



The Role of Psychoeducation in Preventing Stunting: Tackling Early Marriage Culture in Adolescent

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Abstract

Stunting is a chronic nutritional issue threatening future generations, significantly influenced by early marriage practices. In East Java, Indonesia, early marriage has become a pressing concern, with a 10.44% increase in 2022, exceeding the national average. The region reported the highest number of early marriage dispensation requests in Indonesia, totaling 15,337 cases, or 29.4% of the national total. In the Madurese community, early marriage is often viewed as a customary practice, driven by unintended pregnancies and parental pressure. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of psychoeducation regarding stunting and early marriage culture in promoting stunting prevention behaviors among adolescent girls. A mixed-method approach was employed, using a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-test groups, focusing on female adolescents aged 14-21 at the Wonoayu community health center. The independent variables include psychoeducation on stunting and early marriage culture, while the dependent variable is stunting prevention behavior. Data were collected using questionnaires for the quantitative aspect and in-depth interviews for the qualitative component. Results indicate significant improvements in stunting prevention behavior scores post-intervention. Psychoeducation effectively enhances knowledge about stunting's causes and preventive measures, enabling adolescents to take proactive steps. Furthermore, it fosters positive attitudes toward nutrition and reproductive health, encouraging healthier habits among participants.

Introduction

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that occurs over a long period and threatens the nation's next generation. According to WHO, efforts to prevent stunting can be started from adolescence. Adolescent girls can begin to be given knowledge and understanding about the importance of providing nutrition during adolescence (Afiatin et al., 2024; Sari et al., 2024). Fulfillment of nutrition during adolescence can prevent malnutrition during pregnancy (Sumartini et al., 2019). Early marriage in Indonesia, especially in East Java, is still high (Batubara & Heriansyah, 2022). The high rate of early marriage is due to pregnancy outside of marriage, parental requests, and becoming the customary law of certain communities. Early marriage can be one of the factors causing high stunting in East Java (Larasati, Nindya, & Arief, 2018). Psychoeducation can help prevent stunting in adolescents and help them better understand the material for improving knowledge and support to protect themselves from early marriage and stunting (Badi'ah et al., 2022; Wardoyo et al., 2023). The incidence of early marriage in East Java in 2022 increased by 10.44% higher than the national average. The number of applications for early marriage dispensation in East Java is the highest in Indonesia, with 15,337 cases or 29.4% of national cases. The number of early marriages in Sidoarjo in 2022 was 246 cases and increased in 2023, namely 262 cases (Batubara & Heriansyah, 2022;

Irdawati et al., 2023; Larasati et al., 2018). The high number of early marriages can result in increased stunting because couples are not ready to meet nutritional needs during pregnancy, and psychological and reproductive organ immaturity. Psychoeducation about the culture of early marriage in adolescents is an intervention that can be carried out on individuals and families that focuses on educating adolescents to form stunting prevention behaviour. The objectives of this study are to identify psychoeducation on stunting and early marriage culture in adolescent girls, to identify stunting prevention behavior in teenage girls, and to identify the effectiveness of psychoeducation on stunting and early marriage on stunting prevention behavior in adolescent girls. The urgency of the study: The urgency of this study is the existence of a policy of Law Number 16 of 2020 concerning the KUA marriage age limit of 19 years, while the culture of early marriage in society is still preserved so that stunting prevention behavior is not formed. This study is in line with the transformation of the Ministry of Health's primary services which strengthen comprehensive and quality health services by prioritizing promotive and preventive efforts.

Methods

The type of research used in this study is Mixed methods quantitative and qualitative. The research design uses quasi-experimental with a pre and post-one group design approach. The sample in this study was adolescent girls aged 14-21 years. The number of respondents was 50 people who were randomly selected in the Wonaoyu Health Center area, Sidoarjo Regency, which has high rates of early marriage and stunting. The location of the study was the Wonaoyu Health Center. Data collection techniques for quantitative data using questionnaires. Qualitative data collection techniques used in-depth interviews. The sampling technique used simple random sampling and data analysis used paired sample t-test. Qualitative data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model.

Result and Discussion

The data presented from the research results consist of general data and specific data. General data describes the characteristics of respondents, while specific data is in the form of the results of the Psychoeducation Stunting and Early Marriage Culture Questionnaire on Stunting Prevention in Adolescent Girls.

Table 1. Distribution of respondent characteristics

Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Presentase (%)
Ages		
14 - 16 yr	10	20
17 – 19 yr	29	58
20 – 21 yr	11	22
Religion		
Islam	49	98
Kristen	1	2
Protestan	0	0
Hindu	0	0
Budha	0	0
Race		
Jawa	30	60
Madura	19	38
Sumba	1	2
Total	50	100

Source: Research data, 2024

Based on table 1, it is known that the majority of respondents were aged 17-19 years (58%), Muslim (98%), and Javanese (60%).

