



# The Role of Early Childhood Teachers In Prevention and Reduction Of Stunting at Tongkok Village Pajar Bulan District

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## ABSTRACT

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that affects the physical growth and cognitive development of children, especially at an early age. This condition is a serious challenge in various regions, especially in rural areas, where awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition and good parenting is still low. Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers have a strategic role in preventing and reducing stunting through education, monitoring child growth and development, and collaboration with parents and health workers. This study aims to analyze the role of PAUD teachers in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting, including strategies applied in providing nutrition education and appropriate parenting patterns. The research method used is a qualitative approach with literature studies and interviews with PAUD teachers in several villages. The results of the study showed that PAUD teachers play a role in increasing parental awareness of the importance of nutritional intake, healthy lifestyles, and stimulation of child development. However, there are several challenges, such as lack of training for teachers and limited supporting facilities. Therefore, support from various parties is needed to improve the competence of PAUD teachers in handling stunting problems. Thus, efforts to prevent and reduce stunting can be more effective, supporting optimal child growth and development.

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## Introduction

Stunting is one of the chronic nutritional problems that is a serious concern in Indonesia, especially in rural areas. Stunting occurs due to long-term malnutrition, which has an impact on children's physical growth and cognitive development. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2022), the prevalence of stunting in

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Indonesia is still at 21.6%, which indicates the need for further intervention to reduce this figure. One party that has an important role in preventing and reducing stunting is Early Childhood Education (PAUD) teachers, considering that early age is a crucial period in children's growth.

This study aims to examine the role of PAUD teachers in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting in villages, as well as explore strategies that can be applied to increase awareness and good nutritional practices for early childhood. In addition, this study will also analyze the various challenges faced by PAUD teachers in carrying out their roles, and find solutions that can support them in carrying out their duties more effectively.

The main problem faced in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting in villages is the low level of community understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition and proper parenting patterns for children. Many parents are still unaware that stunting is not just a matter of height, but also related to brain development and long-term health of children (Unicef, 2021). In addition, limited access to adequate health and education resources is also an inhibiting factor in overcoming stunting.

Gaps in previous research show that although various intervention programs have been implemented by the government and health institutions, the role of PAUD teachers as agents of change in preventing stunting has received little attention. Most studies focus more on medical interventions and nutrition programs, while the contribution of early childhood education in forming healthy eating habits and good parenting has not been widely discussed (Mardewi et al., 2020).

In addition, although several studies have identified the importance of family involvement in preventing stunting, there is still little research that discusses how PAUD teachers can play a role in bridging nutrition education between schools and families (Sari & Yulianti, 2019). PAUD teachers have a strategic position in providing information that is easy for parents to understand about the importance of nutrition and stimulation of child development. Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap by examining more deeply the role of PAUD teachers in addressing stunting problems.

The proposal in this study covers several main aspects. First, this study will identify various forms of interventions that have been carried out by PAUD teachers in increasing parental awareness of stunting. Second, this study will explore the obstacles faced by PAUD teachers in implementing child nutrition education and monitoring programs. Third, this study will compile policy recommendations and strategies that can support the role of PAUD teachers in preventing stunting, either through training, improving facilities, or support from related parties.

In collecting data, this study will use a qualitative approach with interview and observation methods of PAUD teachers in several villages. The data obtained will be

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analyzed to understand the interaction patterns between teachers, parents, and children in an effort to prevent stunting. In addition, this study will also examine the policies and programs that have been implemented by the government in supporting the role of PAUD teachers in aspects of child nutrition and health.

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more effective early childhood education programs in preventing stunting. By increasing the role of PAUD teachers in supporting good nutrition practices and appropriate parenting patterns, stunting rates in Indonesia can be significantly reduced. In addition, this study also aims to provide recommendations for policy makers in integrating nutrition and health aspects into the PAUD curriculum. Overall, this study will be an important reference for educators, health workers, and policy makers in understanding how early childhood education can contribute to overcoming nutrition problems in Indonesia. With a more holistic and education-based approach, it is hoped that children in villages can grow optimally and have a healthier and more productive future.

## Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to analyze the role of PAUD teachers in preventing and reducing stunting in the village. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon in depth through the experiences, views, and practices carried out by PAUD teachers in dealing with stunting problems. The descriptive method aims to provide a clear picture of how PAUD teachers contribute to increasing parental awareness and in building good parenting patterns and nutritional practices for early childhood (Creswell, 2016).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with PAUD teachers, parents, and health workers in the village where the research was conducted. Interviews were conducted in a structured and semi-structured manner to explore information related to the role of PAUD teachers in nutrition education, parenting patterns, and the challenges they face in preventing and reducing stunting rates (Sugiyono, 2020). In addition to interviews, direct observations in PAUD classes were also conducted to see how teachers implement learning related to nutrition and child health.

Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from various sources, such as government reports, scientific journals, and policy documents related to stunting prevention in Indonesia. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health, Unicef, and the World Health Organization (WHO) will be used as the main reference in understanding stunting conditions nationally and globally. In addition, previous studies that discuss the role of education in nutrition issues will also be reviewed to enrich the perspective in this study (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2022; Unicef, 2021).

The data analysis technique in this study uses the thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method allows researchers to identify main patterns or themes in data obtained from interviews and observations. The stages of analysis include transcribing interview data, reading and understanding the data in depth, conducting initial coding, grouping codes into main themes, and interpreting the meaning of the findings that have been analyzed.

The validity of the data in this study is maintained through source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data from interviews, observations, and secondary documents to ensure consistency of information. Meanwhile, method triangulation is carried out by combining interviews, observations, and documentation studies so that the research results are more accurate and reliable (Miles & Huberman, 2014).

The analyzed data are then presented in narrative form that describes how PAUD teachers play a role in preventing and reducing stunting. In addition, the supporting and inhibiting factors faced by PAUD teachers in carrying out their roles will also be explained in detail. The results of this analysis will be compared with previous studies to assess gaps or new contributions that can be provided by this study.

By using a systematic method, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the role of PAUD teachers in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting. The results of this study can also be the basis for recommendations for the government, educational institutions, and related parties in designing more effective policies and training programs for PAUD teachers in dealing with stunting issues in villages.

**Result**

This study reveals the role of PAUD teachers in preventing and reducing stunting in villages through various educational approaches and parenting practices applied in the school environment. Based on the results of interviews with 10 PAUD teachers from three villages that were the research locations, it was found that the majority of teachers had tried to provide education related to balanced nutrition to children and parents. However, limited resources and lack of special training are still obstacles in the optimal implementation of stunting prevention programs.

To provide a clearer picture of the research findings, the following is a table showing several aspects of the role of PAUD teachers in preventing stunting based on the results of interviews and observations:

Table 1. The Role of PAUD Teachers in Stunting Prevention

No	Aspect of the Role of PAUD Teachers	Implementation in the Field	Obstacles
1	Balanced Nutrition Education	Providing basic nutrition material to children and parents through games	Lack of appropriate teaching materials and

No	Aspect of the Role of PAUD Teachers	Implementation in the Field	Obstacles
2	Monitoring Growth and Development	and discussions Measuring children's weight and height regularly	minimal training Not all PAUDs have standard measuring instruments
3	Collaboration Parents	with Holding regular meetings to discuss healthy eating patterns	Parental participation is still low
4	Collaboration Health Centers	with Inviting health workers to provide counseling	Limited schedules for health worker visits

Observation results show that although PAUD teachers have tried to implement various stunting prevention initiatives, there are still gaps in the effectiveness of the program. One of the main factors is the lack of access to special training for PAUD teachers on child nutrition and effective health education strategies. In addition, parental participation in education programs is still relatively low, which has an impact on minimal changes in children's eating habits at home.

Data verification was carried out through source triangulation, where information from interviews with PAUD teachers was compared with the results of classroom observations and documents from the local Health Center regarding the prevalence of stunting in the village being studied. Data from the Health Center showed that the stunting rate in the village where the study was conducted was still in the range of 25–30%, which is higher than the national average of 21.6% (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022). This finding indicates that educational interventions carried out by PAUD teachers are still not strong enough to significantly reduce stunting rates.

Thematic analysis of the interviews also revealed that PAUD teachers who received nutrition training were better able to provide effective education compared to those who had never received training. Teachers who have received training tend to use more interactive and experiential learning methods, such as practicing cooking healthy food with children. Meanwhile, teachers who have not received training rely more on lecture methods that are less interesting for children and parents.

Thus, the findings of this study confirm that although PAUD teachers have an important role in preventing and reducing stunting, capacity building is needed through more comprehensive training and support from various parties. In addition, increasing parental involvement in nutrition education also needs to be considered so that interventions carried out in schools can continue in the home environment, so that stunting prevention can be more effective and sustainable.

