



Stunting Prevention Education Strengthening Program in Simalanggang Village: Efforts to Create a Healthy Generation

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Abstract: This activity is an effort to strengthen stunting education in the Simalanggang community as a strategy to create a healthy generation. Stunting, a chronic nutritional problem caused by long-term nutritional deficiencies, is a serious challenge that impacts children's physical and cognitive development. Through a community empowerment approach, education, and the involvement of Padang State University Community Service Program students as educators and community leaders. The results of the stunting education activity in Simalanggang Village show an increase in community knowledge about the importance of stunting prevention as well as maternal nutrition, parenting patterns, and good sanitation. This activity is expected to be an effective first step in eradicating stunting and building a healthier generation in Simalanggang Village.

Introduction

Stunting, or failure to thrive in children due to chronic malnutrition, is a public health issue of global concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), stunting is defined as a child's height-for-age (H/A) falling below minus two standard deviations from the median WHO child growth standards (Ministry of Health, 2022). In Indonesia, the prevalence of stunting remains high, although it has decreased in recent years.

Data from the 2022 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) shows that the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia reached 21.6%, although this figure has decreased from the previous year. This figure remains above the WHO standard, which sets a tolerance limit of 20%. Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province, and particularly Simalanggang Village, also face similar challenges with a relatively high stunting prevalence.

Stunting not only impacts a child's physical growth but also impacts cognitive development, productivity, and quality of life in adulthood (Vonaesch et al., 2018). Children who experience stunting are at higher risk of infectious diseases, impaired brain development, and low academic achievement. In the long term, stunting contributes to low economic productivity and a high burden of non-communicable diseases in adulthood.

The causes of stunting are multifactorial, encompassing nutrition, health, sanitation, and socioeconomic factors. The critical period for stunting prevention is the First 1,000 Days of Life (HPK), from pregnancy to age 2 (Beal et al., 2023). During this period, adequate maternal nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding practices, and appropriate complementary feeding (MPASI) play a crucial role.

One effective strategy for preventing stunting is through community education and empowerment, particularly for pregnant women and mothers of toddlers. This research shows that structured nutrition education interventions can increase community knowledge and change behaviors regarding child feeding practices.

Research Methods

This activity was held in the Hall of the Simalanggang Village Head's Office, located in Payakumbuh District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province, on July 11, 2025. This one-day activity focused on reducing stunting rates in Simalanggang Village through strengthening stunting prevention education that was designed effectively and applied.

Participants in this activity are all residents of Nagari Simalanggang who are interested in participating in the stunting prevention program, including pregnant women, mothers with children aged 0-24 months, adolescent girls and women of childbearing age in Nagari Simalanggang.

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach, integrating elements of in-depth field studies. Education is delivered through counseling and presentations using lectures and question-and-answer methods.

Results and Discussion

Strengthening stunting education in the community of Nagari Simalanggang, Payakumbuh District, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra Province. The stunting prevention education strengthening program was implemented by UNP Community Service Program (KKN) students from various educational backgrounds. This program is designed to increase community knowledge, awareness, and behavioral change regarding the importance of stunting prevention through various activities.



Figure 1. UNP KKN Students Presenting Material on Stunting

The materials presented in the educational program include the definition, causes, characteristics of stunted children, the importance of preventing stunting, prevention methods, the importance of balanced nutrition, the role of families and communities, and joint movements to prevent stunting.

The educational strengthening program began with a systematic and structured presentation of material using easy-to-understand language relevant to the community's everyday experiences. The presentation team, consisting of UNP Community Service Program (KKN) students with pre-developed communication skills, used simple yet effective visual media to enhance participants' understanding of stunting prevention concepts. The presentations provided ample space for participants to ask questions, share experiences, and engage in in-depth discussions on how to achieve stunting prevention.

Figure 2. Participants ASK SEVERAL QUESTIONS



One strong indicator of the effectiveness of an educational enhancement program lies in the pattern and quality of questions asked by participants during the Q&A session. Systematic observation of questions revealed high levels of engagement and increasing depth of understanding as the presentation progressed. The quantity of questions also indicated a high level of interest.

Based on interviews conducted after the presentations with 3-5 informants from various participant groups, this study found strong evidence of changes in participants' perceptions and understanding of stunting, the importance of nutrition, and the long-term impact of this knowledge on a child's future. These changes indicate that the one-day educational strengthening program successfully engaged participants at the cognitive and affective levels, not just at the information delivery level.

