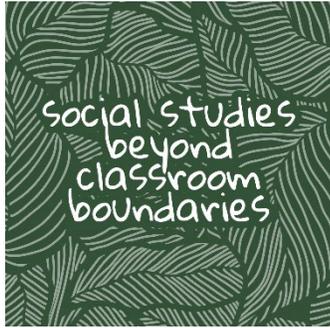


Educating the Community to Prevent Stunting Through Participatory Action Research



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ABSTRAK

Stunting merupakan masalah kesehatan yang signifikan di Indonesia, yang ditandai dengan gangguan pertumbuhan pada anak akibat berbagai faktor, seperti kurangnya asupan gizi, pendidikan ibu yang rendah, dan kondisi ekonomi keluarga yang tidak mendukung. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi upaya pencegahan stunting di Desa Jarit, Kecamatan Candipuro, Kabupaten Lumajang, Jawa Timur, melalui program edukasi Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH). Metode yang digunakan adalah Participatory Action Research (PAR), yang melibatkan observasi, wawancara, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus (FGD) dengan masyarakat setempat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penyebab utama stunting di Desa Jarit antara lain rendahnya pemahaman orang tua mengenai pengasuhan anak, keterbatasan pengetahuan tentang gizi, serta masalah ekonomi dan sanitasi. Program SOTH, yang dilaksanakan bekerja sama dengan pemerintah desa dan BKKBN, terbukti berhasil dalam meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan orang tua dalam pengasuhan anak. Sebanyak 88% peserta menyatakan merasa terbantu dengan program ini. Secara keseluruhan, implementasi program SOTH di Desa Jarit efektif dalam mendukung upaya pencegahan stunting, dengan memberikan edukasi yang relevan dan bermanfaat bagi orang tua serta meningkatkan kesadaran dan partisipasi masyarakat dalam menjaga kesehatan anak-anak mereka.

KATA KUNCI: Stunting; Pencegahan Stunting; Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat; Participatory Action Research.

ABSTRACT

Stunting is a significant health issue in Indonesia, characterized by impaired child growth due to various factors, including inadequate nutrition, low maternal education, and unfavorable family economic conditions. This study aims to explore stunting prevention efforts in Jarit Village, Candipuro District, Lumajang Regency, East Java, through the Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) educational program. The research employed the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method, which included observation, interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD) with the local community. The findings reveal that the main causes of stunting in Jarit Village include low parental understanding of child-rearing, limited knowledge about nutrition, and economic and sanitation challenges. The SOTH program, implemented in collaboration with the village government and BKKBN, has been successful in improving parents' knowledge and skills in child-rearing. A total of 88% of participants reported feeling supported by the program. Overall, the implementation of the SOTH program in Jarit Village has proven effective in supporting stunting prevention efforts by providing relevant and beneficial education to parents and raising awareness and community participation in safeguarding their children's health.

KEYWORDS: Stunting; Stunting Prevention; Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat; Participatory Action Research.

A. Introduction

Stunting remains a significant public health challenge in Indonesia, presenting a multifaceted issue that profoundly impacts both child development and broader societal welfare. This condition is medically characterized as a severe impediment to a child's growth and developmental processes, predominantly resulting from insufficient nutritional intake during critical periods of early life. The primary manifestation of stunting is the inability of affected children to achieve growth standards appropriate for their age, particularly in terms of height and physical development milestones. These deficits not only serve as visible indicators of the condition but also signify deeper underlying health issues, including prolonged exposure to inadequate nutrition and, in many cases, the compounded effects of recurring infections or poor environmental conditions. As a consequence, stunting reflects not only an immediate health concern but also a long-term developmental risk, as it adversely influences physical, cognitive, and emotional growth, thereby affecting the individual's potential to thrive within their community. Addressing stunting requires a comprehensive understanding of its root causes and a commitment to implementing targeted nutritional and public health interventions to mitigate its effects.¹ As described by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia and Wuriningsih et al. , stunting is closely linked to malnutrition, which is often identified through a low z-score in anthropometric measurements.² This nutritional deficiency has far-reaching implications for the physical, cognitive, and socio-economic potential of affected children.

