



Health Education for Stunting Prevention in Mothers with Toddlers Aged 0-24 Months at Kapasa Community Health Center

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Abstract. Stunting is a serious health problem that affects the physical and cognitive development of children, especially in toddlers aged 0-24 months, with a prevalence that remains high in Indonesia. Community service at the Kapasa Health Centre aims to provide health education to mothers as a strategic step to prevent stunting, using interactive methods and counselling on balanced nutrition and the importance of monitoring child growth. The program has been successful in improving maternal knowledge, with the average score increasing from 34% before the program to 78% after education, demonstrating its effectiveness in changing knowledge of child nutrition. The interactive approach encourages participant engagement, allowing mothers to actively discuss and ask questions, while visual materials reinforce understanding. To effectively combat stunting, education must be complemented by greater knowledge of nutritious foods and by parental monitoring of child growth. Collaboration with local health authorities and community organizations is critical to sustaining these efforts and ensuring that important information reaches more families. Continuous evaluation and adaptive strategies will be essential to expanding the program's reach and effectiveness, ultimately encouraging healthier future generations and contributing significantly to stunting prevention and increased health awareness in the community.

1. INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a crucial public health issue characterized by linear growth failure in children due to chronic malnutrition, especially during the first 1000 days of life (Haskas, 2020). This condition not only has an impact on children's physique, but also inhibits cognitive development and productivity in the future. The prevalence of stunting is still high in Indonesia is a serious concern for the government (Asnida et al., 2025; Fernandes & Andriani, 2025), with a target of reducing it to 14% by 2024 through a variety of specific and sensitive interventions. In particular, the work area of the Kapasa Makassar Health Centre, like many other health centres, faces the challenge of high stunting rates among children under five, which could reduce the quality of human resources in the future. Therefore, structured and comprehensive health education interventions are crucial for improving maternal understanding of nutrition and optimal child growth monitoring to prevent stunting in toddlers aged 0-24 months (Melati et al., 2021).

Health counselling is one of the practical efforts to increase maternal understanding of the dangers of stunting, the leading causes such as poor nutritional intake, incorrect parenting,

and child growth monitoring (Mika et al., 2020), as well as the importance of prevention from pregnancy to toddlers aged 24 months (Malka et al., 2021). Given the vital role of mothers in ensuring optimal growth and development of children, proper education is expected to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding stunting prevention (Primasari & Anna Keliat, 2020). Increasing maternal knowledge about nutrition for children under five is very important to prevent stunting (Nur Fitriana Zahra, Aena Mardiah, Musyarafah, 2023), as education is one way to convey health information effectively. Through health education, individuals gain new insights that can change their behaviour to maintain health, including choosing the right foods and engaging in physical activities.

Good knowledge of maternal nutrition can also motivate other community members to deepen their understanding of stunting. This increase in understanding will be very significant if nutrition education is accompanied by nutritional support through dietary supplements or micronutrients, as well as other nutritional safety net interventions. Research shows that health education significantly increases mothers' knowledge about stunting prevention, which in turn influences their attitudes and behaviours regarding food consumption during pregnancy and the baby's birth weight, thereby reducing the risk of stunting. Changes in mothers' mindsets and actions, especially among those with babies under two years old, will encourage greater attention to the baby's health, including the provision of nutritious food to prevent stunting (Ikasari et al., 2025; Maulina et al., 2022; Sitepu et al., 2024). The importance of this education is also reinforced by the fact that integrated interventions that include nutrition education, improved parenting practices, improved access to clean water and sanitation, and hygiene are effective approaches to overcoming stunting. However, the data show that integrating referral data and implementing intervention programs for families at risk of stunting remains suboptimal, as evidenced by the low coverage of Non-Cash Food Assistance and the Family Hope Program. Therefore, strengthening cross-sector collaboration and increasing accountability in the implementation of stunting prevention programs is essential to achieve sustainable stunting reduction targets. In addition, the active participation of the community through the Cempaka Posyandu and similar programs in providing "Isi Piringku" education to mothers under five has been proven to increase nutritional knowledge and its impact on stunting prevention.

Providing structured education can increase public awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition and a healthy lifestyle. Given that most mothers have toddlers, they play an essential role in preventing nutritional problems in this age group, so malnutrition and stunting can be significantly reduced. Optimizing health education programs, such as home visits by

cadres and health workers, has been shown to be effective in increasing maternal understanding of nutrition, which ultimately encourages positive behavioural changes in parenting and stunting prevention in toddlers. This kind of education must be integrated with nutrition interventions that directly target pregnant women and children aged 0-23 months, including socialization of hygiene and balanced nutrition to improve maternal knowledge. Children's health cannot be separated from maternal health, because low maternal nutrition affects parenting, especially feeding during pregnancy and toddlerhood. Continuous and targeted education is needed to address mothers' lack of knowledge about proper nutrition, which is often at the root of malnutrition and incorrect feeding practices in toddlers. Educational activities on stunting prevention for mothers with toddlers aged 0 to 24 months should be held at the Kapasa Health Centre in Makassar City. The purpose of this activity is to increase mothers' knowledge on how to prevent stunting in their toddlers and to disseminate this information to the general public.

2. METHODS

The method used in this activity is counselling. This activity was carried out by the Service Team located at the Kapasa Health Centre. The target audience for this activity is parents of babies 0-24 months old. Some stages provide material on balanced nutrition and the importance of growth monitoring. The evaluation of community service activities is acknowledged by distributing questionnaires before and after the provision of materials, and by conducting pre-tests and Post-Tests.

