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Community education about stunting in Neglasari Village Tasikmalaya Regency

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a problem of malnutrition caused by providing food that does not meet nutritional needs. It also reflects stunted growth due to poor nutrition and poor health before and after birth. Based on service in Neglasari Village, the main problem was identified: the lack of public understanding about stunting and related information. Even though the stunting rate in Neglasari Village is relatively low, it is essential to create awareness and preventive efforts. Therefore, this service aims to educate the people of Neglasari Village, Salawu District, and Tasikmalaya Regency regarding stunting. The method applied in this service is counseling for one month at every Posyandu in Neglasari Village. The service team provides education in collaboration with village officials and community health centers to conduct outreach related to stunting in Neglasari Village. Based on the results of the service implementation, it can be concluded that there is still a lack of public awareness regarding nutritional aspects, economic factors, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and genetic factors of parents in Neglasari Village. It is hoped that implementing this service activity will be an effort to reduce stunting rates in Indonesia.

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ABSTRAK

Stunting merupakan masalah kurang gizi yang disebabkan oleh pemberian makanan yang tidak sesuai dengan kebutuhan gizi. Hal ini juga mencerminkan pertumbuhan terhambat akibat gizi buruk dan kesehatan yang kurang baik pada periode sebelum dan sesudah kelahiran. Berdasarkan pengabdian di Desa Neglasari, teridentifikasi permasalahan utama yakni kurangnya pemahaman masyarakat tentang stunting serta kekurangan informasi terkait. Meskipun angka stunting di Desa Neglasari terbilang rendah, penting untuk menciptakan kesadaran dan upaya pencegahan. Oleh karena itu, tujuan pengabdian ini adalah memberikan edukasi kepada masyarakat Desa Neglasari, Kecamatan Salawu, Kabupaten Tasikmalaya, terkait stunting. Metode yang diterapkan dalam pengabdian ini adalah penyuluhan selama satu bulan di setiap Posyandu di Desa Neglasari. Kelompok KKN Desa Neglasari memberikan edukasi bekerja sama dengan perangkat desa dan puskesmas untuk pelaksanaan penyuluhan berkaitan dengan stunting di Desa Neglasari. Berdasarkan hasil pelaksanaan pengabdian dapat diambil simpulan bahwa masih kurangnya kesadaran masyarakat mengenai aspek gizi, faktor ekonomi, pemberian ASI eksklusif, pemberian MPASI, dan faktor genetik dari orang tua di Desa Neglasari. Pelaksanaan kegiatan pengabdian ini diharapkan menjadi salah satu upaya untuk menurunkan angka stunting di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Anak; edukasi masyarakat; stunting

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INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a form of malnutrition resulting from inadequate nutrient intake. It also reflects inhibited growth due to poor nutrition and health during the prenatal and postnatal periods. The UNICEF framework, as cited by Fitriahadi et al. (2023), identifies factors contributing to malnutrition. The two direct causes of stunting are disease and poor nutrition. These factors are linked to parenting practices, access to food, access to health services, and sanitation.

Other causes of stunting are influenced by various factors, both internal and external (Aridiyah et al., 2015). Internally, stunting is influenced by factors directly related to infant and toddler growth and development, including parenting patterns, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, complete immunization, adequate protein and mineral intake, infectious diseases, and genetics. Externally, stunting is influenced by family socioeconomic factors, including the mother's education level, the mother's employment status, and family income.

Improving the nutrition of mothers, infants, and young children enhances every child's opportunity to reach their full potential (Noviaming et al., 2022). However, chronic malnutrition still affects many children. Almost half of all deaths in children under five are caused by malnutrition (Usman et al., 2021). Childhood malnutrition can serve as a metric to track development progress and help determine if the world is on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal Two: ending hunger (Fitriahadi et al., 2023). Data from the Indonesian Toddler Nutritional Status Study (SSGBI) shows that from 2021 to 2022, Indonesia experienced a 2.8% reduction in stunting rates. This achievement aligns with the Ministry of Health's target of approximately 2.7% annually. Based on this data, efforts are underway to reduce stunting by 14% by 2024 (accessible via <https://upk.kemkes.go.id/new/kementerian-kesehatan-rilis-hasil-survei-status-gizi-indonesia-ssgi-tahun-2022>).

