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The Relationship Between Mothers' Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Local Food Use and Stunting Prevention in the Working Area of the Saitnihuta Public Health Center in 2025

Mayes Felda Simamora[1], Nova Sontry Node Siregar[2], Helprida Sihite[3], Megasilvia Sinaga[4], Debora Simamora[5]
STIKes Kesehatan Baru

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ABSTRACT
Stunting remains a major health problem in Indonesia. Utilizing local foods can be an effective prevention strategy, especially if supported by good maternal knowledge and attitudes. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between maternal knowledge and attitudes regarding the use of local foods and stunting prevention. This study used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. A sample of 45 mothers with toddlers was selected purposively. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using the Chi-Square test. The analysis showed a significant relationship between maternal knowledge and stunting prevention (p = 0.001), as well as a significant relationship between maternal attitudes and stunting prevention (p = 0.003). Mothers with good knowledge and positive attitudes were more likely to take stunting prevention measures. In conclusion, maternal knowledge and attitudes regarding the use of local foods are significantly related to stunting prevention measures. Therefore, ongoing education is needed to increase knowledge and foster positive attitudes in mothers in an effort to reduce stunting rates in the community.

Corresponding Author:
Mayes Felda Simamora
STIKes Kesehatan Baru
mayes.simamora@stikeskb.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), the global prevalence of stunting is 149.2 million children under the age of 5, 45.4 million of whom are wasted, and 318.9 million of whom are overweight. The number of children with stunting is decreasing in all regions except Africa. In Southeast Asia and the African Region, 51 million children under the age of 5 are underweight (wasted), while another 151 million children under the age of five are stunted, with three-quarters of these children living in Asia and Africa.

According to UNICEF data (2019), stunting is a cumulative process caused by inadequate nutrient intake or recurrent infectious diseases, or both. Stunting can also occur before birth and is caused by inadequate nutritional intake during pregnancy, poor dietary habits, and poor dietary quality, along with frequent infections, which can inhibit growth (Majid, 2022).

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Stunting is a public health issue that remains a serious challenge in Indonesia. According to data from the 2022 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI), the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia reached 21.6%. Stunting not only impacts children's physical growth but also impacts their cognitive development, intelligence, and future productivity. One important factor in preventing stunting is ensuring children's nutritional needs from an early age, especially during the First 1,000 Days of Life (HPK).

Stunting is a condition of growth failure in toddlers due to chronic malnutrition, especially in the first 1,000 days of life. One important strategy in preventing stunting is through the use of nutritious, easily accessible, and affordable local foods. Mothers play a crucial role in providing and selecting family meals. Their knowledge and attitudes about local foods significantly influence their child's feeding practices.

Local foods are a highly potential resource for supporting adequate nutrition for the community, especially children. Local foods such as corn, cassava, sweet potatoes, tempeh, freshwater fish, and moringa leaves contain essential nutrients. Besides being nutritious, local foods are also easily accessible, more affordable, and culturally appropriate. However, in practice, the utilization of local foods remains suboptimal, especially in children's diets.

The role of mothers as the primary decision-makers in family food provision is crucial in stunting prevention efforts. Mothers' knowledge of the benefits of local foods and positive attitudes toward their use will influence healthy and nutritious feeding habits for their children. Mothers with limited knowledge or negative attitudes toward local foods tend to prefer instant or processed foods that lack nutritional value.

The lack of adequate information and education regarding the nutritional value of local foods is a major obstacle to their utilization. Therefore, mothers' understanding of the importance of local foods must be improved through educational and culture-based approaches. This aligns with the government's program to accelerate stunting reduction, which emphasizes specific and sensitive nutrition interventions, one of which is through empowering families to choose healthy foods based on local resources.

Based on the analysis of stunting measurement data at the Humbang Hasundutan Regency level, the prevalence of stunting in August was 14.38%, with 14,368 children under five and 2,014 children under five experiencing stunting. Stunting data results in Sijamapolang rank third after Onan Ganjang (24.22%), Parlilitan (22.06%), Sijamapolang (21.88%), Pollung (18.24%), Parlilitan (Hutagalung) (15.93%), Doloksanggul (Saitnihuta) (15.58%), Tarabintang (15.15%), Lintongnihuta (12.92%), Pakkat (11.80%), Baktiraja (11.28%), Paranginan (9.83%), and Doloksanggul (Matiti) (9.33%) (BKKBN, 2022).

