

Village Head's Efforts to Prevent Stunting: Strategy for Providing Additional Menus as a Child Health Solution

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the role of the Jaladri village head in preventing stunting by providing effective additional menus, especially for poor families who are vulnerable to malnutrition. With a descriptive qualitative approach, this research shows that village heads play an important role in improving the nutritional status of children in the village. Additional menus are designed to meet nutritional needs that support children's optimal growth. Research recommendations emphasize the need to improve national nutrition policies that are more integrated and effective. A comprehensive and sustainable approach is needed in stunting prevention programs throughout Indonesia, including nutrition education, access to additional menus, as well as strengthening the health system and support from various parties, including village governments. It is hoped that this effort can have a positive impact in reducing stunting and improving the quality of children's nutrition.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of stunting or impaired growth in children under five remains a major focus for the government to reduce, with a target of 14% reduction by 2024. This is a crucial issue because, especially in developing countries, stunting can have a negative impact not only on children, but also on the nation's economy and human resource development. An important step to stop and tackle stunting is to take a focused cross-sectoral approach (Husnul et al., 2023).

Stunting is a condition of inhibited child growth and development, especially during the first 1000 days of life. The incidence of child growth failure due to lack of nutritional intake, where this physical growth disorder can have a long-term impact on quality of life and productivity. This physical growth disorder is usually characterized by a child's height that is not appropriate for their age due to chronic nutritional problems. Stunting affects brain growth and development, negatively impacting children's intelligence and increasing their risk of developing hereditary diseases such as diabetes mellitus, cancer and coronary heart disease as adults. The impact of health problems needs to be monitored specifically including the issue of stunting which is important to pay attention to (Yuniastuti, Ari et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, 36.4% of children under five were stunted in 2019. This means that 8.8 million children under five, or more than a third of the population, suffer from malnutrition that results in below-average height for their age. Although the Status of Nutrition Indonesia (SGI) study reported a stunting prevalence in Pasuruan City of 11.7% by 2023, this is still well above the WHO standard of 20%. It is already lower than the expected national target of 14% by 2024. In Southeast Asia, the prevalence of stunting in children under five in Indonesia is the second largest after Laos, reaching 43.8% (Nanda et al., 2022).

According to the Nutrition Status Monitor (PSG) in 2021, the prevalence of stunting in children under five in Indonesia reached 26.6%, with 9.8% in the very short category and 19.8% in the short category. Considering that the first 1000 days of life is a crucial period for child growth, there are still many children under five who experience nutritional problems in the age range of 0-59 months. To address this issue, the government has launched a national movement for stunting prevention and collaborated across sectors. The National Team for the Acceleration of Poverty Reduction (TNP2K) has designated 160 districts/cities as priorities to reduce stunting. Based on the 2013 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), there were 15 districts/cities with stunting prevalence above 50%. In 2019, the Indonesian Ministry of Health through the Health Research and Development Agency (Litbangkes) conducted Riskesdas again and found that the prevalence of stunting or children growing short fell from 37.2% in Riskesdas in 2013 to 30.8% (Nanda et al., 2022)

Regarding the prevention of stunting, the government has established a number of key health measures in nutrition services to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition. One of the methods used is through the supplementary feeding strategy, which is aimed specifically at children from underprivileged families, so as to improve the nutrition of these children. Supplementary feeding is an important component of the village head's efforts to prevent stunting, with the aim of improving the nutritional conditions of vulnerable groups, especially children with nutritional problems.

Jeladri Village in Pasuruan Regency is one of the areas working on stunting prevention. The village head plays an important role in raising community awareness of the effectiveness of supplementary feeding as one of the key strategies in preventing stunting in children. The head of Jeladri Village has demonstrated how a village leader can play a role in stunting prevention through various programs and initiatives, such as the implementation of posyandu, the implementation of supplementary menus, the provision of health facilities, and workshops on parenting and nutrition to the community.

