

IMPLEMENTATION OF BALANCED NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR PARENTS TO SUPPORT CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN PADUKUHAN TEGANING 1, KULON PROGO

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Abstract - *Nutritional imbalances in children can hinder their optimal growth and cognitive development. To address this, increasing parents' understanding of the importance of balanced nutritional intake is crucial in supporting healthy child growth. This program aims to enhance parents' awareness and knowledge about balanced nutrition for children through a series of educational activities involving both parents and students of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo. The program uses a participatory and educational approach, starting with coordination with PAUD administrators for event preparation. The activities begin with a Cooking Class, using a demonstration method that engages children in active learning. Next, a session on the concept of balanced nutrition is held through a lecture and interactive discussion with parents as active participants. To deepen understanding, a cooking competition is organized, involving the parents of the students. This competition is designed to foster creativity in preparing tofubased dishes, a nutrient-rich and easily prepared food. The event concludes with a health screening conducted by local health professionals, focusing on indicators such as weight, height, and blood pressure. The program results indicate an increase in knowledge and awareness among both parents and children about the importance of choosing healthy foods in daily life. This improvement is evident from observations that documented active engagement, enhanced abilities, and the enthusiasm of participants throughout the activities. It is hoped that this program will continue and have a lasting positive impact on improving the nutritional quality and health of the local community.*

Keywords: *Balanced Nutrition, Parental Education, Child Growth.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In early childhood, which ranges from ages 0-6 years, children undergo rapid growth and development. During this stage, they experience various physical and mental changes (Ilhami 2024). Early childhood is a crucial phase in an individual's life, as it lays the foundation for their future development. Children at this age process and respond quickly to stimuli they receive. Therefore, everything they experience in early childhood becomes a critical basis for their future life (Inten and Permatasari 2019).

Health is one of the key factors in a child's development. If a child's health is not optimal, it can affect various aspects of their growth and their ability to engage in activities. One of the main ways to maintain a child's health is by ensuring that the food they consume contains balanced nutrition (Awaluddin, dkk 2017). The food consumed should include essential nutrients such as protein, carbohydrates, vitamins, fats, and minerals. Nutrition is an important part of a child's growth and development, and proper nutrition significantly determines their future quality as human resources (Fitriana 2020).

Children in early childhood require high levels of nutrition to support physical growth, brain development, and a healthy immune system. Children with good or normal nutritional status tend to grow according to their age, have healthy bodies, good appetites, and adapt more easily to their environment (Gannika 2023). Conversely, malnutrition can negatively impact a child's growth and development, especially during the golden age (Septikasari 2018).

However, the widespread availability of food and drinks in the market that often do not meet the nutritional standards necessary for supporting children's growth and development presents a serious challenge for parents. These products are often marketed with attractive packaging and flavors that appeal to children, but unfortunately, many of them have low nutritional value or may even pose health risks, such as high sugar, salt, or preservative content (Qomariyah and Istatik 2023).

This situation makes it difficult for parents to ensure that their children receive a balanced diet. Parents are often confused about choosing the right food, which can lead to children unknowingly consuming unhealthy diets (Mansur 2019). Furthermore, the lack of education about the importance of balanced nutrition for young children exacerbates this issue. Many parents are not fully aware of their children's nutritional needs or how to ensure that those needs are met. This lack of knowledge often makes them more easily influenced by advertising and promotional products that do not support optimal health for their children (Lolan and Sutriyawan 2021).

Recently, the public's attention was drawn to a statement by the Chairman of IDAI, Piprim Basarah Yanuarso, who highlighted that modern lifestyles have contributed to the increased risk of chronic kidney disease in children. One alarming factor is the habit of children consuming sugary packaged drinks, often marketed as refreshing and delicious, but containing very high levels of sugar (Arlinta 2024).

Field observations conducted in Padukuhan Teganing 1 revealed that one child was suffering from malnutrition. Additionally, the observations showed

that many parents in the community do not fully understand the importance of balanced nutrition for their children. This is evidenced by the fact that some children still follow unhealthy diets, consuming foods that lack sufficient daily nutrients or could even harm their growth, such as fast food and packaged drinks.

This situation highlights the need for interventions through education and programs aimed at increasing parents' awareness and understanding of balanced nutrition. Such efforts are expected to improve the nutritional status of children in Padukuhan Teganing 1 and prevent further malnutrition. Implementing these programs can help foster positive changes in family eating habits and enhance the quality of life and health of children in the community.

2. METHOD

This research uses a participatory and educational approach designed to enhance parents' understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition in supporting early childhood development. This approach was chosen because it actively involves both parents and children, fostering a more interactive and practical learning environment. The education provided is intended to be not only theoretical but also applicable, allowing parents to immediately implement the knowledge gained in their daily lives.