Toddlers classified as severely or moderately malnourished face bleak futures due to the long-term impacts of the nutritional deficiencies they experience. Nutritional deficiencies can lead to lower intelligence levels in children (Papotot et al., 2021; Moro & Puspawati, 2023). A decline in the quality of the younger generation implies the loss of significant intellectual potential necessary for national development. The period for children under five (toddlers) is crucial for their survival, growth, and development (Jati et al., 2022; Fatmawati et al., 2023). This period is considered vital for laying the foundation for a child's future mental, intellectual, spiritual, and social health. During this time, children grow, develop, and learn faster than at any other age (Kurniati, 2021; Rizal, 2021). Providing nutritious food is a fundamental cornerstone for fostering healthy and intelligent children. Therefore, the nutritional status of toddlers is a critical concern for all mothers with young children.

To address this, a mother's education becomes a foundational asset in supporting family economics, playing a role in preparing family meals, as well as nurturing and caring for children. Families with higher levels of education can more easily access health information, particularly in the field of nutrition, thereby increasing their knowledge and enabling them to apply it in daily life. Conversely, if a mother's education and learning are low, she may struggle to select and provide food for her family that meets balanced nutritional requirements (Dermawan et al., 2022). This aligns with research findings in Mexico, which indicate that maternal education is crucial for nutritional knowledge and family nutritional satisfaction, especially for children, as mothers with lower levels of education may struggle to assimilate nutritional information. Consequently, they might be at risk of having stunted children.

Kusumaningrum et al. (2022) conducted a community service project in Bagan Besar Village, where pre- and post-test results showed that stunting prevention counseling successfully increased the knowledge and understanding of participating mothers. This effort was undertaken to ensure that all parents have

high awareness and actively participate in preventing stunting. Another community service initiative by Masan (2021) employed a lecture method, supported by PowerPoint slides, to explain the importance of stunting prevention in toddlers. The success of this outreach was evident in the effective delivery of the material and the participants' ability to answer the posed questions.

Neglasari Village is located in the Salawu District of Tasikmalaya Regency. According to the Innovillage website, Neglasari Village has a population of 6,345 people, comprising 2,875 males and 3,470 females (accessible via <https://innovillage.id/lini-masa/portfolio/interactive-web-and-build-marketing-desa-wisata-neglasari#>). The primary occupation of the villagers is farming, particularly in seedling cultivation. The village's observed potential lies in its plantations, crafts, and arts.

Although Neglasari Village does not report a high incidence of stunting, educating the community about stunting remains crucial. This is vital considering the severe long-term impacts stunting can have on children, who represent the future generation of our beloved nation. Stunting remains a significant public health concern in Indonesia. Stunting in toddlers can lead to reduced productivity and lower quality of human resources in the future. Growth retardation, or stunting, in Indonesian children results from chronic malnutrition and infectious diseases, affecting 30% of children under five years old (Asmin & Abdullah, 2021).

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI), a prominent higher education institution in West Java, initiated a community service program titled "Mahasiswa Peduli Stunting" (Students Care About Stunting), or "Si Penting". This program engages students from various departments and faculties in implementing community service initiatives, specifically those addressing stunted growth.

One key component of the "KKN Si Penting" program in Neglasari Village is stunting education, aligning with a program championed by the Neglasari Village government under the Salawu District administration. Broadly, the objective of the "KKN Si Penting" activities is to provide stunting education and to support the Neglasari Village government in its "zero stunting" program. The benefits of this stunting education program include offering a comprehensive overview of stunting and outlining prevention strategies, particularly targeting hamlets with a high risk of residents experiencing stunting.

Literature Review

Community Education

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), the word "pendidikan" (education) originates from "didik," meaning "to nurture and provide training." As stated by Yasin dan Jumami (2022), education is a conscious effort made by an individual to develop their potential and a process of behavioral change towards betterment through teaching and training, encompassing both formal and non-formal education. Through education, a nation's national development can be enhanced to produce high-quality human resources. Education serves as a process of imparting knowledge and influencing participants to bring about self-change through guidance, training, or instruction (Islami et al., 2023). It is also a crucial tool for promoting knowledge and shaping behavior concerning various societal issues (Mokodenseho & Wekke, 2017).

A community is defined as a group of people who "associate" with each other, scientifically termed "interact." According to Chozin & Prasetyo (2021), a community is a unit or group characterized by numerous relationships and commonalities, such as attitudes, traditions, feelings, and culture, that form a system. Communities comprise diverse components, including neighbors, government, social communities, community organizations, corporations, and so forth (Islami et al., 2023). Therefore, community education can be understood as a conscious effort undertaken by individuals or groups within

a society to develop their potential and achieve positive behavioral change. Community education also involves various forms of learning, teaching, and training, both within the formal context of educational institutions and in non-formal settings that can occur across different community environments (Muslim & Suci, 2020).

