

## ANALYSIS OF POSYANDU'S ROLE IN IMPROVING MOTHERS' AWARENESS OF BALANCED NUTRITION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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### ABSTRAK

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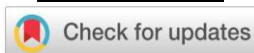
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#### Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the role of Posyandu in increasing mothers' awareness of balanced nutrition in Rowosari Village. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 13 informants, consisting of 4 mothers of young children, 8 Posyandu cadres, and 1 midwife. The results of the thematic analysis based on role theory revealed five main indicators: role expectations, role performance, role pressures, role support, and evaluation-innovation. The findings indicate that Posyandu plays a crucial role as a center for community nutrition information and education; however, it faces challenges such as low mother participation, limited Posyandu cadres, insufficient training, and inflexible education schedules. Nevertheless, the cadres demonstrated initiative through practice-based educational innovations and digital approaches. This study emphasizes that the effectiveness of Posyandu is highly dependent on cross-sectoral support, cadre capacity, and contextual and interactive educational approaches.

#### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran Posyandu dalam meningkatkan kesadaran ibu terhadap gizi seimbang di Desa Rowosari. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 13 informan, terdiri dari 4 ibu balita, 8 kader Posyandu, dan 1 bidan. Hasil analisis tematik berdasarkan teori peran mengungkap lima indikator utama: harapan peran, pelaksanaan peran, tekanan peran, dukungan peran, dan evaluasi-inovasi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Posyandu berperan penting sebagai pusat informasi dan edukasi gizi masyarakat, namun dihadapkan pada kendala seperti partisipasi ibu yang rendah, keterbatasan kader, kurangnya pelatihan, serta jadwal edukasi yang tidak fleksibel. Meskipun demikian, para kader menunjukkan inisiatif dengan inovasi edukasi berbasis praktik dan pendekatan digital. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa efektivitas Posyandu sangat ditentukan oleh dukungan lintas sektor, kapasitas kader, dan pendekatan edukasi yang kontekstual serta interaktif.



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## INTRODUCTION

Nutrition problems in Indonesia are still a serious issue, considering that the stunting rate in this country is the fifth highest in Asia [1]. Based on data from the Indonesian Health Survey in 2024, the prevalence of stunting in children in Indonesia reached 21.5%. To overcome this, the government targets to reduce the stunting rate to 3.5% by the beginning of 2025 [2].

Nutritional status disorders in children must get proper and immediate treatment so as not to interfere with other health problems [3]. Balanced nutrition is an important factor in the growth and development of children, especially in the toddler age. Malnutrition can cause various health problems, such as stunting, anemia, and impaired cognitive development. However, there are still many mothers who do not fully understand the importance of a balanced nutritious diet. They also face challenges in selecting, preparing and serving food at home. In addition, there are problems with the availability of clean water, basic sanitation facilities, and access to adequate public health and nutrition services [4].

A mother's level of knowledge is one of the factors that contribute to malnutrition in children. Mothers are the closest caregivers and play an important role in determining the food that will be consumed by children and other family members. It is very important for mothers to understand the principles of balanced nutrition so that their children can avoid disorders such as malnutrition. One aspect that affects nutritional status is the relationship between socioeconomic status and the level of nutrition received. The role of parents, especially mothers, in caring for toddlers is very influential on the quality of nutritional intake received by the child. A mother needs to understand how to provide balanced nutritional intake to her toddler, so that they can grow into healthy children and develop according to their age stage [5].

Posyandu acts as the spearhead of health services for pregnant women, toddlers and the elderly. One of its main functions is to monitor children's nutritional status through regular weight and height measurements, which are useful for early detection of growth problems such as stunting. In addition, Posyandu provides Supplementary Feeding (PMT) for malnourished toddlers, as well as providing counseling on the importance of balanced nutrition. This education aims to increase the community's understanding of healthy eating patterns to support optimal growth and health.