The data presented in this study consists of both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation during the activities and indepth interviews with parents, PAUD (early childhood education) teachers, and healthcare workers involved in the program. Observations were conducted to document behavioral and comprehension changes among participants before and after the program. In-depth interviews were used to further explore participants' views and experiences regarding the importance of balanced nutrition. Secondary data was collected through documentation available at PAUD Menoreh Mulyo, including children's health records, archives of previous activities, and relevant literature on balanced nutrition and early childhood education. A literature review was also conducted to support the arguments and analysis developed in this research.

The study was conducted in Padukuhan Teganing 1, Kulon Progo, with a focus on PAUD Menoreh Mulyo. The research and program implementation took place over a period of 45 days, coinciding with *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN) from July 10 to August 23, 2024. This timeline was chosen to ensure that all phases of the program, from preparation to evaluation, could be carried out optimally.

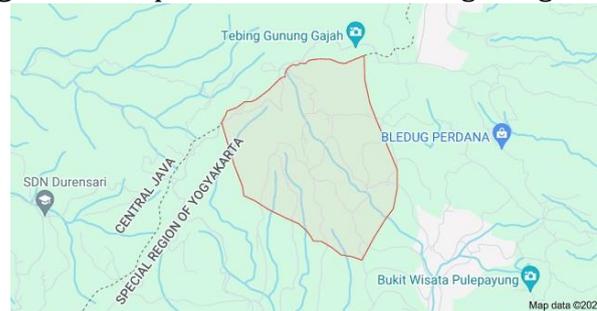
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Overview of Padukuhan Teganing 1

1. Geographical Location

Padukuhan Teganing I is one of the hamlets located in the Kalurahan Hargotirto, Kapanewon Kokap, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta Province.

Figure 1. Map of the Padukuhan Teganing 1 Area



Source: Google Maps

2. Community Conditions

The social conditions of the Padukuhan Teganing I community are deeply rooted in Nusantara Islamic cultural traditions, which are evident through their practices of mutual cooperation, politeness, social interaction, and other Islamic customs. These social norms form the foundation for all social development processes, which are continuously maintained, preserved, and enhanced. Economically, the community of Padukuhan Teganing I is divided into various sectors, but overall, the economic status is considered to be lower-middle class. Financial resources mainly come from farming, palm sap production, and livestock, making it challenging to stabilize the economy due to seasonal variations in these occupations.

Health issues in Padukuhan Teganing I are evident from the data collected through Posyandu activities for both toddlers and the elderly. Observations have revealed cases of malnutrition among some toddlers and high blood pressure in several elderly community members. However, awareness about health is gradually increasing among the residents of Padukuhan Teganing I. Routine Posyandu activities for both the elderly and toddlers serve as key indicators of the community's commitment to monitoring health progress.

In terms of education, the mountainous location of Padukuhan Teganing I results in a sparse population. Most of the residents have only completed Junior High School (SMP) or Senior High School (SMA). The village hosts two educational institutions: PAUD Menoreh Mulyo and SD Negeri Proman. Many residents pursuing SMP and SMA levels attend schools in other villages or in Wates.

Given these conditions, despite the growing health awareness among the community, the generally low educational level poses a challenge to understanding the importance of balanced nutrition (Shodikin et al. 2023). Many parents lack adequate knowledge about nutrition, which impacts their childrearing practices and nutritional fulfillment. This issue is exacerbated by the discovery of a child suffering from malnutrition, highlighting the urgent need to enhance parents' understanding of the importance of nutrition for supporting children's growth and development. This situation underscores the necessity of implementing balanced nutrition education programs. Such initiatives are expected to improve parents' knowledge about the significance of nutrition for their children and serve as a preventive measure to address health issues like stunting and malnutrition in the Padukuhan Teganing I community.

B. Implementation of the Balanced Nutrition Education Program for Parents to Support Child Development in Padukuhan Teganing 1, Kulon Progo 1. Planning and Preparation

- **Needs Assessment:**
Identify the specific nutritional needs of the Padukuhan Teganing I community, with a particular focus on issues like stunting and other nutritional deficiencies.
- **Coordination:**
Collaborate with PAUD Menoreh Mulyo Teganing I, the posyandu balita cadres, and Puskesmas Kokap 2 Kulon Progo to ensure support and approval for the program's implementation.
- **Material Development:**
Prepare educational materials on balanced nutrition, including information on healthy food preparation, signs of nutritional deficiencies and excesses, and strategies for preventing stunting.
- **Scheduling and Venue:**
Set the schedule and location for the activities, and ensure that the venue (PAUD Menoreh Mulyo building) is ready for use on the designated day.