The underlying causes of stunting are complex and multifaceted, involving an interplay of biological, environmental, and socio-economic factors that collectively contribute to its prevalence. Among these, maternal malnutrition during pregnancy and inadequate nutritional intake during early childhood are recognized as primary contributors to the onset of stunting. However, stunting cannot be attributed solely to these direct factors, as a broader spectrum of determinants, including poor maternal health, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, recurrent infections, and limited healthcare services, also play significant roles. Additionally, socio-economic disparities such as poverty, low levels of parental education, and inadequate awareness about proper nutrition further exacerbate the problem. The first 1,000 days of life—encompassing the period from conception to a child's second birthday—are universally regarded as a critical window for growth and development. During this time, targeted interventions, such as promoting maternal health, ensuring exclusive breastfeeding, providing adequate complementary feeding, and improving living conditions, are essential to reducing the risk of stunting. Addressing these underlying factors through coordinated public health initiatives and community-based programs is pivotal to breaking the intergenerational cycle of stunting and its long-term consequences.³ Beyond inadequate nutritional intake, other contributing factors include insufficient energy consumption, low birth weight, limited maternal education, restricted family income, suboptimal child-rearing practices, and a lack of dietary diversity.⁴ Addressing these interconnected factors requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach that targets both immediate and underlying causes.

Stunting represents a significant developmental concern on a global scale, affecting a considerable

¹ N Wulandia and C Maulina, "Faktor Yang Berhubungan Dengan Kejadian Stunting Pada Baduta Di Wilayah Kerja Puskesmas Wonokusumo Factors That Associated with Stunting Cases in Children Under Two at The Working Area of Wonokusumo Health Center," *Media Gizi Kesmas* 10, no. 1 (2021): 32–39.

² A.Y Wuriningsih et al., "Optimalisasi Pencegahan Stunting Melalui Kelompok Pendamping Siaga Risiko Stunting (KP-Skoring) Berbasis Self Help Group," *Journal of Community Engagement in Health* 4, no. 1 (2021): 58–65.

³ T Muliadi, K Khairunnas, and A Syafiq, "Tinjauan Literatur : Pentingnya Intervensi Gizi Anak Usia Di Atas 24 Bulan Untuk Pertumbuhan Dan Perkembangan Kognitif (A Systematic Review)," *Majalah Kesehatan* 8, no. 1 (2021): 54–63, <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.majalahkesehatan.2021.008.01.7>.

⁴ M.R Nugroho, R.N Sasongko, and M. Kristiawan, "Faktor-Faktor Yang Mempengaruhi Kejadian Stunting Pada Anak Usia Dini Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 5, no. 2 (2021): 2269–76, <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v5i2.1169>.

proportion of children worldwide and highlighting its status as a pressing public health issue. According to a comprehensive report published by UNICEF, an estimated 149.2 million children, equivalent to 22.0% of the global child population, experience stunting. This widespread prevalence underscores the pervasive nature of the problem, which transcends geographical, cultural, and economic boundaries. The statistics reflect not only the scale of the issue but also its deep-rooted implications for the physical and cognitive development of affected children. These figures serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for targeted interventions, comprehensive policy frameworks, and collaborative global efforts to address the underlying causes of stunting and mitigate its far-reaching effects. By prioritizing strategies to combat malnutrition, improve healthcare access, and promote early childhood development, stakeholders at local, national, and international levels can work towards reducing the global burden of stunting and fostering healthier futures for children worldwide.⁵ Among these cases, Asia accounts for 79.0 million children, representing 21.8% of the region's child population.⁶ Within the Southeast Asian region, Indonesia holds the second-highest prevalence rate, with 31.8% of children affected by stunting.⁷ Nationally, data from the Ministry of Health 2024 indicates that the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia was 21.5% in 2023, equivalent to 60.1 million cases. This marks a slight reduction from the 21.6% prevalence recorded in 2021, which corresponded to 60.4 million cases. Although these figures suggest incremental progress, they also highlight the persistent challenges in achieving the ambitious target of reducing the national stunting prevalence to 14% by 2024. The uneven distribution of progress across regions further complicates efforts to meet this goal, as certain areas continue to face significant barriers in addressing the root causes and consequences of stunting.

