



## TEENAGERS' UNDERSTANDING LEVEL ABOUT STUNTING IN TERMS OF GENDER

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### ABSTRACT

Stunting is one of the issues that is being focused on by the government. The problem of stunting is a concern and also handled collaboratively with various stakeholder elements. The issue of stunting needs to be introduced to individuals from an early age or before pre-marital age. However, the reality in the field is that there are still many teenagers who do not have sufficient knowledge regarding stunting. This research aims to see the level of students' understanding about stunting. This research uses a quantitative approach, specifically using a survey method. Data sources were obtained from primary sources and analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis and also using different tests. The research results show that students' level of understanding about stunting is at a medium level. And the results of different tests to see whether there are differences in the level of understanding between male and female students show trends that are almost the same or there are no significant differences. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used as a basis for related parties in formulating policies to intervene in stunting prevalence.

Keywords: gender; stunting; understanding teenagers

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## INTRODUCTION

The government's efforts to combat or reduce stunting cases in Indonesia are very serious. Reducing cases of stunting in children is the first of 6 goals in the Global Nutrition Targets for 2025 and is a key indicator in the second Sustainable Development Goal, namely zero hunger (Beal et al., 2018). However, from the results of research by Beal et al (2018), the prevalence of stunting in children in Indonesia has remained high over the last decade, and at the national level is around 37%. The prevalence of stunting in stunting locus villages needs special attention from the Indonesian government. Stunting is a condition of failure to grow and develop in children. Stunting is strongly associated with several long-term consequences, including high mortality and morbidity rates, low cognitive growth, school performance, learning capacity, work capacity and work productivity (Ponum et al., 2020). There are several things that are the main causes of stunting problems in children, one of which is the lack of public knowledge about stunting itself (Azzahra et al., 2024; Bancin et al., 2024; Fitriani et al., 2022; Manik & Boseran, 2024). The research results of Ponum et al (2020) show that the literacy level of mothers or caregivers has a high impact on children's health. Based on these two studies, the understanding factor is urgent as an effort to prevent and overcome the problem of stunting. These findings show the importance of efforts to increase understanding about stunting.

Forms of assistance to increase understanding about stunting with the help of counseling, anti-stunting daily food making competitions, and direct target approach strategies (Nurlaela Sari et al., 2023). Research findings by Nurlaela Sari et al (2023) show that by utilizing available resources, people can create daily diet patterns that meet nutritional needs and are diverse.

The results of this research are supported by findings from Suratri et al (2023), which stated that to prevent stunting in children, the government must intervene with mothers who have low education and live in rural areas. The interventions carried out include intensive outreach about improving nutritional status during pregnancy and practicing the habit of providing complementary foods for breast milk and breast milk until the child is 24 months old. Mothers' knowledge needs to be increased by disseminating information related to stunting through formal and non-formal education and teaching good parenting patterns to reduce the prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age in stunting locus villages (Adam et al., 2022; Atamou et al., 2023).

Based on existing research, the majority focuses on the causes of stunting by making mothers the research target. In this study, researchers explored the level of understanding of adolescents regarding stunting and also sought information on the level of differences in understanding between male and female adolescents regarding the issue of stunting. It is hoped that the findings of this research can be used as a reference in efforts to prevent stunting for teenagers. Based on this food focus, the aim of this research is to determine the level of understanding of stunting among adolescents in terms of gender as a basis for creating policies and interventions in efforts to prevent stunting in the future of adolescents.

## **METHOD**

This research uses a quantitative approach with survey techniques to determine the level of understanding of teenagers about stunting. The survey technique was chosen because the researcher could obtain a general overview of the characteristics of the population (Sugiyono, 2019). This research was conducted on teenagers studying at the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at PGRI Madiun University. The population in this study was 263 students from semester 1 to semester 7. From the total population, the researchers determined a research sample of 130 students consisting of 40 male students and 90 female students. The research sample was carried out using a stratified random sampling technique. This technique is used so that all populations get the same opportunities (Wiyono, 2007). In this study, researchers used an understanding scale about stunting which was developed with reference to Bloom's Taknosomy (in Gunawan & Palupi, 2013) referring to six levels, namely: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. The instrument developed consisted of 30 items which had been tested for validity and reliability. The results of the validity test on 100 respondents showed the lowest  $r$  value of 0.218 or greater than the calculated  $r$  of 0.1946, which means the scale was declared valid. Furthermore, the results of the reliability test show a calculated  $r$  value of 0.887 or close to number one or reliability is in the high category, meaning the instrument is declared reliable. To determine differences in the level of understanding of teenagers about stunting in terms of gender, in carrying out the analysis, researchers used descriptive statistical analysis and also used the  $t$  test.