## Discussion

The results of this study indicate that PAUD teachers have a significant role in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting in villages through nutrition education, monitoring child

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growth and development, and collaboration with parents and health workers. This role is in line with various previous studies stating that early childhood education plays an important role in forming healthy living habits in children (Mardewi et al., 2020). However, the effectiveness of the role of PAUD teachers is still influenced by various factors, including limited facilities and the lack of special training on nutrition and stunting for educators.

One of the main aspects found in this study is that nutrition education provided by PAUD teachers can increase parental awareness of the importance of balanced nutritional intake for their children. However, parental participation in education programs is still relatively low. This is in line with the findings of Sari & Yulianti (2019), which stated that parental awareness of healthy eating patterns is often influenced by economic and social factors. Therefore, a more inclusive approach strategy is needed to ensure active parental involvement in supporting children's growth and development.

In addition, this study also shows that monitoring child growth and development carried out by PAUD teachers has a positive impact on early detection of stunting risks. However, limited facilities and infrastructure in several PAUD institutions in villages mean that not all children receive optimal growth monitoring. A study by Unicef (2021) also confirmed that access to adequate growth measurement tools in early childhood education institutions is still an obstacle in many areas, especially in rural areas.

Collaboration between PAUD teachers and health workers is a key factor in efforts to prevent stunting. PAUD teachers who work with health centers or village midwives can be more effective in providing education to parents and ensuring that children receive regular health checks. However, this study found that the limited number of health workers in villages meant that this collaboration was not yet optimal. This indicates the need for policies that better support synergy between the education and health sectors in addressing stunting problems.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this study indicate that training and capacity building for PAUD teachers are essential so that they can carry out their roles more effectively. Several countries have implemented training programs for early childhood educators in the fields of health and nutrition, which have been shown to help significantly reduce stunting rates (WHO, 2022). Therefore, adopting a similar training model in Indonesia can be the right solution to improve the effectiveness of the role of PAUD teachers in dealing with stunting.

In addition to increasing teacher capacity, this study also highlights the importance of integrating nutrition education into the PAUD curriculum. Currently, the PAUD curriculum focuses more on the cognitive and socio-emotional aspects of children, while the nutritional and health aspects still receive less attention. By including nutrition

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education more systematically in the curriculum, children and parents can better understand the importance of a healthy diet from an early age.

Overall, this discussion shows that although PAUD teachers have a strategic role in preventing and reducing stunting, there are still various challenges that need to be overcome to increase the effectiveness of this effort. Support from the government, educational institutions, health workers, and active involvement of parents are needed to create a conducive environment for optimal child growth and development. With a more holistic and collaborative approach, the stunting rate in Indonesia can be reduced more significantly.

## Conclusion

This study confirms that PAUD teachers have a strategic role in preventing and reducing stunting in villages through nutrition education, monitoring child growth and development, and collaboration with parents and health workers. The main findings show that although PAUD teachers have tried to provide nutrition education to children and parents, limited facilities and infrastructure, lack of special training, and low parental participation are still major obstacles in implementing stunting prevention programs. In addition, collaboration with local health workers has not been optimal due to limited medical personnel in rural areas.

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to enriching the study of the relationship between early childhood education and child health, especially in the context of stunting. Although previous studies have discussed the factors causing stunting and its medical interventions (Unicef, 2021; Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022), this study fills the gap by highlighting the role of PAUD teachers as agents of health education. In addition, the results of this study can be the basis for the development of a PAUD curriculum that is more inclusive of aspects of child nutrition and health, so that the approach to early childhood education does not only focus on cognitive and socio-emotional development, but also on children's physical health.

The social contribution of this study lies in policy and practice recommendations that can be implemented by various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, and health workers. By improving the training and capacity of PAUD teachers in nutrition, they can be more effective in providing education to parents and children about the importance of balanced nutrition. In addition, improving facilities and access to growth measurement tools in PAUD can also help monitor children's growth and development more accurately, so that the risk of stunting can be detected earlier and handled appropriately.

Furthermore, this study confirms that active parental involvement in nutrition education is very important in supporting the success of stunting interventions. Therefore, there needs to be a more innovative and inclusive approach to increasing parental participation in education programs provided by PAUD teachers. The government and educational institutions can play a role in designing programs that actively involve

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parents, for example through healthy cooking activities together or group discussions on children's eating patterns.

Overall, this study provides empirical evidence that early childhood education can be an important strategy in reducing stunting rates, especially in rural areas. With stronger policy support, increased capacity of PAUD teachers, and synergy between the education and health sectors, it is hoped that the stunting rate in Indonesia can be reduced significantly. The results of this study can also be a reference for further studies that want to further explore the interaction between education and health in efforts to improve the quality of life of Indonesian children.

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