

Fighting Stunting for a Brilliant Generation Initiative: Education on Stunting, Malnutrition, Breastfeeding, and Child-Rearing Practices

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ABSTRACT

Parental knowledge and skills in meeting nutritional needs and using appropriate parenting practices are crucial in preventing growth and developmental disorders in children. This Community Service (PkM) activity aimed to enhance parents' knowledge of stunting, malnutrition, the importance of breastfeeding, and parenting practices that support child growth and development. The activity was held at the Nusa Indah 5 Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in Cijeungjing Village, Jatigede District, Sumedang Regency, West Java, with 20 toddler parents participating. Implementation methods included interactive lectures, discussions, and Q&A sessions, along with education on meeting nutritional needs and child-rearing practices. The material covered the definitions and risk factors associated with stunting and malnutrition, the importance of breastfeeding (particularly exclusive breastfeeding), appropriate complementary feeding, child growth monitoring, and responsive parenting. The activity was conducted in an active and participatory manner.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial period in human growth and development. This phase is characterized by rapid physical growth, brain development, and the formation of motor, language, cognitive, and social skills. Meeting nutritional needs and providing appropriate care during this time lay the foundation for optimal child growth and development. Conversely, malnutrition, recurrent infections, improper feeding practices, and unsupportive caregiving patterns can increase the risk of growth and developmental disorders (benjohnson, 2025; Unicef, 2016). One nutritional issue that remains a concern is stunting. Stunting is impaired growth in children resulting from chronic malnutrition, characterized by height-for-age below established growth standards. This condition is not merely a matter of physical size; it is also linked to cognitive development, learning ability, productivity, and the risk of disease later in life (Nyirenda et al., 2025; Saniati et al., 2024). Nutritional issues in children extend beyond stunting to include undernutrition and severe malnutrition. Insufficient energy and nutrient intake over time can result in a child's weight being inappropriate for their age. If left unaddressed, this condition can hinder growth and increase the child's susceptibility to infectious diseases. Therefore, early detection through growth monitoring at integrated health posts (Posyandu) is vital. Breastfeeding is a key factor in preventing nutritional problems. The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, followed by the introduction of appropriate, nutritious complementary foods while continuing breastfeeding up to the age of two years or beyond. Breast milk contains various nutrients and bioactive components that support an infant's growth and immune system. Optimal breastfeeding practices also benefit both mother and child (Horta et al., 2018; Paramashanti et al., 2023; Rachmadiani & Nadhiroh, 2024).

After six months, a child's energy and nutritional needs increase, requiring supplementation of breast milk with complementary foods. Complementary foods must be tailored to the child's age, including the quantity, frequency, texture, variety, hygiene, and nutritional content. Meals should contain appropriate proportions of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals (Jeon & Lee, 2023; Ongprasert et al., 2025). Beyond nutrition, parenting practices are crucial to a toddler's growth and development. Parenting encompasses how parents provide food, maintain hygiene, care for the child during illness, offer stimulation, communicate, show affection, and create a safe environment. Responsive parenting enables parents to recognize their child's needs and respond appropriately to both physical and emotional requirements (Banjarmasin & Asuh, 2021; Krisnana et al., 2020). The Posyandu (Integrated Health Post) is a community-based health service facility that plays a key role in monitoring toddlers' growth and development. Through Posyandu activities, parents can learn about their child's growth status, receive nutrition education, and consult on health and parenting issues (Mursyidah, 2024; Widyantari et al., 2026). However, parental knowledge regarding stunting, malnutrition, breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and parenting practices varies. Therefore, direct health education for parents is one strategy to improve