Based on an initial survey conducted on March 13 at the Saitnihuta Community Health Center, 72 toddlers were found to be stunted. Of the 72 toddlers, 45 were stunted. Of the 45 mothers with toddlers, several were interviewed about local foods that can be processed into nutritious meals and prevent stunting. The interviews revealed that they were unfamiliar with local foods and were unaware that they could be processed into nutritious meals and contribute to stunting prevention. Based on the above background, it is important to examine and conduct research on "The Relationship Between Mothers' Knowledge and Attitudes

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Regarding Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025".

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a descriptive analytical study with a cross-sectional design. The research title "The Relationship Between Mothers' Knowledge and Attitudes Regarding Stunting Prevention" examines the relationship between the independent variables (knowledge and attitudes) and the dependent variable (stunting prevention).

"Utilization of Local Food for Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025." This research was conducted over three months, from March to July in the Sainihuta Community Health Center Work Area, Doloksanggul District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, in 2025. The sample in this study was all 45 mothers with toddlers in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Univariate Analysis

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Characteristics: Age, Education, Occupation, Information Source, regarding stunting prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025.

No	Variables	Amount	Percentage %
1	Age		
	25-30	14	31.1%
	31-35	24	53.3%
	36-41	7	15.6%
	Total	45	100%
2	Work		
	Farmer	26	57.8%
	Self-employed	13	28.9%
	Teacher/PNS	6	13.3%
	Total	45	100%
3	Education		
	JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	7	15.6%
	SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	25	55.5%
	College	13	28.9%
	Total	45	100%
4	Resources		
	Health workers	37	82.2%
	Media	8	17.8%
	Total	45	100%

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Based on Table 4.1, the 45 respondents matched the Knowledge Characteristics. Based on age, 14 respondents (31.1%) were aged 25-30, 24 respondents (53.3%) were aged 31-35, and 7 respondents (15.6%) were aged 36-41. Based on occupational level, 26 were farmers. (57.8%), 13 (28.9%) self-employed, and 6 (13.3%) teachers/civil servants. Based on education level, 7 (15.6%) had junior high school education, 25 (55.5%) high school education, and 13 (28.9%) university education. Based on information source categories, 37 (82.2%) obtained information from health workers and 8 (17.8%) through the media.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Independent Variables: Knowledge, Attitude, and Dependent Variable; Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025.

No	Variables	Amount	Percentage %
1	Knowledge		
	Good	22	48.9
	Not good	23	51.1
	Total	45	100
2	Attitude		
	Positive	20	44.4
	Negative	25	55.6
	Total	45	100
3	Stunting Prevention		
	Done	33	73.3
	Are not done	12	26.7
	Total	45	100

Table 4.1.2 shows that of the 45 respondents, 22 (48.9%) had good knowledge, while 23 (51.1%) had poor knowledge. Based on mothers' attitudes, 20 (44.4%) had positive attitudes and 25 (55.6%) had negative attitudes. Based on stunting prevention efforts, 33 (73.3%) had implemented stunting prevention measures, while 12 (26.7%) had not implemented any preventive measures.

Bivariate Analysis

After conducting univariate analysis, further bivariate analysis was conducted. The data obtained from both variables were categorical, so they were tested using a chi-square statistical test to determine whether there was a relationship between the variables. This was done by comparing the calculated chi-square with the chi-square table.

Relationship of Mothers' Knowledge About Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Community Health Center Work Area Saitnihuta 2025

The results of data collection through questionnaires distributed to respondents through researchers using primary data can be seen in the following table:

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Table 4.3. Crosstabulation of Mothers' Knowledge Regarding the Use of Local Foods to Prevent Stunting in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025

No	Knowledge	Stunting Prevention						df	X^2 Count
		Done		Are not done		Total			
		N	%	n	%	N	%		
1	Good	21	95.5	1	4.5	22	100	1	10,771
2	Not good	12	52.2	11	47.8	23	100		
	Total	33	73.3	12	26.7	45	100		

Based on Table 4.3, it is known that of the 45 respondents, 22 had good knowledge, 21 (95.5%) had implemented stunting prevention, and 10 did not implement stunting prevention. One respondent (4.5%) had poor knowledge, 22 respondents (52.2%) had implemented stunting prevention measures, and 11 respondents (47.8%) had not implemented stunting prevention measures.