The gradual decline in Indonesia's national stunting rate highlights the necessity for more robust, coordinated, and targeted efforts to address this critical public health issue effectively. While progress has been made, the persistence of stunting indicates the need for comprehensive strategies that prioritize early interventions during the pivotal 1,000-day window—from conception to a child's second birthday. These strategies must focus on improving maternal health through better prenatal care, ensuring access to quality and adequate nutrition for both mothers and children, and tackling the socio-economic disparities that exacerbate stunting rates, particularly in underprivileged and rural areas.

In addition to these measures, sustained political will and commitment are essential for driving systemic change. This includes the strategic allocation of resources, the development and implementation of evidence-based policies, and the strengthening of healthcare and nutritional services at the community level. Community engagement and awareness campaigns also play a vital role in fostering understanding and collaboration among all stakeholders, ensuring that interventions are effectively adopted and integrated into daily practices. Addressing regional disparities and overcoming institutional obstacles require an integrated approach that combines public health initiatives, socio-economic development programs, and consistent monitoring and evaluation of outcomes. By embracing these multifaceted and evidence-driven strategies, Indonesia can achieve significant reductions in stunting rates and pave the way for a healthier, more equitable future for its younger generations.

In Indonesia, multiple provinces have reported the lowest rates of stunting and malnutrition, specifically South Kalimantan, North Kalimantan, and South Sumatra. This positive trend reflects the ongoing efforts to address nutritional challenges nationwide. According to the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI), the national prevalence of stunting has significantly decreased to 21.6%. Within East Java, the prevalence rate stands at 19.2%, as reported by the Ministry of Health.⁸ The SSGI also

⁵ UNICEF and WHO, "Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates" 24, no. 2 (2021): 51–78.un

⁶ UNICEF and WHO.

⁷ A Mutia, "Prevalensi Stunting Balita Indonesia Tertinggi Ke-2 Di Asia Tenggara," *Katadata.Co.Id* (blog), 2021.mutia

⁸ T.S Hasiu and L.O Swardin, "Analisis Faktor Yang Berpengaruh Terhadap Kejadian Stunting Pada Balita Di Wilayah Kerja Puskesmas Bukit Wolio Indah Kecamatan
Social Studies in Education Vol. 02 No. 02 (2024)

highlighted that in Lumajang Regency, the stunting rate was as high as 34.41% in 2019. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no measurements were conducted in 2020. However, subsequent data reveal that the prevalence decreased to 30.1% in 2021 and further declined to 23.8% in 2022, indicating the effectiveness of ongoing interventions.

To combat stunting, the Indonesian government has implemented a multifaceted approach targeting the root causes of this public health issue. Key interventions include ensuring that pregnant women receive a minimum of 90 Iron Folic Acid (IFA) tablets throughout their pregnancy, providing supplementary food and nutritional supplements for expectant mothers, and encouraging childbirth under the supervision of qualified doctors or midwives. Additional measures involve the promotion of early initiation of breastfeeding (IMD) immediately after birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and the introduction of complementary feeding for children aged 6 months to 2 years. Other critical actions include administering complete basic immunizations, providing Vitamin A supplementation, monitoring child growth and development at integrated healthcare posts (Posyandu), and promoting clean and healthy living behaviors. Collectively, these initiatives aim to address the multifactorial nature of stunting, ensuring better health outcomes for future generations.