In previous research that has been widely discussed about stunting prevention through supplementary feeding, including an article entitled "Tempeh Nuggets as a Supplementary Feeding Intervention to Prevent Stunting in Padang Village, Lumajang". This study emphasizes the benefits of eating healthy foods to avoid stunting, the impact of soybean tempeh nuggets, and parents' awareness to change food content. A major problem that can have a long-term impact on children's development and health is stunting. With encouraging results, health counseling activities were conducted in this study to increase the awareness of mothers of toddlers of stunting and efforts to prevent it. Tempeh is a fermented soybean food that is good for consumption by all ages as it is low in fat and high in minerals. This project aimed to raise awareness of the benefits of tempeh in stunting prevention. However, this study has some limitations such as the lack of discussion on the long-term impact of tempeh nugget consumption and the absence of comparison with other protein-rich supplementary foods. Therefore, further studies are needed to overcome these weaknesses and deepen the understanding of the utilization of tempeh in stunting prevention (Werdingisih & et al., 2023)

Another study entitled "Socialization of 'My Plate' as Stunting Prevention at Raudhatul Athfal Tanwirut Thullab Payung Makmur Central Lampung" This article explores efforts to prevent stunting through education about balanced nutrition based on the principle of "My Plate". The socialization activity was aimed at parents of 60 students in Lampung, with a special emphasis on the importance of balanced nutrition in stunting prevention. The results showed that 78.3% of parents who participated in this socialization began to practice serving food in accordance with the principle of "My Plate". This shows an increase in parents' understanding of the importance of proper nutrition to prevent stunting. However, this study has two weaknesses. First, there is a lack of discussion on the role that health professionals and community health workers can play in supporting these efforts.

Second, this study did not go deep enough in exploring the challenges that may be faced in applying the “Fill my plate” principle in everyday life (Ayu & Surahman, 2023).

Therefore, this research will be different from previous studies as it will explore innovative and sustainable approaches in the village head's efforts to prevent stunting through the provision of nutritious supplementary menus. The main focus of this research will be to increase community awareness and active participation in the program. This article will also explore the long-term impact of supplementary feeding, by comparing different types of supplementary foods that are high in protein. In addition, the important role of village heads, health professionals and community health workers in supporting the program will be discussed in depth. Nutrition education, community participation and the use of appropriate technology will be key pillars in this strategy, with the aim of creating an effective and sustainably implemented solution to prevent stunting in Jeladri Village.

The main objective of this study is to investigate and analyze the extent to which the efforts of the Jeladri village head in providing supplementary menus are effective as one of the key strategies in preventing stunting in children under five, especially among poor families who are highly vulnerable to malnutrition. This study is expected to identify the contribution of supplementary feeding in meeting children's nutritional needs and reducing the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia. It also aims to evaluate factors that may hinder or support the implementation of supplementary feeding, and provide strategic recommendations for improving national nutrition policy to make the program more effective in the long term. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to improving the health and growth of children in Jeladri village, Winongan sub-district, Pasuruan district. This research will use an integrated and sustainable approach to health care, with the hope of providing in-depth insight into how best to improve the quality of nutrition and overall health of children under five. As such, the research will not only focus on the technical aspects of supplementary feeding, but also on developing more holistic and sustainable policies to ensure optimal growth of children under five in the area.

METHOD

Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif untuk menginvestigasi kondisi tertentu di beberapa lokasi di Kabupaten Winongan. Penelitian dilaksanakan di Puskesmas Winongan, Balai desa Jeladri, dan Rumah Kepala Dusun dari bulan Juni sampai Juli. Populasi penelitian mencakup Kepala Puskesmas, dan dua puluh ibu bagi balita sebagai informan. Data yang digunakan terdiri dari data primer yang diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dan observasi, serta data sekunder yang didapat dari dokumentasi dan rekaman. Instrumen yang digunakan meliputi panduan wawancara, kamera untuk dokumentasi, handphone untuk rekaman, serta lembar observasi. Teknik pengumpulan data mencakup wawancara mendalam dan observasi langsung di lokasi penelitian.

RESULTS

Definition and Impact of Stunting

Stunting is a condition in which children under five have a very low height, falling below -2 standard deviations (SD) from the average normal length or height (Hatijar, 2023). Stunting is assessed using the anthropometric index of height-for-age, which describes a child's linear growth before and after birth. This condition indicates the presence of long-term malnutrition due to insufficient nutrient intake. Stunting occurs due to a failure in linear growth that prevents children from reaching their genetic potential, and is influenced by poor diet and repeated infections. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) definition in 2015, stunting is a child growth and development problem characterized by abnormal height or length caused by recurrent infections and chronic malnutrition. In the 2020 WHO definition, a child is categorized as stunted if their height is lower than the average for children their age and the value on the WHO growth curve is less than two standard deviations. The syndrome is caused by a variety of factors, including malnutrition and frequent or sustained infections in the first 1000 days of life. Stunted children experience delays in

physical and mental development and have a higher risk of developing chronic diseases in adulthood. Stunting and malnutrition are estimated to result in annual economic losses that reduce GDP by two to three percent (J et al., 2022).