Table 2. Stunting Prevention Behavior Before and After Psychoeducational Treatment

Stunting Prevention Behavior	Before Treatment		After Treatment	
	F	(%)	F	(%)
Positif	27	54	35	70
Negatif	23	46	15	30
Total	50	100	50	100

Source: Research data, 2024

Table 2 shows that the behavior of preventing stunting in adolescents before psychoeducation showed positive behavior in as much as 54% and after psychoeducation showed positive behavior in as much as 70%.

Tabel 3. Paired Sample T Test Results for Stunting Prevention Behavior

Stunting Behaviour	Mean	Standard Deviation	p- value	N
Pretest	218,2	18,28	0,015	50
Posttest	223,7	20,61		

Source: Research data, 2024

Table 3 shows that the average score of stunting prevention behavior in adolescents before psychoeducational intervention was 218.2 with a standard deviation of 18.28. The average score of stunting prevention behavior in adolescents after psychoeducational intervention was 223.7 with a standard deviation of 20.61. It can be seen that there is a difference in the average score of stunting prevention behavior of 5.55 with a standard deviation of 0.015. So it can be concluded that there is a difference in the average score of stunting prevention behavior in adolescents before and after psychoeducational intervention.

The results of the study showed that there was a difference in the average score of adolescent stunting prevention behavior before and after psychoeducation intervention. Psychoeducation helped improve adolescent girls' knowledge about stunting, including its causes, impacts, and prevention methods. With better knowledge, they can take effective preventive measures. Through psychoeducation, adolescent girls' attitudes toward the importance of nutrition and health can change to be more positive (Rocco et al., 2001; Khoshkerdar & Raeisi, 2020). This is important because a positive attitude will encourage them to adopt healthy eating habits and maintain their reproductive health (Dewi et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2024; Abni & Kasim, 2024; Roy, 2008).

Adolescent girls who receive psychoeducation about stunting can become agents of change in their communities. They can spread correct information and help peers and other family members understand the importance of stunting prevention (Putro et al., 2022; Sazali & Utami, 2023). Psychoeducation also provides emotional and social support to adolescent girls, helping them feel more confident and motivated to maintain their health and prevent stunting in the future. The results of this study indicate that adolescent girls who receive psychoeducation on stunting aimed at preventing stunting can improve their knowledge, attitudes, and active roles in the community by disseminating information to those around them and motivating them to take better care of their health in preventing stunting in the future. Psychoeducation programs targeting adolescent girls and communities can help reduce the practice of early marriage and raise awareness of the importance of preventing stunting (World Health Organization, 2023; Petersen et al., 2013). By providing education about the risks of early marriage and the importance of good nutritional intake during pregnancy which aims to help prevent stunting in

the future. Adolescent girls are a group that is vulnerable to nutritional problems.(Badi'ah et al., 2022; Damayanti et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2024).

Poor food intake is a common cause of nutritional problems in adolescents. A balance between nutrients that enter is needed for optimal health. The culture of early marriage, especially under the age of 20, turns out to have quite worrying risks (Wardani & Harumi, 2022; Jones et al., 2014). Mentally not ready to face the changes that occur during pregnancy, not ready to play the role of a mother, and not ready to face household problems that often hit families who have just married. Meanwhile, adolescents do not yet have the maturity of mind in thinking and acting (Batubara & Heriansyah, 2022; Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). One of the factors that make the source of information captured affect the differences in individual perceptions from one another in capturing the knowledge provided is influenced by attention. There are so many stimuli received by the senses that not all can be absorbed to be perceived. Therefore, individuals only focus their attention on one or two objects. This depends on which object is the most important for each individual. This is evident from the conditions during the treatment, namely that several subjects came with their children. So that the subject's attention was not fully focused on the treatment session given (Badi'ah et al., 2022; Kazdin et al., 1992).

The level of education is not always related to the mother's ability to absorb information. This is because many factors influence the level of education. One of these factors is the economic factor. Quality education requires money, people will decide the level or path of education chosen based on their economic ability. Economic factors have an impact on the choice of education level, such as individuals can only pursue education up to junior high school due to limited funds. Other factors are also influenced by culture, education is viewed differently in different cultures.

Conclusion

Psychoeducation effectively improves adolescent girls' knowledge and attitudes towards stunting prevention, empowering them to make healthier choices and act as agents of change in their communities. Factors like early marriage and poor nutrition remain significant risks, especially for adolescent girls. While education plays a role, economic, cultural, and attentional factors also influence the effectiveness of information absorption.

To enhance the impact of psychoeducation, it should address economic and cultural challenges while minimizing distractions during sessions. Collaboration with schools and communities is essential to raise awareness about early marriage and the importance of proper nutrition for stunting prevention.

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