Jarit Village, located in Candipuro District, Lumajang Regency, East Java, has emerged as a significant area of focus in the efforts to address stunting. The village, which is home to a population of 12,222 residents, is geographically divided into four hamlets: Kebonsari, Bulak Klakah, Krajan, and Uranggantung. Investigations and interviews conducted with the local population have identified several key factors contributing to the high prevalence of stunting in this region. These factors include the economic challenges faced by many families, the low educational attainment of mothers, limited knowledge and awareness about proper child-rearing practices, and inadequate access to essential sanitation facilities. Notably, some households lack functional toilets, which exacerbates health and hygiene issues, further influencing the incidence of stunting.

To effectively address these challenges, a comprehensive and integrated approach is essential. Such an approach should combine community participation with educational initiatives aimed at enhancing maternal and child health knowledge. Efforts must also focus on improving the economic conditions of families through programs that provide financial support or income-generating opportunities, as well as increasing access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities. Furthermore, targeted interventions should include workshops and training sessions for parents on effective nutrition and childcare practices, supported by collaboration between local government agencies, healthcare providers, and community organizations. By implementing these evidence-based strategies, Jarit Village can progress towards reducing the stunting rate and improving the overall well-being of its residents, ultimately contributing to broader public health goals in the region.

Observations and interviews with community leaders in Jarit Village indicate that the stunting problem first emerged in 2019. By 2024, significant progress had been made, with the stunting rate declining to minimal levels. It is anticipated that the issue will be entirely resolved by 2025. Despite these advancements, efforts aimed at reducing the stunting rate in Jarit Village have been deemed relatively inefficient, primarily because the prevalence of stunting in 2024 is already considered low. This underscores the importance of shifting the focus from reduction efforts to preventive measures. Such a transition is vital to ensure sustained progress and the long-term well-being of the community.

Further insights from interviews with mothers of toddlers in Jarit Village reveal substantial gaps in knowledge about nutritional preparation during pregnancy and the first 1,000 days of a child's life. This period is critical for preventing stunting, as inadequate nutrition during this time can have irreversible consequences on a child's physical and cognitive development. Additionally, the lack of awareness

regarding proper parenting practices has been identified as a significant area of concern. To address these challenges, researchers have initiated a community education program called SOTH (Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat). This program is specifically designed to equip parents with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective toddler care. The curriculum covers a wide range of topics, including healthy eating habits, developmental stimulation, positive parenting techniques, and clean and healthy living practices. By empowering parents with these tools, the SOTH program aims to create a supportive environment conducive to the optimal growth and development of children.

Moreover, data gathered from interviews with representatives from the local Office of Religious Affairs (KUA), Modin (traditional village officials), and neighborhood heads reveal another critical factor contributing to stunting: early marriage among teenagers. This issue is often rooted in unsupervised social interactions, which lead to premature marriages and, subsequently, an increased risk of stunting among children born to adolescent mothers. Recognizing the urgency of this issue, researchers have developed an educational initiative targeting middle school students. The program focuses on raising awareness about the risks associated with early marriage and unsupervised social interactions. Through engaging and age-appropriate materials, students are educated on the long-term consequences of these behaviors, including their impact on child health and development. By addressing these underlying social issues, the initiative seeks to empower young individuals with the knowledge to make informed decisions, ultimately contributing to the reduction and prevention of stunting in the community.

B. Literature Review

The methodology implemented in this community service initiative is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a research method specifically designed to enhance awareness among community members regarding existing problems and potentials within their environment. It simultaneously encourages their active involvement in planning and executing activities aimed at driving social change.⁹ PAR emphasizes the active engagement of community members, making them integral participants in the transformative process rather than passive recipients of external interventions.¹⁰ This collaborative approach is key to ensuring that the changes achieved are relevant, meaningful, and sustainable for the community.

The stages of PAR applied in this initiative were methodically structured to ensure the active participation of all stakeholders and the effective realization of the program's objectives. The first stage was an observation phase, during which an in-depth investigation of the community's challenges and potentials was conducted. This phase served as a foundation for understanding the specific context and identifying areas requiring intervention. The second stage involved the organization of a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with key community figures, including village heads, to collaboratively formulate solutions tailored to the identified challenges. These discussions provided a platform for shared learning and the co-creation of innovative strategies.