## **RESULT**

The results of the descriptive analysis are as presented in table 1, showing that: the sample size of female students is 90 people and the sample number of male students is 40 students. The results of measuring the level of understanding of stunting show that the average score for female students is 76.76 and the average level of understanding of stunting for male students is 77.25. The results of this descriptive analysis show that the level of students' understanding of the issue of stunting is at a medium level.

Table 1.  
Average value of understanding of stunting among male and female students

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Understanding Stunting	Female	90	76.76	6.11741	.64483
	Man	40	77.25	5.62390	.88922

Table 2.  
T Test Results on Level of Understanding of Stunting in Male and Female Students

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Understanding Stunting	Equal variances assumed	.001	.977	-.436	128	.664	-.49444	1.13473	-2.73971	1.75082
	Equal variances not assumed			-.450	80.989	.654	-.49444	1.09841	-2.67995	1.69106

Based on the results of different tests as presented in table 2, the Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.664 or greater than 0.05. These results show that there is no significant difference in the level of students' understanding of the issue of stunting between male and female students

## DISCUSSION

The research results show that teenagers have knowledge related to stunting at a moderate level, both in terms of understanding about stunting, the causes of stunting, as well as efforts to prevent or avoid stunting. The majority of teenagers have an understanding that cases of stunting will occur when they are pregnant and during the parenting process as a baby and can also be influenced by the behavior of teenagers before marriage. This finding is in line with the results of research by Mulyani et al (2022) which shows that cases of stunting are due to the lack of information from prospective mothers, which has an impact on the low knowledge of prospective mothers regarding the issue of stunting. Atamou et al (2023) in their research explained that the prevalence of stunting in children under five years of age in rural areas was caused by a lack of maternal knowledge and negative parenting patterns. Suminar et al (2021) emphasized that the high prevalence rate of stunting cannot be separated from the low level of knowledge and attitudes of the community, especially young mothers regarding the importance of preventing stunting (A'ini et al., 2024; Hermayani & Maran, 2024; Saputri et al., 2024). The low level of knowledge of young mothers cannot be separated from the low level of literacy about healthy lifestyles and stunting prevention. Research results from Kadafi et al (2023) also show that parents' understanding of stunting can reduce the risk of stunting cases in their children. Based on these findings, it shows that the ability and willingness to increase stunting literacy are important things that need to be improved by individuals in efforts to prevent stunting. This shows that it is very important that knowledge about stunting is given from an early age, or before teenagers decide to form a household.

The second finding in this research shows that there is no significant difference between male and female adolescents in the level of understanding of stunting issues. This shows that the gender factor does not influence the level of understanding of teenagers regarding the issue of

stunting. However, if you look at the research results from Tahir & Marniati (2018), it is clear that there are differences in the level of creativity and achievement between male and female students. Malini & Fridari (2019) in their research also explained that there are differences in the level of motivation between male and female students. Henny & Yendi (2021) also explained that there are differences in the level of self-compassion between teenage boys and teenage girls. Based on these findings, it shows that there are differences between men and women in levels of achievement, motivation and self-compassion, but these differences do not occur in the level of understanding of the stunting issue. Researchers can assume that there are other factors that influence the level of teenagers' understanding of the issue of stunting.

Yani et al (2023) in their research explained that stunting cases can occur influenced by the characteristics of the family household including individual factors (age, history of diarrhea, and place of birth), family factors (head of the family, main caregiver/mother, socio-cultural orientation, and family system factors), and environmental factors (Suprihatin et al., 2024). Suryani et al (2023) explained that the factors that cause stunting are maternal age, poor parenting patterns, food security, maternal education, and maternal employment. Therefore, these factors should be evaluated to prevent and control stunting, and should be included in health programs targeting stunting. Based on these findings, it can of course be used as a basis for determining strategies to prevent stunting cases, especially with the main target being teenagers or prospective brides. These findings also show that it is important for men and women to have an understanding of stunting as a preventive measure to prevent the prevalence of stunting.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research shows that teenagers' level of understanding of the issue of stunting is at a medium level. This shows that efforts are needed to increase students' level of understanding of the issue of stunting. The second finding shows that there is no difference in the level of student understanding of the stunting issue between male and female students. These findings show that there are other variables, apart from gender, that need to be considered to increase teenagers' understanding of the issue of stunting.

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