The Rowosari Village Posyandu, located in Ulujami Subdistrict, Pemalang Regency, is one of the community-based health services that plays an important role in improving the nutritional status of the community, especially for toddlers and pregnant women. Every week, this Posyandu routinely holds various activities that include health counseling, monitoring the growth and development of toddlers, and providing additional food (PMT). Posyandu Rowosari in practice acts as an information and education center that educates mothers and children about health, including an emphasis on the importance of balanced nutrition. Educational activities include the delivery of nutritional materials and consultations for mothers regarding healthy eating patterns that suit their children's needs.

Although these activities are routinely conducted, there are still some challenges faced, such as the low participation rate of mothers, the limited number of cadres who are competent in nutrition education, and the lack of educational materials that are relevant to the socio-cultural conditions of the surrounding community. These challenges raise questions about how effective Posyandu activities are in improving mothers' knowledge and awareness about balanced nutrition.

Based on the above review, this study aims to identify the role and function of Posyandu in providing education on balanced nutrition to mothers in Rowosari Village.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach and descriptive observational design to understand in depth the role of Posyandu in increasing maternal awareness of balanced nutrition. The research location was in Rowosari Village, Ulujami Sub-district, Pemalang Regency, with the research subjects being 8 Posyandu cadres, 1 village midwife and 4 mothers of toddlers who were purposively selected. Data collection techniques included direct observation, in-depth interviews with semi-structured guides. Data analysis was done thematically through the process of coding and identifying patterns of findings. Data validity used the source triangulation method and member checking techniques to informants to ensure the truth of the information. The results of the analysis were used to describe the effectiveness of the Posyandu's role in increasing mothers' awareness of balanced nutrition and explore the barriers in carrying out these activities.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The role of posyandu in improving nutrition is very important in this activity, especially in trying to overcome nutritional problems in children under five. Posyandu provides health services for the community to check the growth of their infants and toddlers. Posyandu cadres have significant responsibilities in carrying out posyandu activities, and they are expected to proactively detect the nutritional status of children under five years of age. This study was conducted at Posyandu Mawar, which is located in Rowosari Village, Ulujami Sub-district, Pemalang Regency, Central Java. Posyandu Mawar is one of the posyandu that actively conducts health

monitoring activities for mothers and children, including nutrition counseling activities. This study aims to analyze the role of posyandu in increasing mothers' awareness of balanced nutrition in Rowosari Village, Pekalongan District. The results were obtained from in-depth interviews with 13 informants consisting of 4 mothers of toddlers, 8 Posyandu cadres, and 1 midwife. Through thematic analysis based on role theory, five main indicators were found:

### 1. Role Expectation

The Role Expectation indicator revealed that mothers of children under five have high expectations of Posyandu as the main source of information on nutrition. Posyandu is seen as a place that fulfills the need for information about healthy food, children's nutritional needs, and stunting prevention.

"I hope Posyandu can provide information about healthy food, good nutrition for children". (IT 1)

Mothers consider Posyandu as the main means of child nutrition education and support.

"The existence of Posyandu is very helpful... information about good nutrition for children...". (IT 2)

Posyandu is also expected to provide regular and consistent monitoring of children's growth and development.

"We also hope that children are weighed and measured regularly...". (IT 3)

This expectation is also shared by the cadres, who stated that the community often comes to ask questions and consult about children's diets.

"...from the community itself, they hope that Posyandu can be the main place to get information about health and nutrition, especially for children under five". (IU 3)

This expectation is also shared by midwives, as the community expects Posyandu to be not only a service, but a community nutrition learning center.

"They want Posyandu to be the main place to learn about nutrition". (IU 9)

These findings prove that the community has high expectations of Posyandu cadres as the main source of disseminating health and nutrition information directly in the community. This study emphasizes that community expectations of cadres are not only on basic services but also on the ability of cadres to act as a driving force in overall health empowerment [6]. This expectation shows that Posyandu is considered not only as a place for basic health services, but also expects the active role of cadres in empowering family nutrition knowledge.

