opening speech by the group leader, followed by the delivery of material on balanced nutrition by the community service team. The methods used include lectures, focus group discussions (FGD), and question-and-answer sessions to assess participants' understanding of the material presented. Afterward, the session continues with the introduction of a healthy snack product made from nuts such as almonds, cashews, and walnuts, which are rich in plant-based protein, healthy fats, and vitamin E. Additional ingredients include pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, raisins, honey, and milk powder. The nutritional content of these ingredients is beneficial for boosting the immune system. This snack, called **Growbar**, is suitable for consumption by both children and adults.

3. Evaluation

The evaluation is conducted by asking participants several questions. The participants' enthusiasm in answering indicates the success of the community service activity. Prizes are then awarded to those who answer correctly. The session is concluded with the distribution of the Growbar snack product.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity was carried out through counseling on balanced nutrition. Nutrition counseling is a planned effort to modify community behavior at the individual, family, and group levels, particularly in the health sector with a focus on nutrition. This activity is beneficial in increasing knowledge, especially for mothers in RW 11, Mandalahaji Village.



Figure 1. Balanced Nutrition Counseling



Figure 2. Speech



Figure 3. Discussion session



Figure 4. Preparatory Meeting & Joint Meeting after the briefing

CONCLUSION

Balanced nutrition is a daily dietary pattern that contains nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals in types and amounts appropriate to the body's needs. Its principles emphasize food diversity, adequate portions and nutritional quality, accompanied by physical activity, clean living habits, and maintaining an ideal body weight to prevent malnutrition. The community service activity carried out demonstrated that counseling on balanced nutrition successfully improved mothers' understanding of toddler nutrition, as shown by participants' ability to answer questions well. In addition, the use of appropriate media and methods proved effective and contributed positively, making the counseling process active, efficient, and optimal.

THANK-YOU NOTE

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