2. Socialization and Promotion:

- **Information Dissemination:**
Inform and invite parents of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo students to participate in the planned activities.
- **Stakeholder Coordination:**
Ensure that all relevant parties, such as PAUD teachers, posyandu cadres, and healthcare professionals, are prepared to actively participate in the activities.

Figure 2.

Coordination with relevant stakeholders and inviting parents of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo students to participate in the series of activities



Source: Personal Documentation

3. Implementation of Activities

- **Cooking Class:**
The cooking class activity within the balanced nutrition education program is designed to engage children in active learning through

demonstration methods. In this session, simple ingredients such as fruit, bread, and milk are used to create healthy food creations. Children are taught how to prepare nutritious snacks using these ingredients. Fruit provides vitamins, bread serves as a source of carbohydrates, and milk provides protein and calcium.

Through this activity, children not only learn about the importance of choosing healthy food ingredients but also participate directly in the food preparation process. This experience is intended to cultivate healthy eating habits from an early age while introducing the concept of balanced nutrition into daily life.

Parents are also invited to accompany their children during the class, which helps enhance their understanding of the importance of providing healthy food for their children's growth and development. The involvement of parents in this activity is expected to reinforce good nutritional practices at home and support long-term healthy eating patterns.

Figures 3 and 4

Cooking Class with PAUD Menoreh Mulyo students



Source: Personal Documentation

- **Socialization:**

The socialization of balanced nutrition is carried out using an interactive and participatory approach, with the parents of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo students as the primary participants. Educational material is presented through lectures that provide an in-depth understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition for optimal child growth and development. UIN Sunan Kalijaga KKN students, supported by health workers from Puskesmas Kokap 2 and cadre of the balita posyandu, serve as facilitators explaining various crucial aspects related to child nutrition.

The discussion during this socialization covers essential topics, such as the importance of meeting balanced nutritional needs to support optimal child growth, how deficiencies or excesses in nutrition can affect a child's health, and ways to prevent various diseases through

nutritious food intake. Parents are also guided on understanding good food composition, including the types of foods containing carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals needed in balanced portions.

Not limited to theory, the socialization also provides practical tips on choosing nutritious everyday food, including how to read food labels and select healthier products. Students emphasize the importance of reducing the consumption of processed foods high in sugar, salt, and preservatives that could pose health risks to children, especially during growth periods.

Interactive discussions are a key component of the socialization, providing parents with the opportunity to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss challenges and solutions related to their children's eating habits. Many parents express concerns about choosing healthy foods and dealing with their children's preferences for sweet or fatty foods. This approach aims not only to increase parents' knowledge but also to change their attitudes and behaviors in providing healthy food that supports the growth and health of children in Padukuhan Teganing 1.

Figures 5, 6, and 7

Series of Balanced Nutrition Socialization Activities with Parents of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo Students



Source: Personal Documentation

• Health Screening:

Health screening is a crucial step in monitoring the health status of children in Padukuhan Teganing 1, conducted as part of efforts for early detection and prevention of health issues. Medical staff from Puskesmas Kokap 2 perform a series of physical examinations, including measuring height, weight, and checking blood pressure. This process not only assesses physical growth but also evaluates whether children are developing according to health standards appropriate for their age and developmental stage.

The main goal of this screening is to provide a clear picture of the children's nutritional and health status and to identify any health conditions that may require further attention, such as malnutrition,

stunting, or obesity. The data obtained from these measurements assist medical professionals in evaluating growth patterns and determining if there are any nutritional imbalances that need to be addressed.

If health issues are identified, such as malnutrition, excess weight, or abnormal blood pressure, medical staff provide immediate recommendations to parents. These recommendations include guidance on improving the child's diet, increasing appropriate nutritional intake, and advice on suitable physical activities for children experiencing obesity.

This screening not only serves as an important moment for tracking children's growth but also raises parents' awareness about the importance of a healthy diet and balanced nutrition. Early detection through health screening helps prevent more serious health issues and equips parents with better knowledge to maintain their children's health and well-being.

The screening process is expected to become a regular part of the health program in Padukuhan Teganing 1, ensuring that every child receives optimal attention regarding nutrition and health, and can grow appropriately according to their age stages.

Figure 8.

Health Screening Activity with Health Staff from Puskesmas Kokap 2 and Posyandu Cadres



Source: Personal Documentation

- **Fathers' Cooking Competition:**

To encourage active participation from parents, especially fathers, a cooking competition was held with the theme of PMT (Supplementary Feeding), using tofu as the main ingredient. This competition was designed as a fun and educational interaction aimed not only at entertainment but also at teaching how to prepare nutritious ingredients into appealing dishes that children enjoy. Tofu was chosen as the main ingredient because it is a readily available, inexpensive, and nutrient-rich source of plant-based protein.

