

Strategies to Strengthen Public Awareness Towards Handling Stunting Early

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Abstract

Stunting is basically chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections in children under five years old (toddlers) due to chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections. The problem of stunting is one of the essential issues in the world of children's health that is still a big concern, especially for children in underdeveloped and developing countries. The purpose of this article is to find a strategy to strengthen public awareness of handling stunting from an early age involving pregnant women, brides-to-be, and toddlers, especially teenagers. The service was carried out by collecting data by interviewing, observing, and reviewing documents. The results show that, basically, they understood the challenges in handling stunting. However, due to the lack of knowledge of both the community and village government officials, the stunting problem that occurs in the Village is often limited in the quality of efforts to solve it. In addition, the level of education results in people not caring or trying to find out about the good or wrong way to solve the stunting problem. The rise of stunting in the community also arises because people choose to allow this condition to occur and do not deter the source of the cause. It is as if the cause of stunting is so free to spread its impact without any pressure from the community, who are actually victims, to overcome it. Continuous support from various parties is needed to support efforts to handle stunting.

Keywords: strengthening strategy, stunting handling, community awareness

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition in toddlers who have a lower-than-average height. This is due to the nutritional intake received not being in accordance with the needs for an extended period. This condition has the potential to slow down brain development, with long-term impacts in the form of mental retardation, low learning ability, and the risk of chronic disease attacks such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Stunting is basically a deficiency, chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections in children under five years of age (toddlers) due to chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections, especially in the period of the first 1000 days of life (1000 HPK). The problem of stunting is one of the critical issues in the world of children. It is still a big concern, especially for children in various countries in the world. Based on a report from the World Health Organization, it is estimated that there are around 149 million children under five who are stunted worldwide in 2020, while another 45 million children are estimated to be too thin or underweight.

The growth period of 1000 HPK is a period of growth from the fetus to the child at 24 months old. Children are categorized as stunted if their height is below minus two standard deviations in length, or the height of children of their age is below minus two standard deviations in length or height of children of their age. The factors that cause stunting are not only aspects of poverty and food fulfillment but also parenting patterns, especially feeding children. Indonesia's Indonesian rate decreased from 29 percent in 2015 to 27.6 percent in 2017. In 2013, the national stunting rate reached 37.2 percent. However, this figure is still above the limit set by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is 20 percent. Indonesia's percentage is also higher than that of a number of Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam (23), the Philippines (20), Malaysia (17), and Thailand (16).

Some of the factors that cause stunting include malnutrition, lack of stimulation for children from the womb, and infections that recur in the long term. Of course, this stunting problem has an impact on the quality of human resources. This condition will cause the quality and productivity of human resources to be poor and will eventually become a population problem. The results of Basic Health Research (Risksedas) in

2018 show that as many as 30.8 percent of children under five are stunted. In 2019, the prevalence of stunting dropped to 27.7 percent.

Not only in the poor, stunting cases occur at all levels of society and spread throughout Indonesia. Because it is an urgent problem, the prevention and handling of stunting is one of the priorities of national development. The main cause of stunting is malnutrition when mothers are pregnant with babies. Pregnant women who are malnourished may be sick with malaria, hypertension, HIV/AIDS, or a history of other diseases that also affect the development of the fetus in the womb. Stunting can also occur when pregnant women do not get enough nutritional intake, such as calcium, iron, folic acid, omega-3, and other essential vitamins and minerals. As a result, the fetus in the womb also does not get adequate nutrition and is born with low body weight, risks of malnutrition, or other complications.

Parents may not fully understand good parenting patterns for children and lack knowledge about the importance of nutrition for children. This condition can make children neglected and lack nutritional intake, so they experience growth disorders that are at risk of being fatal. The environment significantly affects children's development. When children are born in environments that lack access to nutritious food and clean water, children are at risk of malnutrition and failure to grow. Growth disruptions are still vulnerable in poor and developing countries due to difficulties in accessing food, high food prices, or limited access to adequate healthcare. Efforts to accelerate stunting prevention are carried out through a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders in an integrative manner from the center, regions, to the village level. This approach is not limited to the health sector alone but also includes nutrition, drinking water and sanitation, education, community empowerment, social protection, and food security sectors. In the end, the problem that arises is about strategies to strengthen public awareness through the concept or model of handling stunting from an early age and the recognition of its harmful impact on adolescents in the community.