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem common in developing countries, including Indonesia, which is committed to reducing the prevalence of stunting to 14% in line with the WHO global target of reducing stunting by 40% by 2024. Stunting is the most common form of malnutrition among children worldwide, affecting an estimated 161 million children aged 0-5 years. The serious impacts of stunting include increased rates of childhood morbidity and mortality as well as significantly reduced cognitive function. The WHO has set tackling stunting as a top priority on the global health agenda, given its wide-ranging and long-term impact (Kumalawati et al., 2024).

The incidence of stunting can have a negative impact on children. In the short term, stunting can lead to impaired physical and mental development, decreased intelligence, and metabolic problems. Meanwhile, in the long term, the impacts include decreased cognitive abilities, decreased immunity so that children become more vulnerable to disease, and a high risk of developing degenerative diseases such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke. In addition, stunting can reduce the ability to compete in the world of work, which leads to low productivity (Rahmadhita, 2023).

Stunting can also have an impact on significant economic losses for Indonesia. This is due to the decrease in productivity caused by stunting. The economic loss due to nutrition and stunting is the largest, reaching more than 50% compared to other nutrition problems. The high birth rate of stunted children affects productivity and impacts the quality of human resources, which in turn leads to economic losses. In addition, parents' education and knowledge, especially regarding children's nutritional needs, also impact the risk of poor nutritional status in children, which contributes to stunting (Rahmadhita, 2023).

Therefore, efforts to reduce stunting in Jeladri Village should focus on the first thousand days of life, a critical period for children under five years old. Based on responses from 20 mothers of children under five, there are several issues that cause stunting. First, parents' lack of knowledge in caring for their children, such as ignorance about the importance of diet and hygiene during pregnancy and the postpartum period. Data shows that two out of three children aged 0-24 months do not receive appropriate supplementary feeding after six months, and 60% of infants 0-6 months do not receive exclusive breastfeeding as recommended, so they get less nutritious food. The introduction of complementary foods is important to strengthen the child's immune system and fulfill nutritional needs not provided by breast milk. Second, there is a lack of adequate health services, including prenatal health and early childhood education. In addition, access to quality early childhood education is limited, and many pregnant women do not get enough iron supplements. Third, children under five are not getting adequate nutrition from food at home. Fourth, there is limited access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation.

Jeladri Village Stunting Data

At the Winongan Health Center, data shows that 2,774 under-fives were measured, a total of 2,485 were not stunted and 289 stunted under-fives were found in Winongan sub-district. Stunting is a condition in which a toddler's physical growth is stunted, often caused by malnutrition and a diet that does not provide enough essential nutrients during the early growth period. At the sub-district level, the 289 stunted children under five highlights the importance of attention to nutrition in the under-five population. The Winongan Health Center has likely conducted regular monitoring to identify and provide necessary interventions to these children, so that they can grow and develop properly (Mukhammad Alfani et al., 2024).

In Jeladri Village in 2024, data showed that out of 156 children under five measured, 9 were found to be stunted, illustrating that stunting is still a significant health problem at the village level, with a stunting percentage of 6% indicating that the number of children under five experiencing this problem, although small in percentage terms, is still a serious concern in public health efforts. Compared to the previous year, when 16 out of 147 children under five were measured as stunted, there was a significant decrease to 9 children under five in 2024. This reflects progress in prevention and intervention efforts by the village head in Jeladri village (Mukhammad Alfani et al., 2024).