Following the FGD, two flagship programs were implemented during the third stage. The first was the "Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat" (SOTH) program, executed in collaboration with the Jarit Village Government and the National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN). This program focused on equipping parents with knowledge and skills essential for fostering positive family dynamics. The second initiative addressed the critical issue of preventing early marriages through educational campaigns aimed at raising awareness about its social and health implications. These programs not only tackled

⁹ A. Rahmat and M. Mirnawati, "Model Participation Action Research Dalam Pemberdayaan Masyarakat," *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal* 6, no. 1 (2020): 62–71, <https://doi.org/10.37905/AKSARA.6.1.62-71.2020>.

¹⁰ L Atmasari and E Irawan, "Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Melalui Pengembangan Wisata Di Desa Keling, Kepung, Kabupaten Kediri.," *NAJWA: Jurnal Pengabdian Dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat* 1, no. 1 (2023): 42–52, <https://doi.org/10.30762/najwa.v1i1.150>.

immediate concerns but also aimed at instilling long-term behavioral and cultural shifts within the community.

The final stage of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) process involved an in-depth phase of reflection and evaluation, which served as a critical component for assessing the overall effectiveness of the implemented interventions. This stage was designed to systematically examine the outcomes of the interventions by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to identify their successes and highlight areas requiring improvement. The process aimed not only to measure the tangible impacts of the interventions but also to gain insights into the experiences and perspectives of the community members involved.

A key element of this phase was the active engagement of the community, ensuring that their feedback and lived experiences were fully integrated into the evaluation. Through structured discussions, focus groups, and surveys, participants shared their views on the relevance, implementation, and outcomes of the interventions. This collaborative approach reinforced the participatory nature of the PAR framework, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment among the community members. Additionally, the evaluation outcomes provided valuable data to inform the refinement of existing strategies and guide the development of future initiatives. By combining systematic assessment with community involvement, this final phase underscored the importance of reflection and continuous improvement in achieving sustainable and impactful results within the PAR process.

The overarching objective of utilizing the PAR methodology, as elaborated by Z et al. is to act as a catalyst for change.¹¹ This change is conceptualized as a process of reorganizing existing community structures or creating new ones to address localized challenges effectively. The participatory framework employed in PAR seeks to empower communities by fostering collective action, building social capital, and promoting sustainable improvements in public health, education, and social welfare. By prioritizing inclusivity and collaboration, this approach ensures that the interventions resonate with the community's needs and aspirations, ultimately leading to transformative and enduring outcomes.

C. Initial PAR Phase: Observations and Interviews on Stunting Causes in Jarit Village

The initial phase of implementing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology focused on conducting thorough observations and interviews to explore the underlying causes of stunting in Jarit Village. This stage officially began on June 21, 2024, marked by a series of visits to the homes of local village officials and the heads of several hamlets within the community. These visits were designed to establish rapport with key stakeholders and gather preliminary insights regarding stunting issues. A subsequent round of observations was conducted on June 24, 2024, during which researchers concentrated on collecting detailed data about the factors contributing to stunting among young children. This process specifically targeted mothers of young children in Jarit Village, with significant support and collaboration from local village officials to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the situation.

The findings from this phase revealed several critical factors contributing to the prevalence of stunting in Jarit Village. A primary issue identified was the limited understanding among parents regarding the principles of balanced nutrition for children. This knowledge gap significantly affects their ability to implement appropriate dietary practices, thereby compromising the nutritional status of their young children. Another substantial concern highlighted was the lack of effective parenting practices, which stems from insufficient parental education and awareness. This deficiency not only impedes

¹¹ A. Sari F.M Z and Prihati, "Pemulihan Ekonomi Melalui Pembangunan Kebun Bibit Desa Menggunakan Metode Participatory Action Research (PAR)," *Dinamisia : Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 5, no. 2 (2021): 356–64, <https://doi.org/10.31849/dinamisia.v5i2.5351>.

proper child-rearing but also exacerbates the challenges of providing adequate care and nutritional support. These interconnected issues underscore the pressing need for targeted educational initiatives aimed at enhancing parental knowledge about nutrition and child-rearing practices. Such interventions are vital for addressing the root causes of stunting and promoting better health outcomes for children within the community.