The competition tested the creativity of parents in processing tofu. Participants had the opportunity to experiment with various recipes and cooking techniques, from simple preparations to more complex

presentations. This provided participants with direct insight into the importance of food variety and how to make healthy food more appealing for children who often resist vegetables or other nutritious foods.

Each team, consisting of fathers from the PAUD students, aimed to create dishes that were not only healthy but also delicious and visually attractive. The competition involved judging based on aspects of nutrition, creativity, taste, and presentation. Nutritional assessment focused on the balance of nutrients in each dish, while creativity evaluated participants' ability to use tofu as a main ingredient to create something unique and appealing to children.

The cooking competition served a purpose beyond just competition. It was an educational tool where parents indirectly learned about the importance of balanced nutrition in everyday meals. Through the cooking process, they also understood that nutritious food does not have to be expensive or complicated to prepare but can be made from simple, readily available ingredients.

Additionally, this event functioned as a way to strengthen relationships among parents and increase fathers' involvement in child-rearing, particularly in providing proper nutrition. By involving fathers in the cooking competition, it is hoped that their role in maintaining a healthy diet and the overall well-being of their children will be enhanced, and they will gain a better understanding of the importance of providing nutritious food daily.

The competition concluded with the awarding of prizes to the winners, which is expected to motivate all parents to continue applying the skills and knowledge they gained in their daily lives. Through this activity, it is hoped that parents' awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition for their children will increase, and healthy eating habits will be sustained within their families.

Figure 9.

Cooking Competition with Fathers of PAUD Menoreh Mulyo Students



Source: Personal Documentation

C. Results of the Balanced Nutrition Education Program

The results of the balanced nutrition education program in Padukuhan Teganing 1 indicate a significant improvement in both parents' and children's knowledge and awareness about the importance of choosing and consuming healthy food in daily life. Through various activities such as cooking classes, socialization, cooking competitions, and health screenings, participants not only gained theoretical knowledge but also practical skills that could be directly applied in their daily lives.

This improvement is clearly evident from the observations documenting active participant involvement. Parents displayed a high level of interest in each session, both in lectures and interactive discussions. They enthusiastically asked questions and shared experiences about their children's eating habits, indicating a growing awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition. Children participating in the cooking classes also showed great interest in healthy food, particularly because they were directly involved in preparing appealing and tasty dishes.

Additionally, the results of the cooking competition highlighted an increase in parents' skills, especially in utilizing simple ingredients like tofu to create nutritionally rich and appealing dishes for children. Many parents who previously lacked confidence in preparing healthy meals now understand that with a bit of creativity and basic nutritional knowledge, they can create nutritious meals that their children enjoy.

Participants' enthusiasm was evident not only in their direct involvement but also in their long-term commitment. Several parents expressed their intention to start improving their family's diet and ensuring their children receive adequate and balanced nutrition. Support from Puskesmas Kokap 2 and the cadres of the toddler posyandu further strengthened the program's impact, with follow-up health recommendations provided for parents whose children were identified with nutritional or growth issues.

In addition to increasing knowledge, the program successfully built a more health-conscious community. This educational initiative has served as a platform for parents to exchange information and experiences, creating a strong support network among them. Therefore, the program not only enhanced understanding of nutrition but also strengthened social connections and collective commitment to supporting optimal child growth and development in Padukuhan Teganing 1.

The success of this program is hoped to serve as a foundation for similar activities in the future. It is expected that this educational program will continue and become an integral part of efforts to improve the quality of nutrition and health in the local community. In the long term, it is hoped that there will be a reduction in stunting and other nutritional issues, leading to a healthier and more productive generation. Continued support from local government, educational institutions, and health facilities is crucial for the program to sustain and have a

broader positive impact on the community.

4. CONCLUSION

Efforts to enhance parents' knowledge and awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition for children have had a significant impact. Through educational activities such as cooking classes, socialization, cooking competitions, and health screenings, both parents and children gained a better understanding of the importance of healthy food for optimal growth and development. Active participation by parents in each activity reflects an increased awareness of the need to choose nutritious and varied foods in daily life. Additionally, parents' skills in preparing simple ingredients, like tofu, into appealing and nutritious meals for children have also improved.

The program has demonstrated that collaboration between the community, educational institutions, and health services can strengthen collective awareness of health and nutrition. With ongoing support from various stakeholders, it is hoped that the program can continue regularly and contribute to reducing stunting rates and improving the overall health quality of the local population. Overall, this educational program serves as an important initial step in building community awareness about healthy eating from an early age, while also fostering habits that support more optimal child development in the future.

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