The Role of the Village Head in Stunting Prevention

The Village Head is the main authority in the village government and serves with his assistants. He acts as a village official in running the village's household affairs and managing government affairs. As the Head of Government, the Village Head is responsible for the effective implementation of village governance and development. The Village Head is also a representative of the people who is directly elected by the village community and plays an important role in the community. Law No. 6/2014 states that the village government is led by the Village Head who is assisted by village officials, including the Village Secretary and other village officials. The Village Head has the task of managing the village government, implementing development, fostering the village community, and empowering the village community. The Village Head has a role to independently manage the interests of the village community in accordance with local socio-cultural conditions. Village community development is something that includes the management of the village government as a whole where the Village Head plays a role in it (Sajangbati, 2015). As a village leader, the Village Head plays a crucial role in the prevention of stunting, a condition of chronic malnutrition that affects children's growth. The Village Head is responsible for raising community awareness about the importance of early nutrition and health through counseling and education. It should also ensure effective coordination between various relevant parties, such as puskesmas and health offices, to implement a comprehensive stunting prevention program. In addition, the Village Head has a role in formulating village policies that support these efforts, such as providing access to nutritious food and adequate health facilities. By monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the program, as well as motivating the community to actively participate, the Village Head can ensure that stunting prevention efforts go well and have a positive impact on the health of children in the village (Sandari, 2023).

The role of the village head as an active local leader in working on stunting prevention through supplementary feeding strategies as a solution for children's health can have a positive impact on social relations and solidarity among villagers (Parwati et al., 2023). By improving the quality of life and health of children through stunting prevention, the community in Jeladri Village can experience an overall increase in welfare, as well as create a more productive and empowered social environment. Therefore, the village head's role in addressing stunting risk is not only health-focused, but also an investment in sustainable social welfare at the local level.

Prevention of stunting in Jeladri Village can be achieved through various strategies, such as more intensive nutrition campaigns, supplementary feeding programs, as well as routine data collection and monitoring at posyandu. Various efforts of the village head in prevention continue to be carried out. Providing nutrient-rich supplementary food to toddlers is one of the main strategies, to ensure adequate nutrition during their critical growth phase. Regular data collection and monitoring at the posyandu is also key to early identification of children at risk of stunting, so that early intervention can be carried out. Overall, this data shows a strong commitment to addressing the issue of stunting in the community, with the hope of continuously improving the health and growth conditions of children. Collaboration between the government, puskesmas, and local communities is key in achieving this goal, to create a supportive environment for optimal growth and development for every young person. This reflects the progress of the village head's efforts in prevention and intervention in Jeladri Village.

Nutrition Improvement Efforts through Supplementary Menu Provision

Efforts to improve nutrition through Supplementary Menu Provision as a child health solution to improve the nutritional status of toddlers in Jeladri Village which is less than optimal can have a significant impact and contribution to improving the quality of human resources with adequate nutrition. If a child's nutritional status is inadequate, this can affect physical growth and endurance, and even potentially lead to disability. Therefore, monitoring child development in the first five years is very important, ensuring that nutrition is adequate, endurance is strong, and children grow up healthy with optimal organ function. The program implemented by KKN 72 UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya students, in collaboration with the Village Head, along with the Village Government as

well as officers from the Winongan puskesmas, is a step taken in Jeladri Village. This program involves cadres, midwives, and mothers with children affected by stunting, by providing additional menus as a strategy to overcome nutritional problems. The supplementary feeding program in Jeladri Village uses quality food that is appropriate for the child's developmental age. The program targets stunted children with an average age of 3 years, with a total of 9 children benefiting (Mukhammad Alfani et al., 2024).

The implementation of the Supplementary Menu Provision program in Jeladri Village has been carried out by providing egg Takoyaki to stunted children, aiming to improve their nutritional status. However, the results of this supplementary menu program have not shown significant changes, because there are still obstacles such as the lack of understanding of parents about this new program. Therefore, it is important for the community to better understand how to provide additional menus in accordance with the age stages of child growth. With a good understanding of Supplementary Feeding, children who have not met their nutritional needs can grow optimally with the support of nutritious food. The Supplementary Feeding Program provides intake with high protein content, vitamins, and minerals gradually. The Supplementary Menu is homemade, not as a main meal, but as an additional snack. On the other hand, some parents experience confusion in determining the right food menu.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Supplementary Feeding program as a solution to improve nutrition can help overcome the problem of unmet child nutrition, especially if parents are active in meeting their children's nutritional needs through this program (Widaryanti, 2022). This will support the Village Head's efforts to reduce the stunting rate in Jeladri Village. In addition, this program aims to encourage the community of Jeladri Village to be more creative in providing nutritious supplementary food for their children. If necessary, the community can organize training to make various types of food with easily available ingredients. One of the obstacles faced is confusion in determining the menu, which can cause the community to be reluctant to continue the program. The solution to overcome this obstacle is to use local ingredients available in Jeladri Village. The Supplementary Feeding Program in Jeladri Village, monitored by the Village Head, cadres and midwives, will continue to monitor the development of children's nutritional status during the program. The Supplementary Feeding Program is implemented once a month on the third week of every Wednesday, with monitoring of stunted children. The implementation of the Supplementary Menu Program can be done by parents every day by giving it once a day with the main menu served.