The observed increase in knowledge in Nagari Simalanggang aligns with research (Sari et al., 2023) in Central Java, which found that structured education can increase mothers' knowledge by up to

40%. Educational methods using a combination of lectures, discussions, and demonstrations have been shown to be more effective than conventional methods.

The emphasis on maternal nutrition in this education is important, given that maternal malnutrition during pregnancy can hinder neural tube development, reduce birth weight, and increase the risk of preterm birth. The explanation of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding is also consistent with WHO recommendations and current scientific evidence.

The observed increase in community knowledge aligns with well-known theories of health behavior change, particularly the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the social construction of knowledge. In the Health Belief Model (HBM), health behavior change is generally preceded by an increase in perceived susceptibility, or an individual's perception of their vulnerability to a particular health problem, an increase in perceived severity, or the perception of the severity and impact of the health problem, and an increase in perceived benefits, or the perception of the benefits of adopting new preventive behaviors. The education program in Nagari Simalanggang successfully systematically enhanced these three components of the theory by openly explaining the prevalence of stunting in the local and national areas, the long-term impact of stunting on children's physical and cognitive development, the economic and social impacts of stunting on children's future lives, and the concrete and measurable benefits of implementing stunting prevention. Furthermore, by providing practical information and demonstrations on how to prevent stunting using available local resources (self-efficacy), the program supported a smooth transition from theoretical knowledge to concrete health behavior change at the family and community levels. This combination of increased knowledge, changes in risk perception, and increased self-efficacy creates the ideal psychological and social conditions for communities to adopt new stunting prevention practices.

In addition to cognitive aspects, the educational program also demonstrated positive impacts on the affective and motivational dimensions of the community. Participants demonstrated increased awareness of stunting as a serious and urgent public health issue, increased emotional commitment to being part of the solution through behavioral changes at the family level, and an increased spirit of collaboration and cooperation among community members to collectively address stunting.

The effectiveness of the educational program in Nagari Simalanggang can also be seen in the high level of active participation of participants throughout the event. Participants were not only physically present, but also demonstrated deep engagement by asking quality questions, actively participating in discussions, sharing personal experiences, and even offering constructive suggestions for strengthening the program in the future. This high level of participation demonstrates that the program has succeeded in creating a safe, respectful, and democratic atmosphere where every participant feels their voice and experience are heard and valued.



Figure 3. Group photo of the Village Head along with Village Officials and the Community

This research has shown that strengthening stunting prevention education through an approach involving multidisciplinary community service students has a significant positive impact on increasing knowledge, awareness, and changing attitudes in the Simalanggang community. The education delivered not only provides factual information but also builds collective awareness and intrinsic motivation in the community to actively participate in stunting prevention efforts.

This indicates that community empowerment through appropriate education can pave the way for sustainable behavioral change and contribute to efforts to significantly accelerate the reduction in stunting prevalence.

Furthermore, the success of this educational program underscores the importance of collaboration between higher education institutions and local communities as an effective model of synergy in addressing complex public health issues. By combining theory and practice, and leveraging local resources, this program provides a concrete example of how contextualized and participatory interventions can strengthen community health resilience. It is hoped that similar approaches can be replicated and developed in other regions to help realize a healthier Indonesia and a stronger future generation.

As a follow-up, this research encourages long-term evaluation and ongoing support to ensure that changes in community knowledge and attitudes are followed by real changes in daily life practices.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The stunting prevention education strengthening program in Simalanggang Village has achieved its primary goal of increasing community knowledge, awareness, and understanding of the importance of stunting prevention. Through a structured, interactive, and locally relevant educational approach, the program has successfully shifted the public's perception of stunting from an inviolable problem to one that can be addressed through sustainable interventions.

This activity demonstrates that collaboration between higher education institutions, particularly through the Community Service Program (KKN), and local communities can have a tangible impact on raising public health awareness. Increasing community knowledge about maternal nutrition, childcare, exclusive breastfeeding, quality complementary feeding (MPASI), and good sanitation is a crucial foundation for long-term stunting prevention.

With the high level of active participation from the Nagari Simalanggang community, this program is expected to be a catalyst for sustainable health behavior change at the household and community levels. Raising collective awareness of the importance of the First 1,000 Days of Life and the factors that influence it is a significant step toward achieving the national target of reducing stunting to 14.2% by 2029.

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