## 2. Role Performance

In the Role Performance indicator, Posyandu cadres carry out their roles through various concrete activities such as nutrition counseling, cooking demonstrations, education about the contents of my plate, personal nutrition consultations, monitoring nutritional status through KMS, practice making complementary foods and direct discussions with mothers of children under five.

“We usually do counseling, consultation, and provide PMT for malnourished toddlers”. (IU 1)

Various media are used, including MCH books, leaflets, posters, and educational videos shared via WhatsApp.

“We use posters, short videos, baby porridge demonstrations, or invite mothers to share their experiences”. (IU 9)

Nutrition education activities at the posyandu also include personal consultation sessions, which are continued at the next monthly meeting through monitoring and evaluation of child nutrition.

“Usually there is a personal consultation session and we are asked again the following month”. (IT 2)

This activity shows that the role of nutrition education has been actively implemented, although it has not reached all mothers, especially those who are absent or have limited understanding. The

implementation of these activities also shows that cadres are able to meet community expectations through appropriate educational approaches based on local needs.

This illustrates achievement in the aspect of role execution, which is how individuals perform tasks in accordance with social expectations. Cadres have shown high enthusiasm in developing and presenting nutrition materials that are appropriate to the local context. This study showed that training and educational simulations can improve cadres' ability to deliver nutrition education to the community [7]. This study also found that cadre characteristics, such as educational background, work experience, and length of involvement in Posyandu, influenced the successful implementation of cadre duties, especially in nutrition counseling and stunting prevention efforts. Cadres who have better experience tend to be able to carry out their roles more effectively [8].

## 3. Role Conflict/Strain

The Role Conflict/Strain indicator shows the challenges faced by cadres in carrying out their duties. These include low participation of mothers of children under five in Posyandu activities and a lack of educational tools.

“Sometimes the mothers don't have time to come, they are busy or tired....And in terms of tools or materials, sometimes they are still lacking.” (IU 7)

This study also found that the low effectiveness of nutrition education at Posyandu was due to the lack of guidance for cadres and the lack of adequate educational media [9].

Several other cadres reported that they face a heavy workload and a small number of cadres.

“Mothers like to rush because they have work at home or selling, so we feel burdened by the limited number of cadres”. (IU 6)

This finding proves the existence of role pressure, which is a situation in which

individuals who undergo roles experience difficulties due to limitations in meeting existing demands [10]. This situation causes role pressure that can hinder the optimization of cadre functions, although they still try their best in carrying out their duties. The mother of a toddler said that in educational activities, cadres and health workers still use language that is difficult to understand.

“Sometimes the delivery is not clear or uses medical terms that are difficult to understand”. (IT 1)

Mothers of children under five also revealed that counseling is often boring, the time of Posyandu activities often collides with work time or household tasks and the distance of Posyandu is far.

“Then the counseling is also boring and the time clashes with home work”. (IT 1)

Inflexible education schedules are a significant factor in reducing mothers' participation in nutrition education activities at Posyandu.

#### 4. Role Support & Adjustment

On the Role Support & Adjustment indicator, it was found that support from the village government, community organizations and the community itself is also an important factor in the ongoing posyandu activities. However, most cadres admitted that they do not routinely receive training from the puskesmas even though the issue of under-five nutrition is increasingly prevalent among the community. Most cadres also felt that they lacked support from the village government in routinely encouraging community participation in posyandu activities. Despite limited support from the puskesmas and village government, cadres managed to adapt through various innovations. Some of the strategies taken include combining education with arisan activities, creating simple educational media such as songs and videos, and utilizing digital platforms such as WhatsApp to disseminate information.

*“If they can't come, we usually visit them at home. Or we give information through WA groups. Then, we also invite community leaders to help encourage mothers to be more enthusiastic about participating in Posyandu”. (IU 9)*

This cadre initiative demonstrates adaptability and creativity in maintaining the effectiveness of education despite limited resources. This study confirms that the implementation of the cadre role is highly dependent on cross-sector support, including training, logistics and the presence of local facilitators [11].