The first Supplementary Menu Provision implemented in Jeladri Village included vegetable dim sum, milk pudding, and sweet soy sauce quail eggs, which were prepared by the Village Government, as well as cadre mothers with the guidance of midwives. Vegetable dim sum was chosen because it contains chicken meat and vegetables as the main ingredients. Chicken meat contains 23.20% protein, 1.65% fat, and 0.98% minerals. Vegetables are also rich in potassium, folic acid, and various vitamins such as vitamins A, E, and C. Milk pudding was chosen because it is popular with toddlers thanks to its sweet taste and smooth texture. Milk as the main ingredient has a high calcium and mineral content which is important for the strength of toddler's bones and teeth. Furthermore, the Egg Takoyaki menu was chosen for the second Supplementary Menu Provision in Jeladri Village organized by the Village Government, Women Cadres and KKN 72 Students of Sunan Ampel Surabaya State Islamic University. This menu uses the main ingredients of eggs, chicken meat, and carrots. Eggs contain 50% fat, 42% protein, and 9% carbohydrates. Carrots also provide many health benefits, such as vitamin A and beta carotene which are good for the eyes, vitamin C and antioxidants to increase endurance, and fiber which can help reduce the absorption of bad cholesterol, sugar, and excessive starch in the intestines.(Mukhammad Alfani et al., 2024)

Based on the content of the ingredients that have been described in the Village Head's efforts to prevent stunting through the Supplementary Menu Provision strategy that has been implemented, it can be concluded that the menu chosen has the potential to prevent stunting in children. This is because stunting in toddlers is generally caused by a lack of protein in the body.

CONCLUSION

The Village Head's efforts to prevent stunting through the Supplementary Menu Provision strategy in Jeladri Village aim to reduce the prevalence of childhood stunting, a serious health problem in Indonesia that inhibits children's optimal growth. Through Supplementary Feeding, the main goal is to improve the nutritional status of children under five and address the problem of stunting, which can have a long-term impact on their health and development. Despite its proven positive impact, there are several obstacles that still need to be overcome in Jeladri Village, especially in terms of the community's low understanding and awareness of the importance of this strategy. The specially selected Supplementary Menu is designed to contain essential nutrients that support children's optimal growth. With effective monitoring and mentoring, it is expected that this program can significantly help reduce stunting rates in Jeladri Village, as well as improve the overall quality of life for children.

The results show that the Village Head's efforts in stunting prevention through the strategy of Providing Supplementary Menus as a Child Health Solution in Jeladri Village have successfully improved the nutritional status of children, indicating that this approach is effective in preventing stunting in children. Nonetheless, challenges with community education and socialization suggest that further efforts are needed to increase participation as well as a deeper understanding of the benefits and goals of Supplementary Feeding. More broadly, it provides a comprehensive picture of the urgency of stunting prevention strategies and the importance of the community's active role in supporting these efforts. With the proven success of the Supplementary Feeding Program, it is expected that child stunting rates will continue to decline significantly in many areas, while the quality of life of children can be maintained and improved.

The Village Head's efforts in stunting prevention through the Supplementary Feeding Strategy in Jeladri Village aim to reduce the prevalence of childhood stunting, a serious health problem in Indonesia that inhibits children's optimal growth. Through Supplementary Feeding, the main goal is to improve the nutritional status of children under five and address the problem of stunting, which can have a long-term impact on their health and development. Despite its proven positive impact, there are several obstacles that still need to be overcome in Jeladri Village, especially in terms of the community's low understanding and awareness of the importance of this strategy. The specially selected Supplementary Menu is designed to contain essential nutrients that support children's optimal growth. With effective monitoring and mentoring, it is hoped that this program can significantly help reduce the stunting rate in Jeladri Village, as well as improve the overall quality of life for children.

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