Community education is not confined to formal processes in schools or educational institutions; it also encompasses learning that occurs in daily life, social interactions, and group or community activities (Ahyar, 2020). The goal of community education is to enhance knowledge, skills, and positive values within society, with the hope of fostering higher-quality individuals who contribute positively to social and national development (Aquan et al., 2023). Community education plays a vital role in shaping citizens who are aware of the importance of self-development, understand social values, and are able to participate actively in community life. It serves as a foundation for empowering community members, providing them access to knowledge, skills, and self-development opportunities (Perkasa & Siregar, 2023). These programs are designed to meet diverse educational needs and community aspirations, aiming to build social cohesion and support lifelong learning. Nevertheless, maintaining the quality of community education programs remains a critical challenge.

The quality of community education encompasses several key aspects, including the relevance of content, the effectiveness of instructional methods, the availability of resources, and support systems for learners (Damayanti & Nuzuli, 2023). When all these elements operate synergistically, community education can have a profound impact on individual lives, contributing to personal growth, employability skills, and overall well-being. Conversely, if the quality of community education is compromised, it can hinder the potential benefits and outcomes that participants can achieve (Dacholfany et al., 2023).

Stunting

Stunting is a linear growth impairment in children caused by long-term malnutrition, characterized by children being shorter than their peers of the same age. According to Efendi et al. (2021), stunting is a condition of impaired growth and development in children under five years old (under 5 years) due to chronic malnutrition, making them too short for their age. Stunting does not occur in isolation but often begins before pregnancy when an adolescent becomes a mother suffering from malnutrition and anemia (Nasriyah & Ediyono, 2023). Impaired fetal health and growth due to insufficient nutrient intake (iron, folic acid, hemoglobin) will result in babies being born with low birth weight (Aghadiati, 2020; Lestari, 2021).

Stunting represents one of the most common forms of malnutrition (protein-energy/micronutrient deficiency) affecting infants before birth and in early infancy, directly related to maternal nutrition and fetal growth (Wigati et al., 2022; Dermawan et al., 2023; Fuadi et al., 2021). Stunting can impact child growth and development, leading to lower quality human resources and jeopardizing workforce productivity. The incidence of stunting in Indonesia is influenced by several factors: non-exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months, low family socioeconomic status, premature birth, short birth spacing, and low maternal education levels (Setianingsih et al., 2022; Hunggumila, 2020). Furthermore, households with inadequate sanitation and untreated drinking water also face a higher risk of health issues.

According to a 2010 UNICEF report, as cited by Dermawan et al. (2022), stunting has several impacts, including:

- a. Children experiencing early stunting, specifically before six months of age, will likely suffer severe stunting by two years of age. Severe stunting in children leads to long-term deficits in physical and mental development, preventing them from learning optimally in school compared to children of normal

height. Children with stunted growth tend to stay in school longer and have higher absenteeism rates than those with good nutritional status. This can significantly impact their future life success.

- b. The nutritional impact during early childhood, when stunting occurs, can hinder growth and impair cognitive development. Stunting at five years of age tends to persist throughout life, with growth failure continuing into early adolescence and subsequently into adulthood for women. Stunting directly affects health and productivity, increasing the likelihood of giving birth to infants with low birth weights.
- c. Stunting is particularly hazardous for females as it tends to inhibit normal growth processes and increases the risk of maternal mortality during childbirth. Another consequence of stunting growth is a significant impairment in a child's performance. If poor conditions occur during the golden period of brain development (0-2 years), the brain may not develop properly, and it is difficult to recover. This is because 80-90% of brain cells are formed from the womb until the age of two. If this anomaly persists, it can lead to a 10-13 point reduction in IQ test scores. Reduced cognitive development, impaired concentration, hindered educational attainment, and a 20-30% decrease in productivity will result in significant losses, meaning the child is alive but severely limited in their capabilities.

Stunting impacts children's health and development. The underlying factors contributing to stunting can impair both physical growth and intellectual development. Causes of stunting include low birth weight, insufficient breastfeeding, inappropriate complementary feeding, frequent diarrhea, and respiratory tract infections. Therefore, socialization efforts are crucial for providing an understanding of stunting in rural communities.

METHODS

In this community service initiative, the KKN (Community Service Program) group provided community outreach through promoting education. The community service by the thematic KKN group "Si Penting" took place in Neglasari Village from July 26 to August 26, 2023.

Before commencing the service, the KKN group gathered information and statistical data to serve as initial baseline data for their work. Following this, discussions were held with both village officials and healthcare providers in Neglasari Village regarding existing village programs for preventing and managing stunting. Subsequently, direct observation and follow-up actions were conducted based on these observations. The methods employed included stunting prevention socialization, explicitly focusing on promoting healthy, nutritious, and balanced diets, as well as providing education on personal and environmental hygiene.

