

Father's perspective in caring for babies and toddlers to prevent stunting

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ABSTRACT

Background: Stunting is a condition where the height of children under five years of age is far below the age standard due to chronic malnutrition and other health problems. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and various national health institutions, stunting can have a long-term impact on children's cognitive development, health and well-being. Traditionally, the role of childcare is often considered the mother's responsibility, while the father's role is often focused on financial aspects. **Objective:** to obtain information about fathers' perspectives in caring for babies and toddlers to prevent stunting. **Method:** This research is qualitative research involving 96 father respondents. The inclusion criteria for fathers were fathers who were healthy and had children aged infants or toddlers. **Results:** From this study it was still found that the majority showed sufficient awareness of the importance of nutrition for their children, but their knowledge was often limited to basic information and did not fully understand the details of a proper diet or the importance of regular health checks. Fathers' involvement in health visits and child health consultations is often more limited. Fathers tend to rely on mothers for decisions regarding health and treatment, despite fathers' awareness of the importance of routine check-ups and immunizations. **Conclusion:** the father's role cannot yet be said to be optimal to help prevent stunting because there are still values that assume this function lies with the mother. There is a need to increase the optimization of the father's role in addition to increasing knowledge capacity.

Key words: father, caring for toddlers, stunting

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Stunting adalah kondisi di mana tinggi badan anak di bawah usia lima tahun jauh di bawah standar usianya karena kekurangan gizi kronis dan masalah kesehatan lainnya. Menurut data dari Organisasi Kesehatan Dunia (WHO) dan berbagai lembaga kesehatan nasional, stunting dapat berdampak jangka panjang pada perkembangan kognitif, kesehatan, dan kesejahteraan anak. Secara tradisional, peran pengasuhan anak sering kali dianggap sebagai tanggung jawab ibu, sementara peran ayah sering kali terfokus pada aspek finansial.

Tujuan: untuk memperoleh informasi tentang perspektif ayah dalam pengasuhan bayi dan balita untuk pencegahan stunting

Metode: metode penelitian ini adalah kualitatif yang melibatkan 96 responden ayah. Kriteria inklusi ayah adalah ayah yang sehat dan memiliki anak dengan usia bayi atau balita.

Hasil: Dari penelitian ini masih ditemukan bahwa sebagian besar menunjukkan kesadaran yang cukup tentang pentingnya gizi untuk anak-anak mereka, tetapi pengetahuan mereka sering kali terbatas pada informasi dasar dan belum sepenuhnya memahami detail diet yang tepat atau pentingnya pemeriksaan kesehatan rutin. Keterlibatan ayah dalam kunjungan kesehatan dan konsultasi kesehatan anak sering kali lebih terbatas. Ayah cenderung mengandalkan ibu untuk keputusan terkait kesehatan dan pengobatan, meskipun ada kesadaran ayah tentang pentingnya pemeriksaan rutin dan imunisasi

Kesimpulan: peran ayah masih belum dapat dikatakan optimal untuk membantu pencegahan stunting karena masih terdapat nilai yang menganggap fungsi tersebut ada pada ibu. Perlu adanya peningkatan optimalisasi peran ayah selain peningkatan kapasitas pengetahuan.

Kata kunci: ayah, pengasuhan bayi balita, stunting

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition where the height of children under five years of age is far below age standards due to chronic malnutrition and other health problems. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and various national health institutions, stunting can have a long-term impact on children's cognitive development, health and well-being. Therefore, preventing stunting is an important priority in public health (World Health Organization 2018).

Traditionally, the role of childcare is often considered the mother's responsibility, while

the father's role is often focused on financial aspects. However, research shows that fathers' active involvement in parenting can have a significant positive impact on children's development, including in the context of preventing stunting. With increasing awareness of the importance of the father's role, many families are now beginning to recognize that fathers also play an important role in ensuring the well-being of their children (Erfina Erfina et al. 2022); (Rachman et al. 2023); (Osorio-Castaño, Carvajal-Carrascal, and Rodríguez-Gázquez 2017).

It is important to understand how fathers' perspectives and involvement can influence parenting patterns and children's health. Several aspects that need to be considered include that fathers who are involved in planning and providing nutritious food can help ensure that children get sufficient nutritional intake to prevent stunting. Father involvement in routine health visits and disease management can support early detection of health problems that can contribute to stunting. Father involvement can create a family environment that supports children's physical and mental development, as well as reducing stress that may have a negative impact on children's health (Choi et al. 2021); (Doherty, Kouneski, and Erickson 1998).