community knowledge and awareness. In light of this situation, a community service activity titled "Education on Stunting, Malnutrition, Breastfeeding, and Parenting" was conducted at the Posyandu Nusa Indah 5 in Cijeungjing Village, Jatigede District, Sumedang Regency, West Java. The activity targeted parents of toddlers and aimed to enhance their knowledge and awareness of the importance of meeting nutritional needs and adopting appropriate parenting practices as part of efforts to prevent growth-related issues in children. The objective of the activity is to increase parents' knowledge and awareness of stunting, malnutrition, breastfeeding, and child-rearing practices to support optimal child growth and development.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The activity was conducted as a health outreach and interactive education session for parents of children under five (toddlers). The outreach focused on four key topics: 1) Stunting; 2) Severe malnutrition and nutritional issues in toddlers; 3) Breastfeeding and the provision of complementary foods; 4) Child-rearing practices. A participatory approach was employed, ensuring that participants not only received information but also had the opportunity to ask questions, engage in discussions, and share their experiences in caring for toddlers.

Location and Target Audience

Location: Posyandu Nusa Indah 5, Cijeungjing Village, Jatigede District, Sumedang Regency, West Java. Target Audience: Parents with children under five. Number of participants: 20 people.

Implementation Methods

The methods used in the activity included:

1. Interactive Lecture
Presenters conveyed information regarding stunting, malnutrition, breastfeeding, and child-rearing practices using simple language that was easily understood by the community.
2. Discussion
Participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences and the challenges they faced regarding feeding, breastfeeding, and child-rearing.
3. Q&A Session
A question-and-answer session was held to assess participant understanding and clarify any information that was not yet fully understood or was incorrect.
4. Practical Education
Participants were shown examples of applying balanced nutrition principles, age-appropriate feeding, growth monitoring, and responsive parenting practices.

5. Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted by observing participant engagement during the activity and through Q&A sessions regarding the material presented. Where feasible, the evaluation could be supplemented with pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in participants' knowledge.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Activity Implementation Results

An educational session covering stunting, severe malnutrition, breastfeeding, and child-rearing practices was conducted at the Nusa Indah 5 Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in Cijeungjing Village, Jatigede District, Sumedang Regency, West Java. Twenty parents with children under five participated in the event. Overall, the activity proceeded smoothly, with participants actively engaging in the various sessions. They received information on the importance of meeting nutritional needs from early life, monitoring child growth, breastfeeding, introducing complementary foods, and adopting parenting practices that support young children's growth and development.

Stunting was a key topic of the session. Participants learned that stunting is not merely a matter of short stature but a condition of growth failure linked to chronic malnutrition and various other factors. Prevention efforts must begin during pregnancy and continue with appropriate feeding and parenting practices after birth. The segment on severe malnutrition helped participants understand the importance of recognizing signs of growth disorders. Parents were encouraged to monitor their children's growth regularly at the Posyandu and to consult healthcare professionals if they observed any irregularities in weight or growth. Regarding breastfeeding, participants were informed about the benefits of breast milk and the importance of exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of life. After six months, nutritional needs must be met through adequate complementary foods while continuing to breastfeed. Participants also received education on parenting practices. Child-rearing encompasses more than just feeding; it also involves providing affection, stimulation, communication, hygiene, and safety, as well as being responsive to the child's needs.

The activity was attended by 20 parents of toddlers. Throughout the session, participants stayed actively engaged by paying close attention to the material and participating in discussions and Q&A sessions.

Topics of particular interest to the participants included:

1. How to determine if a child's growth is appropriate for their age.
2. Foods suitable for toddlers.
3. Feeding frequency for children.
4. The importance of protein in a toddler's diet.
5. Breastfeeding after the child reaches six months of age.
6. Strategies for dealing with picky eaters.
7. The link between parenting styles and child development.
8. The importance of regular visits to the *Posyandu* (Integrated Health Post).

These questions indicate a significant need among parents for information regarding daily feeding practices and child-rearing.

Stunting and its Prevention

Stunting is a form of growth impairment that can result from various factors, including chronic malnutrition, recurrent infectious diseases, environmental conditions, and social and caregiving factors. Preventing stunting requires a comprehensive approach across pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, infancy, and the toddler years (Naryono, 2023; Suryanegara et al., 2024; Tyarini et al., 2024). Parents play a crucial role in ensuring children receive sufficient, nutritious food; are breastfed according to recommendations; receive necessary immunizations and healthcare services; and grow up in a clean, safe environment. Routine growth monitoring at integrated health posts (Posyandu) enables early detection of growth issues. If problems are identified, healthcare professionals can promptly provide appropriate assessment and intervention.