The initial phase of this activity involved seeking information about the village's stunting prevention programs. This was followed by discussions with the Field Supervising Lecturer to receive input and guidance for the activity's implementation. During the implementation phase, the program's socialization was conducted directly at the Posyandu (integrated health posts) located in the village, and posters about stunting were created and distributed at each Posyandu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the onset of the community service in Neglasari Village, activities began with the collection of information and data regarding stunting. This information was acquired through visits to the village and the Posyandu (integrated health post), specifically the one known as "Plamboyan," located within Neglasari Village. This approach was undertaken to obtain up-to-date data on stunting cases in the village.



Figure 1. Visiting the Integrated Health Post
Source: Documentation 2023

Data collection was conducted at the Posyandu (see Figure 1), involving the validation of children in Neglasari Village. This activity included measuring height, weight, arm circumference, and head circumference, along with other variables that enable the identification of stunted children. The data obtained from this activity are presented below.

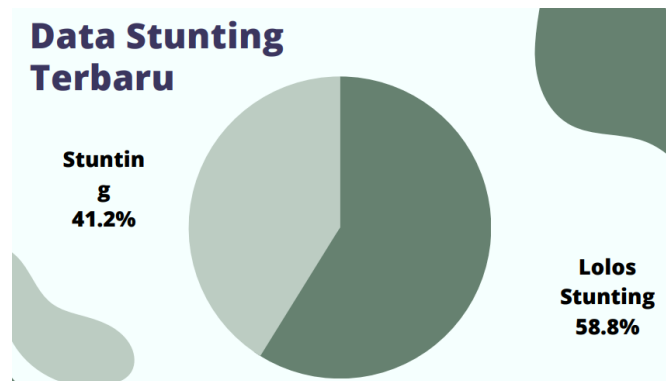


Figure 2. Stunting Data
Source: Neglasari Stunting Data 2023

Data presented in **Figure 2** reveals that Neglasari Village has 14 stunted children. This finding prompted the KKN (Community Service Program) team to conduct further observations. After discussions and visits, the Neglasari Village KKN team identified that the contributing factors to stunting in Neglasari Village include genetic elements and a lack of parental understanding regarding the causes of stunting (Dermawan et al., 2022). A systematic review of 10 studies by Sulastris (2023) indicated a correlation between parental height, particularly the mother's, and the child's height. If a parent's height is below the population average, their children tend to have a higher risk of stunting. Additionally, physical, economic, demographic, and social environmental conditions also influence the risk of stunting in children (Raiten & Bremer, 2020). Although these factors were not extensively explored in this particular community service project, they remain a focus for the Neglasari Village KKN team.

Following the collected data, the Neglasari Village KKN team engaged in discussions with the local Puskesmas (Community Health Center) to implement the gathered information and data. As part of this initiative, the Neglasari Village KKN team collaborated with the Puskesmas to organize a stunting education event. This activity was led by Ms. Firda Fakhira, ST.r.Gz, a nutritionist from the Puskesmas, who served as the primary speaker.



Figure 3. Coordination with Nutritionist
Source: Documentation 2023

Subsequently, the Neglasari Village KKN (Community Service Program) team collaborated with the Puskesmas (Community Health Center) to organize a Seminar on Stunting Health at the Village Hall (see **Figure 3**). This seminar, led by a nutritionist, aimed to enhance community understanding of stunting and the importance of proper nutritional intake for children, both those already born and those still in the womb. Nutritional education is crucial for mothers to gain knowledge regarding children's nutritional intake to prevent stunting (Kresnawati et al., 2022; Masitah, 2022). This is expected to help avoid the factors that cause stunting. In addition to the seminar, the Neglasari Village KKN team also provided balanced, nutritious food supplies as part of this activity.



Figure 4. Stunting Seminar
Source: Documentation 2023

CONCLUSION

Following the implementation of this community service project, it can be concluded that the factors contributing to stunting in toddlers in Neglasari Village include a lack of nutritional understanding, economic factors, non-exclusive breastfeeding, inadequate complementary feeding (MP-ASI), and genetic factors from parents.

The main outcome of the work program developed during the “Si Penting” Thematic Community Service Program (KKN Tematik) by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in Neglasari Village was stunting education for the community. This initiative received a positive and enthusiastic response from the villagers. It is hoped that the activities undertaken by the Neglasari Village KKN group will be beneficial and support government programs aimed at reducing and eliminating stunting rates in Indonesia.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the data and content of the article are free from plagiarism.

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