METHOD

The method used is to use a qualitative approach. The concepts of stunting and the results of the implementation of the service are analyzed and presented descriptively. This is done to obtain analysis and solutions to the main problems in this article, especially regarding handling stunting and strategies to overcome it from an early age.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Strategy to Strengthen Public Awareness of Stunting Handling

Tackling stunting requires comprehensive and sustainable interventions involving various sectors such as health, education, and the economy. One of the crucial steps is to increase public awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition, especially for pregnant women and early childhood, through nutrition education programs, health counseling, and the procurement of nutritious food in local communities. In addition, improvements are also needed to the sanitation system and access to clean water, which plays an essential role in preventing infections that can worsen children's nutritional conditions, stunting education, fulfilling balanced nutrition, and public health.

Stunting is one of the main problems of development. The malnutrition condition experienced by mothers during pregnancy is one of the main reasons why babies experience stunting. Babies who experience stunting when they grow up will experience various health problems, both physical and brain development. This is what needs attention. It is important to understand the public's problem with stunting and what efforts can be made to deal with it. This condition shows how vital early intervention and integrated efforts are to prevent stunting in Indonesia. Health and education programs that involve all levels of society, from parents and brides-to-be to health workers in villages, are needed to ensure that children in rural areas get adequate nutritional intake and adequate health care. With continuous collaborative efforts, the stunting rate in Indonesia can be reduced. There are several solutions to the stunting problem that are present in the community. This solution comes after conducting research through community conditions, which are then adjusted to the national program so that a harmonious and effective program can be obtained to deal with this stunting problem. The programs that are the solution include:

a. Premarital Education and Assistance

One of the risk factors for disability and death of newborns, maternal mortality, is the age of the mother at the time of pregnancy who is not yet mature. Several factors cause early marriage. This is what I feel needs to be educated about the importance of premarital assistance. So that couples who will later have a family have sufficient knowledge not only about family aspects but also about parenting patterns.

b. Pregnancy, Postpartum, and Breastfeeding Assistance Education

Improving diet and parenting is one of the keys to handling stunting. A poor diet can create a lack of nutrients in the body, especially for pregnant women who need more nutrients because of their needs. Unbalanced nutrition for pregnant women has an impact not only on the mother but also on the baby she is carrying. Balanced nutrition will increase the well-being of pregnant women. If pregnant women are not prosperous, it will cause problems during pregnancy until puberty, which can cause stunted babies.

c. Education and Socialization About Sanitation and Clean Water

Poor sanitation and an unhealthy environment are problems that can cause health problems. Small examples of poor sanitation and an unhealthy environment can lead to health problems such as inflammatory disorders of the small intestine. This can reduce the absorption of nutrients and improve intestinal permeability, which should be used for growth to prevent infection in the body—community empowerment to overcome stunting through poverty alleviation. People who are categorized as underprivileged generally do not have the production factors to manage and generate income. This group needs to be accompanied and empowered to get out of the poverty trap, which will eventually improve the quality of life and the lives of their families. Therefore, it is necessary to empower these vulnerable groups so that they can be empowered. This empowerment can be achieved by developing productive types of businesses and involving the community group as the subject. The results of the activity are not only aimed at increasing public awareness about stunting and its treatment but also encourage their active participation in health programs organized in the Village. The increase in residents' participation in routine health checks and posyandu activities shows that the community is starting to implement the knowledge they gain during socialization, which has the potential to continue to reduce stunting rates.