This research aims to determine fathers' perspectives regarding their role in caring for babies and toddlers, analyzing the impact of fathers' involvement on stunting prevention, and identify factors that influence fathers' involvement in parenting. Recommend strategies to increase the role of fathers in stunting prevention efforts

METHODS

This research method is qualitative research which aims to understand fathers'

perspectives and experiences regarding caring for babies and toddlers and their role in preventing stunting. Qualitative methods were chosen because they can provide in-depth insight into fathers' views, motivations and practices in specific contexts.

The research was conducted in East Jakarta, with a focus on areas representing various socio-economic backgrounds. This location was selected to obtain a representative perspective of various social and economic conditions.

Informant Selection Criteria: The informant is a father who has children under the age of five. Inclusion criteria included: Fathers living with children and partner; Fathers who are actively involved in childcare; There are no restrictions on age or employment status, but variations in socioeconomic and educational background are preferred. **Number of Informants:** A total of 15-20 informants will be selected to explore various perspectives. This number was chosen to ensure data saturation, i.e. the point where additional information does not provide new insights.

Data Collection Technique is In-depth interview: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore the father's views and experiences in depth. Interview questions will cover topics, namely: knowledge about stunting and its prevention, role and involvement in caring for babies and toddlers. Challenges and barriers to actively engaging and views on the support needed to increase engagement.

Interviews will be conducted face-to-face or via video call platform, depending on the informant's convenience and preferences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Father's involvement in caring for babies and toddlers in preventing stunting is as follows:

1. Awareness and knowledge

Many fathers show sufficient awareness of the importance of nutrition for their children, but their knowledge is often limited to basic information. Most fathers understand that good nutrition is key to preventing stunting, but they may not fully understand the details of a proper diet or the importance of regular health check-ups. The results of this research can be concluded from:

Informant A: "*Saya tahu bahwa stunting itu terkait dengan kekurangan gizi, terutama pada anak-anak. Katanya, kalau anak tidak*

mendapatkan makanan yang cukup bergizi dari kecil, tinggi badannya tidak akan tumbuh sesuai dengan usianya. Tapi saya tidak tahu pasti makanan apa saja yang harus dihindari atau ditambahkan."

Informant B: "*Stunting itu seperti kondisi di mana anak tumbuh lebih kecil dari teman-temannya. Saya sering mendengar bahwa itu karena anak tidak mendapatkan nutrisi yang cukup, tapi saya belum mendalami lebih lanjut bagaimana cara mencegahnya dengan tepat.*"

Fathers are often involved in aspects of food preparation and diet planning, although this role is more often seen in the context of buying groceries or suggesting menus. In some cases, fathers are directly involved in preparing food, especially when mothers are working or busy. The results of this research can be concluded from:

Informan C: "*Menurut saya, nutrisi sangat penting untuk mencegah stunting. Saya mendengar bahwa kekurangan vitamin dan mineral seperti vitamin A, zat besi, dan seng bisa menyebabkan*

stunting. Namun, saya masih bingung bagaimana cara memastikan anak mendapatkan cukup dari semua itu."

Informan D: *"Saya paham bahwa protein dan kalori penting untuk pertumbuhan anak. Saya sering mencoba memberi anak makanan yang kaya protein seperti daging dan telur, serta makanan yang mengandung banyak energi. Tapi saya tidak terlalu tahu apakah itu sudah cukup untuk mencegah stunting."*

Fathers' involvement in health visits and child medical care is often more limited. Fathers tend to rely on mothers for decisions regarding health and treatment, despite awareness of the importance of routine check-ups and immunizations. This can be seen from the informant's information below:

Informant E: *"Saya tahu bahwa stunting itu masalah kesehatan yang membuat anak tumbuh lebih lambat dibandingkan teman-temannya. Saya tahu itu disebabkan oleh kekurangan gizi, tetapi saya tidak begitu jelas tentang bagaimana mengidentifikasi atau menangani stunting di rumah."*

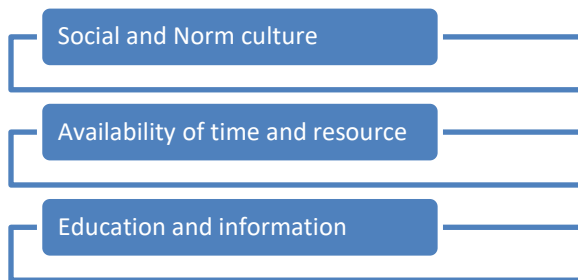
Informant F: *"Stunting adalah kondisi di mana anak tidak tumbuh dengan baik, biasanya karena kekurangan makanan*

bergizi. Saya pernah membaca tentang ini, tapi saya tidak yakin langkah-langkah spesifik apa yang perlu diambil untuk mencegahnya."

