



THE INFLUENCE OF MOTHER'S EDUCATION LEVEL ON STUNTING IN CHILDREN

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Abstract:

Stunting is a condition where there is a delay or even failure of growth and development in toddlers (infants under 5 years old), which results in chronic malnutrition so that the child is too short for his age. Malnutrition is a cause of infant mortality in Indonesia. Malnutrition occurs from the baby in the womb and in the early stages of the baby's birth. The mother's education level is one factor in meeting the nutritional needs of the family, especially in children. The purpose of this study was to identify the influence of maternal education level on stunting in children. This research method uses a case study design. The subjects of this study were mothers who have children under 5 years old in Besuk Agung Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency. A study was conducted on 166 mothers who have children under 5 years old. Maternal education level was determined by the formal education that has been completed, stunting was determined by the z-score indicator for body length according to age. The results of this study found a significant influence between maternal education and the incidence of stunting in children under 5 years old in Besuk Agung Village. Mothers with low education levels are at greater risk of having stunted children. Maternal education plays a crucial role in stunting among children under 5 years of age in Besuk Agung village. Education is a practical way for mothers to more easily absorb health information.

Keywords: *Maternal Education Level, Stunting*

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition in which a person's height is shorter than that of others of the same age. (Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration 2017). The causes of stunting are chronic malnutrition and repeated infections during the first 1,000 days of life (HPK).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), stunting becomes a public health problem when it reaches 20% or more. In 2025, in Besuk Agung Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency, it was found that of 166 children under 5 years old who visited the integrated health post (Posyandu) in Besuk Agung Village, 37 were identified as stunted. Therefore, the prevalence of stunting in Besuk Agung Village was approximately 22%.

Allen & Gillespie (2001) stated that stunting in childhood is a risk factor for increased mortality, low cognitive ability and motor development, and imbalanced body functions. Purwandini (2013) stated that stunting in toddlers requires special attention because it can hinder a child's physical and mental development. Stunting is associated with an increased risk of illness and death, as well as stunted motor and mental development.

The author's case study in Besuk Agung village revealed that children

with stunting tend to be more susceptible to illness and even delayed in speaking and walking. One of the target community health posts (Posyandu) in Besuk Agung village, Azka, was identified as stunted at age 2. Azka's height and weight were lower than those for her age, resulting in delayed speech and walking. Stunting in children can be seen as a reflection of the low quality of human resources. Reflecting on the case study of Azka, stunting can lead to poor cognitive abilities, low productivity, and an increased risk of disease.

Stunting, featuring educational level, has a significant influence. According to the Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) (2013), stunting is largely influenced by low parental education, particularly the mother's. Mothers play a crucial role in childcare, particularly in preparing meals. When a mother's education level is low, it can be difficult for her to understand adequate nutrition for her child, such as providing nutritious food for their growth and development.

This aligns with a case study conducted by the author in Besuk Agung village. When a mother's education level is low, it can be difficult for her to receive information about the nutritional content of the food served to the family. (For example, in the case of Azka, a child from Taman 1 Hamlet in Besuk Agung Village.)

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method and type used were qualitative with a case study design. This research method involves an in-depth examination of several specific cases within a real-life context. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of these cases. The subjects of this study were mothers with children who were targeted by the Integrated Health Service Post (Posyandu) in Besuk Agung Village, Besuk District, Probolinggo Regency. The study was conducted among all 166 Posyandu toddlers targeted in Besuk Agung Village in October 2025.

Primary data were obtained from interviews with mothers attending the Posyandu. Weighing and measuring of children under 5 years old were also observed by Posyandu cadres. Stunting was determined using WHO anthropometry. Secondary data were obtained from evaluations of weighing and measuring results conducted by village midwives in Besuk Agung Village.

The study revealed that of the 166 mothers who brought their children to the Posyandu, 37 children were identified as stunted. Of the 37 children, the author's research revealed the mother's low level of education. This suggests that mothers often find it difficult to provide nutritious food to their families, especially their children. Furthermore, a mother's low level of education can lead to a lack of patience when dealing with children who experience GTM (Closed Mouth Movement). Another factor, according to the author's research on integrated health service post (Posyandu) targets, is the lack of knowledge about mealtimes. For example, when a child feels full from a snack containing MSG, then a few minutes later the mother serves them food. The child will not eat because their stomach is already full from the snack. This can trigger stunting in children under 5 years old.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stunting is a condition characterized by chronic malnutrition during growth and development, beginning early in life. This means that height and weight are inadequate for age. The study above revealed that out of 166 children

targeted by integrated health posts (Posyandu), 37 children in Besuk Agung village were identified as stunted. Of the 37 stunted children, 17 had elementary school education, 13 had junior high school education, and 7 had senior high school education. Therefore, a mother's education level is closely related to stunting in children. Therefore, low maternal education is not directly related to the mother's level of nutritional knowledge and stunting in children. Research has shown that mothers with low nutritional knowledge are more likely to experience stunting.

Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 233, emphasizes the importance of breastfeeding, including as a way to prevent stunting in children. This verse emphasizes that mothers should breastfeed their children for two full years, unless there are specific reasons preventing them. Therefore, mothers with this knowledge have a significant impact on preventing stunting in children. Housewives play a significant role in making daily food consumption decisions. Providing food for the family, especially children, is a primary responsibility of housewives. Therefore, the higher the education level of a housewife, the greater their ability to provide adequate nutrition for the family.

Educational attainment, particularly that of the mother, significantly impacts the health of the family, especially children (Mundir et al., 2022). This is evident in the crucial role a mother plays in providing food for children (Aisyah et al., 2022). Mothers play the most significant role in preparing meals, from shopping to cooking to serving. Mothers with nutritional knowledge are expected to be able to provide the right types and quantities of food, thus ensuring optimal child growth and development.

According to Dekkar L (2010) in Rahayu A and Khoiriyati (2014), even the food consumed by children aged 1-2 years must meet their nutritional needs. Consuming foods that lack nutritional content can lead to an imbalance in the body's metabolic processes. If this continues, stunting will occur. Therefore, a mother's education and knowledge are crucial components in preventing stunting.

In a case study conducted by the author on a community health post (Posyandu) identified as stunting, most mothers were unaware of the nutritional impact of food. For example, when interviewing Azka (one of the Posyandu targets in Besuk Agung Village), she found that her daily diet consisted of only rice with soup. Azka's mother explained that Azka's child refused to eat fish. In a subsequent interview with Mimi, her child was identified as stunting at 10 months old. The author explained that the reason she refused to eat was that she refused to eat every day.

From the case study above, mothers significantly influence the development of stunting in children. Therefore, if a mother has a high level of education, she can create creative and appealing food preparations for her child. For example, fish can be made into meatballs, rice can be replaced with potatoes, and so on.

CONCLUSION

The influence of maternal education on the occurrence of stunting in children is significant. This is evident from the author's research and interviews in Besuk Agung village, Besuk sub-district, Probolinggo Regency. Low maternal education significantly increases the risk of stunting in children.

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