Figure 1.1

Data Collection through Observation and Interviews

D. Formulating Solutions to Address Stunting in Jarit Village

The subsequent phase of implementing the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology focused on formulating solutions to address the critical issues contributing to stunting in Jarit Village. The initial step in this process involved a systematic identification of the specific factors responsible for stunting within the community. This approach enabled a detailed diagnosis of the underlying problems, facilitating the development of targeted and effective solutions. The activities in this phase were conducted through a structured Focus Group Discussion (FGD), which included the active participation of community representatives, the Head of Posyandu (integrated health service post), the Village Midwife, and the leaders of various hamlets in Jarit Village. This collaborative forum served as a vital platform for exchanging insights and building consensus on actionable strategies to mitigate stunting.

The importance of family involvement emerged as a central theme in preventing stunting. Families play a critical role in ensuring children receive nutritionally balanced meals, complete immunizations, and adequate developmental stimulation.¹² Despite this, many families in rural Indonesia, including those in Jarit Village, face significant barriers such as limited knowledge, restricted access to reliable health information, and inadequate healthcare services. Previous research underscores these challenges, with Titaley, Ariawan, and Hapsari identifying dietary imbalances as a key cause of stunting.¹³ Furthermore, low maternal education levels¹⁴ and socioeconomic constraints¹⁵ are also recognized as significant contributors to stunting among children.

¹² E.D Olsa and E Anas, "Hubungan Pengetahuan Dan Sikap Ibu Terhadap Kejadian Stunting Pada Anak Baru Masuk Sekolah Dasar Di Kecamatan Nanggalo," *Jurnal Kesehatan Andalas* 6, no. 3 (2017): 523–29.oi

¹³ C.R Titaley et al., "Determinants Of The Stunting Of Children Under Two Years Old In Indonesia: A Multilevel Analysis Of The 2013 Indonesia Basic Health Survey," *Nutrients* 11, no. 5 (n.d.), <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11051106>.

¹⁴ R Ruswati et al., "Risiko Penyebab Kejadian Stunting Pada Anak," *Jurnal Pengabdian Kesehatan Masyarakat (Pengkesmas)* 1, no. 2 (n.d.).

¹⁵ G Apriluana and S Fikawati, "Analisis Faktor-Faktor Risiko Terhadap Kejadian Stunting Pada Balita (0-59 Bulan) Di Negara Berkembang Dan Asia Tenggara," *Media Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Kesehatan* 28, no. 4 (2018): 247–56.

The findings from the FGD provided a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to stunting in Jarit Village. Economic conditions within families were identified as a major determinant, alongside the educational level of mothers and their limited knowledge regarding effective parenting practices. Additionally, the discussion highlighted the critical role of health infrastructure, revealing that inadequate sanitation facilities, such as the absence of household toilets, exacerbate the issue. These insights reinforced the multifaceted nature of stunting, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive interventions that address interconnected challenges, including economic empowerment, educational initiatives for mothers, and improvements in health and sanitation infrastructure. By adopting a holistic approach, the community can work towards sustainable solutions that effectively tackle the root causes of stunting.

E. Educating Youth on Early Marriage Prevention

1. Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) - A Parental Education Initiative

The prevention of stunting is a critical public health objective, as stunting disrupts children's growth and development, impacting their overall well-being and future potential. Parental involvement, particularly from mothers who often serve as primary caregivers, plays a pivotal role in addressing this issue. Parents must ensure that children's nutritional needs are met, especially during early childhood, a period marked by rapid growth and development. Consequently, equipping prospective and current parents with adequate knowledge about nutrition and child development is essential, particularly during pregnancy and the early years of life.