Informant G: *"Saya tahu imunisasi penting untuk mencegah penyakit, dan saya juga mendengar bahwa beberapa penyakit bisa memperburuk kondisi stunting. Jadi, kami memastikan anak mendapatkan semua vaksin yang diperlukan sesuai jadwal."*

Informant H: *"Kami rutin membawa anak ke posyandu untuk imunisasi. Saya tahu bahwa vaksinasi melindungi anak dari penyakit yang bisa membuat mereka sakit berat dan memperburuk masalah seperti stunting. Namun, saya tidak begitu paham bagaimana vaksinasi secara langsung mempengaruhi stunting."*

To find out the factors that cause fathers' knowledge and awareness when caring for babies and toddlers in preventing stunting to be not optimal, it can be analyzed by knowing the factors that cause fathers' involvement.



Traditional views of gender roles influence the level of father involvement. Some fathers feel that their main responsibility is to earn a living, while childcare and care is considered the mother's duty. However, there has also been a shift towards more active involvement as social norms change and awareness of the importance of the father's role increases. The results of this research are the same as the results of research which explains that the role of fathers is greatly influenced by social norms of father and family relationships (Sujalmo and Chusairi 2023); (Han, Liu, and Xie 2023).

These results show that Busy work and time constraints are often the main obstacles for fathers to be actively involved in parenting. When fathers have adequate flexibility of time and resources, they are better able to participate in parenting and stunting prevention activities. The results of this study are the same as the results of research which found the impact of time availability on fathers' involvement and role in parenting (Rakotomanana et al. 2021)

Fathers' education level is related to their knowledge about stunting prevention and involvement in caregiving. Fathers with higher levels of education tend to be better informed and more active in their parenting role. This is the same result with result from rohmalina et all, 2021 (Rohmalina, Suryono, and Fauziah 2021).

The impact of father's involvement on preventing stunting, especially father's involvement in ensuring nutritious food intake, can help prevent stunting. However, the impact depends on the extent to which they are involved in planning and providing healthy food and supporting mothers in this regard. When fathers are active in parenting, this can create a more supportive environment for children's development. This is in accordance with other research which states that psychological and emotional support from fathers can help reduce stress in mothers and improve the mental health of the entire family, which has a positive impact on children's health (Siron et al. 2021).

Challenges and Opportunities Some challenges include traditional gender norms, lack of adequate information and education, and limited time and resources. Additionally, there are still significant differences in engagement levels based on socioeconomic and educational background (Hernawati, Rizkillah, and Herawati 2020). There is an opportunity for fathers to increase education and awareness about the role of fathers in preventing stunting through public health programs and family education can increase fathers' involvement. Support programs that are flexible and sensitive to family needs can help overcome existing barriers (Schober 2015).

The recommendation from the research is that educational programs targeting fathers about the importance of nutrition and their role in stunting prevention need to be developed. This can include workshops, seminars, and educational materials designed specifically for fathers. The existence of policy support that supports fathers' involvement in parenting, such as paternity leave or family support programs, can help overcome time constraints and increase fathers' involvement. These two recommendations are added with an integrated approach that involves all family members in a stunting prevention

program that can be more effective. This includes collaboration between health care providers, educational institutions, and local communities .

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that father involvement has the potential to have a positive impact in preventing stunting, but requires greater support in the form of education, policies and resources to maximize their role. Although there are indications that father involvement has the potential to make a positive contribution to stunting prevention, there is a lack of research that specifically explores fathers' perspectives in this context. In-depth research is needed to understand how fathers' perspectives and roles can be optimized in stunting prevention strategies and to identify barriers and opportunities in increasing fathers' involvement. With a better understanding of fathers' perspectives and roles in parenting, it is hoped that more effective interventions can be developed to prevent stunting and support children's holistic well-being. It is hoped that this research will make a significant contribution to policy and practice in public health and child care.

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