#### 5. Evaluation and Innovation

In the Evaluation/Innovation indicator, it appears that a practice-based educational approach is preferred by mothers of toddlers compared to the lecture method. Activities such as cooking demonstrations and simulations are considered more effective because they are easier to understand and can be practiced immediately. The cadres also realized that visual and interactive approaches make educational messages more quickly understood by the target.

*“The innovations we have tried are like creating a WhatsApp group specifically for mothers of toddlers to share information and recipes. We have also held simple MPASI cooking demonstrations using local ingredients that are easy to find. In addition, we try to make interactive games or quizzes related to nutrition to make mothers more active. We also try to invite husbands or other family members to participate in nutrition education activities when possible”. (IU 9)*

Mothers of toddlers acknowledged that fun and applicable educational activities encourage behavior change,

*“Sometimes there are also demonstrations on cooking healthy menus and complementary food. So I used to rarely give vegetables to my child because I didn't like them. Now I often give my child processed vegetables with the creations*



*taught. My child now likes vegetables". (IT 2)*

This innovation is important in designing Posyandu education activities to better suit the needs and characteristics of the community. It also indicates that participatory and practice-based nutrition education is more suitable for the needs of mothers of children under five. This research also shows that the quality of service and effectiveness of cadres is influenced by contextualized, interactive, and practice-based counseling methods [12]. Overall, these five indicators show that the role of Posyandu cadres is dynamic and complex. The cadres not only perform service functions, but also act as agents of change in improving nutrition awareness in the community. The effectiveness of this role depends on how well the cadres are able to meet community expectations, carry out educational functions, overcome various obstacles, innovate in the midst of limitations, and evaluate the approaches applied.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings show that Posyandu has an important role in increasing mothers' awareness of balanced nutrition through educational activities carried out by cadres and health workers. However, the implementation of this role is inseparable from the role conflict/strain experienced by cadres, where one of the causes is the limited number of cadres, high workload, and inadequate structural support.

### 1. Cadre Role Stress and Barriers to Optimization

This study revealed that many cadres experience difficulties in performing their duties well due to the large number of multi-tasks and the unbalanced number of cadres. Signs of role overload reflected role pressure when carrying out educational functions. This is supported by the results of a study showing that a small number of

cadres increases pressure and reduces service quality [13].

This study revealed that lack of training and low incentives contributed to low cadre participation, which led to most of the tasks resting on a handful of active cadres. This pressure, if not addressed immediately, will result in low effectiveness of Posyandu as an educational agent [14]. Role Strain Theory suggests that role conflict arises when individuals face pressure from demands that exceed their abilities and resources [10]. Posyandu cadres must balance community expectations with the limited amount of manpower, time, and educational media available.

### 2. Impact of Inflexible Schedule and Low Participation

The rigid education schedule is an important factor that reduces mothers' attendance at Posyandu activities in addition to internal pressures. Mothers of children under five revealed that activity times often coincide with household chores or daily business. Research supports this finding by suggesting that low maternal participation is due to a lack of schedule coordination and the absence of regular reminders. Schedules that do not match community needs risk reducing the effectiveness of Posyandu activities [15].

### 3. Structural and Cross-Sector Support Needs

In this study, Posyandu cadres demonstrated innovation in overcoming limitations by using an educative approach through WhatsApp, home visits, and community activities. However, many cadres stated that they did not receive regular training, and support from the village government was minimal.

This finding is in line with the results of the study, which showed that the lack of support from health workers to cadres influenced the low participation of cadres. The pressure experienced by cadres due to

the absence of facilitators or technical assistance resulted in decreased motivation in carrying out their duties [16].

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that Posyandu has a very important role in increasing the awareness of mothers of children under five about balanced nutrition through education programs, nutrition monitoring, and innovation in various activities. However, its effectiveness is hindered by low maternal involvement, limited cadre numbers, lack of support from other sectors, and challenges in educational communication. The findings highlight the importance of improving cadres' skills through regular training, strengthening collaboration with village government and puskesmas, and developing relevant, flexible and interactive education methods to make nutrition education more effective and engaging.

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