One of the key initiatives in the effort to prevent stunting is the Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH), or "School for Great Parents" program. This program targets pregnant women and mothers with young children, providing them with valuable guidance and education. The SOTH program operates under the supervision of the Posyandu Head and the Village Midwife and is supported by the Jarit Village Government in collaboration with the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN). This partnership reflects a shared commitment to fostering quality parenting practices and ensuring a stunting-free environment for children.

The Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) program, developed by the BKKBN, is specifically designed to enhance parents' skills and knowledge about effective child-rearing. Its primary objective is to educate parents about essential practices during the first 1,000 days of a child's life—a critical window for emotional, physical, and social development.¹⁶ The program covers a range of topics, including balanced nutrition, effective parenting techniques, understanding child psychology at various developmental stages, and fostering positive interactions.¹⁷ By providing comprehensive resources and guidance, SOTH empowers parents to nurture their children's holistic growth and reduce the risk of stunting.

In Jarit Village, the Strengthening Optimal Toddler Health (SOTH) program was officially launched at the Village Hall on July 8, 2024, marking the beginning of a structured initiative aimed at addressing stunting and promoting child health. The program comprised 13 carefully designed sessions that actively engaged parents in a series of workshops and discussions centered on improving child-rearing practices, nutrition, and overall family health. These sessions provided an interactive platform for parents to acquire practical knowledge, share experiences, and seek guidance from facilitators and health professionals.

¹⁶ Y.K Saputriani, Radjikan, and S Hartono, "Implementasi Kebijakan Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) Guna Mendukung Percepatan Penurunan Stunting (Studi Di Kecamatan Sukolilo Kota Surabaya Provinsi Jawa Timur)," *Eksekusi: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum Dan Administrasi Negara* 2, no. 3 (2024): 452–69.

¹⁷ W Fujika and R Sanjaya, "Pola Asuh Orang Tua Terhadap Kejadian Stunting Pada Balita Usia 24-59 Bulan," *Wellness and Healthy Magazine* 3, no. 1 (2021): 103–7.

To foster a supportive and inclusive environment, the program incorporated engaging playtime activities for young children, ensuring their safety and well-being while their parents participated in the sessions. These activities, which included interactive games such as sliding and collaborative play, were supervised by student volunteers from the Community Service Program (KKN). This thoughtful arrangement allowed parents to focus entirely on the workshops, knowing their children were in a nurturing and stimulating environment. The program's dual focus on parental education and child engagement demonstrated a holistic approach to community development, effectively addressing the needs of both groups. By combining practical learning opportunities with a family-friendly atmosphere, the SOTH program exemplified a model of community-based intervention designed to create sustainable improvements in child health and well-being.

On July 23, 2024, a reflection phase was conducted to evaluate the program's impact. A questionnaire distributed to 15 participants revealed that 88% of respondents found the SOTH program highly beneficial in enhancing their parenting knowledge. Participants reported improvements in their understanding of proper nutrition, developmental stimulation, positive parenting techniques, and healthy living habits. These findings highlight the program's success in equipping parents with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective caregiving. The active involvement of the village midwife and Posyandu staff was instrumental in ensuring the program's quality and effectiveness, contributing significantly to its positive outcomes.

The Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) initiative has provided substantial benefits to parents, children, and the wider community. By fostering informed and proactive parenting practices, the program has laid a strong foundation for healthier child-rearing approaches, effectively addressing the root causes of stunting. This collaborative effort demonstrates the potential of targeted educational programs to create meaningful and lasting impacts on community health and well-being.

2. Early Marriage and Free Association Education

The second initiative within the stunting prevention program focused on educating adolescents about the risks associated with early marriage and promoting the importance of delaying marriage. This educational activity was conducted at SMPN 01 Atap, a junior high school located in Jarit Village, in partnership with Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Azhar, a local Islamic boarding school. The event included participation from all students in grades 7 to 9 at SMPN 01 Atap, as well as students enrolled at Hidayatul Azhar. By targeting these youth groups, the initiative aimed to address the critical issue of early marriage, a significant contributor to stunting in children.