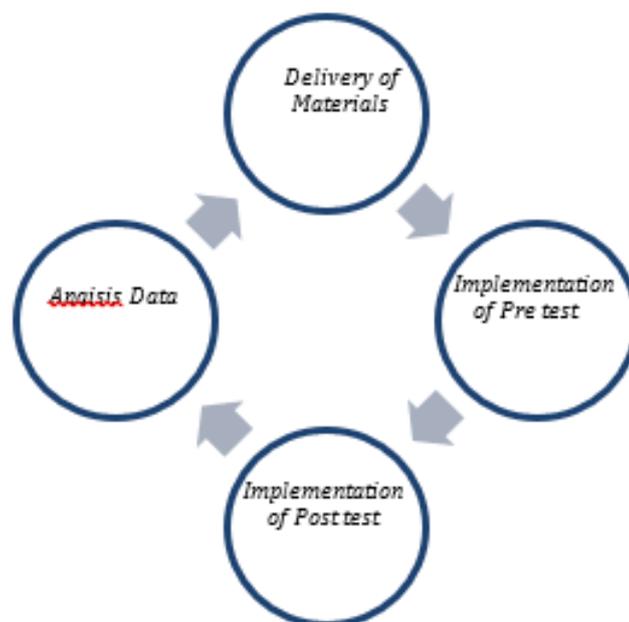


Figure 1. Method of Implementation of the Service.

3. RESULTS

Before counselling begins, participants are given a questionnaire (pre-test) to assess their understanding of balanced nutrition and the importance of growth monitoring. The results of the pretest to find out the level of knowledge of the community are as follows:

Table 1. Pretest on the importance of balanced nutrition, and the importance of monitoring the Growth of Children.

No	Knowledge	Quantity	Percentage
1	Low	21	66 %
2	Height	11	34%
Total		32	100%

Pre Test about balanced nutrition, and the importance of growth monitoring Based on the results of the pretest, it can be concluded that most people do not understand the importance of balanced nutrition, and the importance of monitoring children's growth where the knowledge results are low, which is as many as 13 people (38%), After the pretest is carried out followed by the presentation of material, counseling materials provided related to the material at the time of intervention, namely knowledge about the importance of nutrition balanced, and the importance of monitoring child growth. The intermediary used in counselling is leaflets—32 participants in total. The setting was in accordance with the plan, namely, the implementation was carried out at the Kapasa Health Centre, delivering the material in language that was easily understood by participants.

Table 1. Post Test on the importance of balanced nutrition, and the importance of monitoring the Growth of Children.

No	Knowledge	Quantity	Percentage
1	Low	7	22%
2	Height	25	78%
Total		32	100%

Based on the posttest results, most of the community already understands the importance of balanced nutrition and monitoring child growth. where the results of high knowledge, namely 25 people (78%), concluded that there is an increase in public knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition, and the importance of monitoring child growth



Gambar 1. foto dokumentasi.

4. DISCUSSION

Health education is an essential component in stunting prevention efforts, especially for mothers with toddlers aged 0-24 months. Stunting, a consequence of chronic malnutrition in children, can negatively impact physical and cognitive development (Lestari et al., 2024; Mustakim et al., 2022; Setianingsih et al., 2020). Therefore, the educational program conducted at the Kapasa Makassar Health Centre is highly relevant. The results of this program showed a significant increase in maternal understanding of balanced nutrition and the importance of monitoring the growth of children under five. Before counselling, 66% of respondents had low knowledge, but after the program, the percentage dropped to 22%. The increase in knowledge from 34% to 78% on the posttest reflects the effectiveness of the educational methods used, demonstrating that educational interventions can change individual attitudes and behaviours regarding nutrition issues.

The interactive methods used, including question-and-answer sessions and leaflets, succeeded in attracting participants' attention and making the material easier to understand. Although these positive results are encouraging, the challenges in stunting prevention in Indonesia remain significant. The high prevalence of stunting in the Kapasa Health Centre's work area indicates that, although health education is important, there is a need for more integrated interventions. Health education must be balanced with nutritional support, access to nutritious food, and improved sanitation, given that the integration of nutrition intervention programs remains suboptimal. Therefore, this educational program should be expanded and involve the wider community. Support from various sectors, including government and

community organizations, is key to providing sustainable solutions.

Overall, the health education program conducted at the Kapasa Makassar Health Centre has had a significant impact on increasing maternal knowledge about stunting prevention. However, to achieve more optimal outcomes, a more holistic strategy is needed that combines education, nutritional interventions, and other health supports. Further steps to strengthen cross-sector collaboration are critical to achieving sustainable stunting prevention goals.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this article confirms that the health education program implemented at the Kapasa Makassar Health Centre has successfully increased maternal knowledge about stunting prevention among toddlers aged 0-24 months. The evaluation results showed a significant increase in understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition and child growth monitoring after counselling. However, challenges in stunting prevention persist, particularly given the region's high stunting prevalence. Therefore, it is essential to continue these educational efforts with a more integrative approach, including nutritional support and sanitation improvement. Cross-sector collaboration also needs to be strengthened to achieve sustainable solutions to stunting. Thus, in the future, similar programs are expected to continue improving maternal and child health in the community.

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