Increasing knowledge about the importance of balanced nutritional intake, the village community has also actively applied the principles of balanced nutrition in their daily lives. These efforts are carried out not only on an individual scale but also at the family and community level. This is evident from the positive changes in people's diets, with an increase in the consumption of fresh vegetables, animal proteins such as meat, fish, and eggs, as well as a variety of other nutritious foods, including healthy sources of carbohydrates, nuts, and fruits. This change reflects a heightened awareness of the importance of a variety of foods rich in vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients needed by the body. People are also starting new habits, such as reducing the consumption of processed foods high in sugar and salt and replacing them with healthier and more natural foods. Their efforts in improving family diets show a strong commitment to improving the quality of life and preventing health problems, such as stunting and malnutrition, especially in children and pregnant women. This change in behavior is driven by new understandings gained through various socializations and hands-on demonstrations conducted in the Village, which helps communities better understand how to apply the principles of balanced nutrition in practice.

Ultimately, this is expected to not only have an impact on improving the health status of individuals but also make a positive contribution to the welfare of the entire village community. One concrete example of the application of balanced nutrition can be seen through the demonstration activity of making quail egg balls, which involves the direct participation of the village community. This activity not only provides practical examples of how to prepare easy and quick meals but also ensures that the food served meets the nutritional needs of children effectively. The quail egg balls, made during the demonstration, are a food option that is rich in protein and essential nutrients and is easy to prepare at home.

Thus, this activity not only increases people's understanding of the importance of nutrition but also provides practical solutions that can be implemented in daily life. The implementation of these balanced nutrition principles plays an important role in supporting children's health and reducing the risk of stunting, as well as strengthening the community's commitment to implementing a healthier diet. The results of this activity are also in line with community service, which states that the cooking demonstration method is effective in increasing public understanding of balanced nutrition, especially in the context of stunting prevention.

The best strategy is that collaboration between various stakeholders can support programs to accelerate stunting reduction, for example, through training for health workers and health cadres, as well as sensitive and promotive intervention programs, such as the provision of clean water and sanitation, non-cash food assistance, and sustainable food houses, in addition to specific interventions. Ultimately, a better understanding of nutrition and its application in daily life is an important step in reducing the stunting rate in the village.

Collaborative Efforts That Can Be Carried Out by The Government and the Community

Stunting is a serious problem that negatively impacts children's growth and development. To overcome this, strong collaboration is needed between the village government, medical personnel, and the community. One of the main pillars of this collaboration is the active role of the community in maintaining the health and nutrition of their families. The strategies that have been described earlier are a form of strategy

that requires collaboration and support from the government and the community. The government can conduct socialization, provide health facilities, and coordinate programs related to nutrition and sanitation. The community plays a role in applying the information obtained, maintaining children's health, and ensuring access to health services.

Community involvement is essential in creating an environment that supports stunting prevention. By working together, the village government, medical personnel, and the community can create an environment that supports children's health and nutrition, as well as preventing and overcoming stunting in the Village. Work hand in hand to create a healthy and stunting-free village for a better future for the next generation.

CONCLUSION

Basically, the community has understood the challenges of handling stunting. However, due to the lack of knowledge of both the community and the village government apparatus, the problem of stunting that occurs in villages is often limited in the quality of their efforts to solve it. In addition, the low level of education results in people not caring or trying to find out about the right or wrong way to solve the stunting problem. The rise of stunting in the community also arises because people choose to let this condition occur and do not prevent the source of the cause. It seems as if the cause of stunting is so free to spread its impact without any pressure from the real community to become a victim to overcome it. Therefore, elements of the government, village officials, and academics periodically need to provide information about the consequences of dangers that may arise and the threat of stunting that can be compiled in village regulations, in addition to escorting the development of community knowledge must be guarded so that there is a common perception and awareness of parents and adolescents need to be encouraged by all related parties such as the apparatus, village government, school teachers so that they can change based on knowledge that they have gained in the socialization that has been given.

The government has made the most effort to overcome the problem of stunting. As a party directly related, it is natural for the community, village officials, and all parties to support. The stunting problem has begun to be overcome. The role of the government and the community in synergy is still needed to continue the strategy of handling stunting so that the nation's generation can grow healthily and intelligently.

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