The importance of educating adolescents on this topic cannot be overstated. Early marriage poses substantial health risks, particularly for young women, as their bodies are often not yet fully prepared for the demands of pregnancy and childbirth. Research indicates that the younger a woman is when she marries, the higher the likelihood that her child will experience stunting due to inadequate maternal readiness.¹⁸ Consequently, raising awareness among adolescents about these risks is vital for empowering them to make informed decisions regarding their future. This educational program emphasized the importance of prioritizing education and personal development over marriage at an early age, thereby fostering healthier outcomes for future generations.

The content of the initiative was meticulously crafted to align with the needs and interests of the adolescent audience, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. The program employed a variety of engaging methods, including interactive sessions, open discussions, and visually appealing presentations, to communicate the critical health, social, and psychological implications associated

¹⁸ Abidin Yulius and A Liliandriani, "Hubungan Pernikahan Dini Terhadap Kejadian Stunting Pada Balita Di Wilayah Kerja Puskesmas Tawalian Kecamatan Tawalian Kabupaten Mamasa," *Journal Pegguruang* 2, no. 1 (2020): 279–82.

with early marriage. These methods were chosen to foster an engaging and dynamic learning environment that encouraged active participation and critical thinking among students. Participants were invited to ask questions, share personal perspectives, and discuss their thoughts in a supportive setting, which not only deepened their understanding but also empowered them to reflect critically on the topic.

A notable strength of the program was its collaboration with Pondok Pesantren Hidayatul Azhar, which added a culturally and religiously sensitive dimension to the initiative. This partnership facilitated the integration of Islamic values and teachings into the discussion, making the program's message more relatable and impactful for the participants, many of whom identified strongly with these cultural and religious contexts. By addressing the issue of early marriage through a multifaceted approach that combined educational, cultural, and religious perspectives, the initiative successfully engaged the adolescent audience and provided them with the tools to make informed decisions. The thoughtful design of the program ensured that its content was not only informative but also meaningful, fostering both awareness and a sense of responsibility among the participants.

Through this initiative, the program sought to build a strong foundation of knowledge among youth regarding the adverse effects of early marriage. Adolescents were encouraged to delay marriage until they were better prepared physically, emotionally, and socially. By fostering an understanding of the long-term benefits of education and personal development, this initiative aimed to contribute to healthier, more informed decision-making processes among young people. Ultimately, the program aspires to support the creation of a generation that is not only more resilient to health challenges but also better equipped to contribute positively to their communities.

F. Conclusion

Conclusion Stunting is a multifaceted public health issue in Jarit Village, driven by an intricate interplay of factors, including parents' limited understanding of effective child-rearing practices, inadequate knowledge of proper nutrition, economic difficulties, and insufficient sanitation facilities. These challenges underline the need for targeted and comprehensive interventions to address the root causes of stunting effectively. One such intervention is the Sekolah Orang Tua Hebat (SOTH) program, implemented using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. This initiative has proven to significantly enhance parents' knowledge and skills in areas critical to child care and nutrition.

The results of this study indicate that 88% of participants reported experiencing a positive impact from their involvement in the SOTH program. This high level of satisfaction underscores the program's effectiveness in equipping parents with essential caregiving knowledge and fostering healthier practices within the community. Beyond improving individual understanding, the SOTH program has succeeded in promoting active community involvement in child health initiatives. This collaborative approach has not only strengthened the capacity of parents to address their children's nutritional needs but also cultivated a shared commitment among community members to tackle stunting collectively.

Furthermore, the program's focus on education and collaboration has contributed to measurable reductions in stunting rates in Jarit Village. By empowering parents and community members with the tools and knowledge necessary to improve child health outcomes, the SOTH program has demonstrated the value of participatory and educational strategies in addressing complex public health challenges. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of continued investment in community-based interventions that prioritize both education and active participation, offering a sustainable pathway to combat stunting and enhance child well-being.

G. References

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