Severe Malnutrition and Nutritional Issues in Toddlers

Nutritional issues in toddlers can arise when a child's nutritional needs are not adequately met or when those needs increase due to illness. Infections and malnutrition can worsen each other; children with poor nutritional intake may have weaker immune systems, while infections can suppress appetite and increase metabolic demands (Nyirenda et al., 2025; UNICEF, 2015). Therefore, parents must pay attention to the quality and quantity of the food provided. Feeding practices should consider the child's age-specific needs, dietary variety, nutrient density, food hygiene, and the child's response to the food. Periodic monitoring of weight and height or length is vital for early detection. Parents should not wait until a child appears severely underweight or suffers from serious health problems before seeking assistance.

The Importance of Breast Milk

Breast milk is the primary source of nutrition for infants during early life. It provides energy, nutrients, and bioactive components that support growth and the immune system. The WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, followed by the introduction of safe, adequate complementary foods while continuing breastfeeding up to two years or beyond. Breastfeeding education is crucial because a mother's knowledge, family support, environment, employment, and other social factors can influence breastfeeding practices. Therefore, successful breastfeeding is not solely the mother's responsibility; it also requires support from the family and the surrounding environment (Aksu & Arslan, 2026; Ongprasert et al., 2025).

Introduction of Complementary Foods

After age six months, an infant's energy and nutritional needs increase, requiring supplementation of breast milk with complementary foods. Introduce these foods gradually, in line with the child's development. Parents should ensure dietary variety and include both animal- and plant-based protein sources in the child's meals. Additionally, adjust food texture to match the child's developing eating abilities (Ongprasert et al., 2025). Introducing complementary foods aims not only to meet energy requirements but also to support the development of eating skills, acceptance of various food types, and healthy eating habits.

Parenting Styles

Parenting style is a key factor influencing a child's health and development. Effective parenting encompasses meeting needs related to nutrition, hygiene, health, safety, affection, stimulation, and communication. Parents must understand that every child has unique characteristics and needs. Responsive parenting involves parents recognizing a child's cues such as hunger, satiety, fatigue, illness, fear, and emotional need and responding appropriately (Krisnana et al., 2020). During mealtimes, for instance, parents are encouraged to create a pleasant atmosphere and avoid placing excessive pressure on the child. Responsive feeding practices can help children recognize hunger and satiety cues and foster a positive relationship with food. Documentation of the activity is provided in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1. Documentation of Activity

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A community service activity – comprising prenatal exercise training and education on anemia and iron-folic acid (IFA) supplements – was conducted at the Melati 1 Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in Kadu Village, Jatigede District, Sumedang Regency, with 15 pregnant women participating. The event proceeded successfully. It helped participants understand the importance of preventing anemia, the benefits of taking iron-folic acid supplements, and the value of safe physical activity during pregnancy. Through educational sessions, discussions, demonstrations, and hands-on practice, participants actively engaged in the program. The activity aims to encourage pregnant women to adopt healthy lifestyle habits, take iron-folic acid supplements as recommended

by healthcare professionals, attend regular prenatal check-ups, and perform prenatal exercises safely according to their pregnancy conditions.

Parents are expected to regularly monitor their toddlers' growth and development through Posyandu services, provide breastfeeding and complementary foods tailored to the child's needs, and offer a diverse, nutritious diet. Parents should also adopt responsive, affectionate parenting practices that support their child's growth and development. Posyandu volunteers and health workers are expected to provide periodic education regarding stunting, nutrition, breastfeeding, and parenting. Similar outreach activities should also be conducted on an ongoing basis to enhance public knowledge and awareness of preventing nutritional issues and growth disorders in toddlers.

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