The Chi-Square analysis yielded a Pearson Chi-Square value of 10.771 with a significance value of p = 0.001 (p < 0.05). This indicates a significant relationship between mothers' knowledge about local food and stunting prevention measures.

Table 4.4. Crosstabulation of Mothers' Attitudes Regarding Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025

No	Attitude	Stunting Prevention						df	X^2 Count
		Done		Are not done		Total			
		n	%	n	%	N	%		
1	Positive	19	95	1	5	20	100	1	8,642
2	Negative	14	56	11	44	25	100		
	Total	33	73.3	12	26.7	45	100		

Based on Table 4.4, it is known that of the 45 respondents, 20 had a positive attitude, 19 (95%) took action to prevent stunting, and 1 (5%) did not take action. Of the 25 respondents, 14 (56%) took action to prevent stunting.

Discussion

The discussion of the results of the study, entitled "The Relationship between Mothers' Knowledge and Attitudes regarding Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area," is as follows: The Relationship between Mothers' Knowledge about Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025

The results of the Chi-Square analysis obtained a Pearson Chi-Square value of 10,771 with a significance value of p = 0.001 (p < 0.05). This indicates a significant relationship between mothers' knowledge about local food and stunting prevention measures. Good knowledge enables mothers to understand the importance of fulfilling children's nutritional needs, the role of local foods in providing balanced nutrition, and the importance of healthy behaviors during a child's development. With sufficient knowledge, mothers can make informed decisions about parenting and child diets that will prevent stunting.

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Research by Sari (2021) in Sleman Regency found that mothers with good nutritional knowledge were three times more likely to take action to prevent stunting than those with poor knowledge. Fitriani et al. (2020) also stated that mothers' level of knowledge about toddler nutrition is strongly related to their nutritional status. High knowledge encourages mothers to choose healthy and nutritious local foods.

Utami (2019) in West Sumatra showed that empowering mothers through nutrition education increased the practice of providing locally-based foods, which can reduce the risk of stunting. These results align with Green's (1991) theory, which states that knowledge is a predisposing factor influencing a person's health actions. This means that a person's knowledge will encourage them to act in accordance with the information they have. Furthermore, these results align with previous research showing that maternal nutritional knowledge is closely related to children's nutritional status.

The Relationship Between Maternal Attitudes Regarding Local Food Utilization and Stunting Prevention in the Saitnihuta Community Health Center Work Area in 2025

The results of the Chi-Square analysis showed a Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.642 with a significance value of $p = 0.003$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant relationship between maternal attitudes and stunting prevention measures. Attitude is the readiness or tendency to act and react to certain objects or situations. In this context, mothers with positive attitudes tend to accept and support the use of local foods as a source of nutrition to prevent stunting. This supports sustainable behavior change in providing nutritious food to children.

Positive attitudes toward local foods can be formed through nutrition education and direct experience. This reinforces the importance of educational efforts that not only increase knowledge but also foster attitudes that support healthy behaviors. Research by Ramadhani (2020) in Makassar City showed that mothers' attitudes about the importance of local food were closely related to healthy feeding patterns in children aged 6–24 months.

Research by Yuliana et al. (2022) examined 80 mothers of toddlers at the Kenjeran Community Health Center and found that mothers with positive attitudes toward child nutrition were four times more likely to take action to prevent stunting. Research by Dewi and Maharani (2018) also showed that mothers' attitudes toward healthy food significantly influence household practices for choosing nutritious foods. These findings are also supported by various studies that suggest that attitudes play a crucial role in influencing a person's health behaviors, including feeding practices for toddlers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that: There is a significant relationship between mothers' knowledge about the use of local food and stunting prevention measures. The higher the mother's knowledge, the greater the likelihood of actively taking action to prevent stunting. There is a significant relationship between mothers' attitudes toward local food and stunting prevention measures. Positive attitudes support beneficial behavioral changes in meeting children's nutritional needs. These results reinforce the importance of nutrition education-based interventions and the strengthening of positive

attitudes through public health programs that actively involve mothers in integrated health service posts (Posyandu) and outreach activities. It is recommended to conduct further research with a larger sample size and additional variables, such as the role of the environment, family economy, or social support in stunting prevention, to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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