

# Formation of Adolescents' Understanding of Stunting Through The Communication Skilled Program at Vocational Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Stunting is a chronic malnutrition problem caused by a lack of nutritional intake for a long time resulting, in impaired growth in children. The Bandung Regency area is one of the areas experiencing an increasing number of stunting in years. Adolescents who are assumed to be the main element who should understand stunting, are not yet proven to be strong. A unique way is needed and should not give them the impression of being forced to learn new things. Communication and socialization training related to stunting issues is a strategy to instill an understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle as stunting prevention, as well as provide provisions to be able to disseminate this information through various innovations that can make their peers interested in stunting issues. This study used a quantitative research method, by distributing questionnaires to students at SMK Bintara Rancaekek, Linggar Village, West Java. The results of the study show that most respondents have a good understanding of stunting, which includes characteristics, causes, prevention, and participation or role, that adolescents want to carry out as agents of change in stunting prevention. Based on the results of the research, the provision included in communication training materials can be an alternative way of educating youth in the village.

## KEYWORDS

Stunting;  
Adolescent  
understanding;  
Communication  
training; Agent  
of change

## INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a chronic malnutrition problem caused by a lack of nutritional intake for a long time, resulting in growth disturbances in children such as lower or shorter height than standard age, which we often call "stunted" (P2PTM Ministry of Health RI, 2018). Stunting is a condition in which toddlers have less length or height than their age. Stunting toddlers is a chronic nutritional problem caused by many factors, such as socioeconomic conditions, maternal nutrition during pregnancy, infant morbidity, and lack of nutritional intake. Stunting babies experience difficulties achieving optimal physical and cognitive development (Stunting Bulletin, 2018).

Currently, stunting is a major nutritional problem in Indonesia. This problem is also related to other nutritional problems, such as being short, malnourished, thin, fat, or lack of cognition. The Indonesian Nutrition Status Study (SSGI) stated a decrease in nutritional status of 1.6% per year from 27.7% in 2019 to 24.4% in 2021. Most regions in 34 provinces experienced a decline, and only 5 provinces showed enhancement. The government makes every effort to overcome this problem. However, public awareness,

especially among adolescents, is needed regarding fulfilling the nutrition needs of babies from pregnancy to the growth period (Bulletin Stunting, 2018).

The Bandung Regency area is one area experiencing increasing stunting over the years. Based on the results of research conducted by Wempi et al. (2023) regarding the opinions and attitudes of the adolescent subculture in Sukamulya Village, Rancaeke District, Bandung, West Java, which is in the Citarum River basin area on the issue of stunting, shows that the understanding of the adolescent subculture which is assumed to be the main element that must understand stunting is proven not yet to be strong. Adolescents' understanding of stunting formed from their immediate environment, namely through Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) cadres, only touches the surface. Adolescents need to understand the causes of stunting and how to prevent it, explain it well and in detail, and become agents of change.

In providing information on stunting issues, adolescents should not be made into passive listeners who just sit back and listen to counseling on stunting issues. However, the ability to create an atmosphere that allows adolescents to discover, process, and construct various forms or innovations related to the knowledge they understand is needed.

Seeing the results of the previous study, it is appropriate for adolescents to change their lifestyle to help reduce stunting rates in Sukamulya Village. Unfortunately, this condition did not occur. Understanding stunting is only additional knowledge and has not become a priority. The handling of stunting in Sukamulya Village in the last two years is still only in toddlers who fall into this category. It appears that the formation of understanding among adolescents is not associated with other programs.

Based on the focus group discussions that were held during the pre-research, it was found that the priority for the adolescents of Sukamulya Village at this time was to live life according to the cycle that usually occurs there, namely going to school to high school, working as factory workers, and getting married. The textile company, the largest factory in the region, is the leading destination for adolescents when they complete their studies at the senior high school level. Those who could not get a job at the factory would choose odd jobs, trading, or being unemployed. This condition is an excuse for not making stunting prevention a lifestyle (Pre-Research FGD, 2022).

Another thing that also happens is awareness of environmental hygiene and sanitation. The culture of keeping livestock close to the main house is still common. Efforts running through Karang Taruna cadres who go around to provide an understanding of the safe distance between cattle pens and houses are still not working well. Many residents still feel that Karang Taruna cadres are young people who do not have enough life experience. Likewise, regarding sanitation-related hygiene, residents still do not care about the cleanliness of facilities such as toilets and public bathrooms. The users do not want to maintain it properly, so the facilities obtained from outside assistance become unkempt and dirty (Pre-Research FGD, 2022).

Karang Taruna cadres help understand the causes of stunting and emphasize that hygiene is the most significant determining factor. Nevertheless, back to the social conditions that occurred in Sukamulya Village, this was not considered necessary. The

behavior of adolescents who are still not open to changing their lifestyle to prevent stunting is hampered. The formation of understanding when graduating from high school became late because the priority was finding a job. Another condition that makes it difficult is that adolescents are not interested in additional knowledge. They only want to gather for fun events, such as dangdut performances, Independence Day competitions, or inter-village competitions.

Seeing the conditions and characteristics of adolescents in Sukamulya Village, agents of change willing to communicate stunting prevention well from an early age are needed. The issue of stunting is not only a concern for parents and married couples. Adolescents will become future parents, one of which is the nutritional status of a mother, which must be developed from a young age. This is what makes healthy behavior and living habits have to be built by adolescents (Kartinah, 2022).

The approach to conveying material related to stunting issues to adolescents must be changed into an activity that gives them a new skill by inserting the necessary information. This formation can begin when adolescents are at the upper secondary education level. Lifestyle changes are hoped to start earlier and become a good habit.

It is undeniable that adolescents often only see from the surface and look for information briefly. Therefore, a unique way is needed that does not give the impression of being forced for them to learn new things. Communication is an important thing that must be trained for prospective change agents. Good persuasion skills can undoubtedly be a hope that contributes to a lifestyle change.

Referring to research conducted by Nurlinda, Zarkasyi, and Sari (2021), stunting prevention animation media is used as an outreach medium to shape the knowledge and attitudes of prospective brides. Likewise, research conducted by Nur'afiah and Hendriana (2022) conveys that there are efforts to prevent stunting through a series of programs called the Gebrak Stunting program, which includes cadre training, field practice, advocacy of figures, assistance to targets at risk of stunting and the best innovations.

In this research, the social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura describes the students' understanding of Bintara Vocational High School, Rancaekek, Linggar Village-West Java, after participating in a communication training program that included information about stunting. According to Bandura, one's understanding is learned in several ways, one of which is imitation or modeling the understanding of others. There are four stages in the social learning process, according to Bandura & Walters (1963) in Fithri (2014): 1) attention, 2) reminder (retention), 3) production (production processes), and 4) incentives (incentive and motivational processes).

According to Winkel and Mukhtar in Sudaryano (2012), understanding is a person's ability to grasp the meaning of the material being studied and expressed by describing the main content of a reading or changing data presented in one form to another. Blom in Kuswana (2012) states that the ability to understand based on the level of sensitivity and degree of absorption of the material is divided into three levels: 1) translating, namely the ability to understand the meaning contained in a concept; 2) interpret (interpretation), and 3) extrapolate (extrapolation), which is activities that encompass thoughts or predictions based on understanding.

This research focuses on adolescents studying at SMK Bintara Rancaekek, Linggar Village, Bandung, West Java. Most adolescents living in Sukamulya Village attend school in Linggar Village because there is no high school in Sukamulya Village. Dissemination and persuasion communication training regarding stunting has not been focused on in this school. Local government and district police programs focus more on socializing the dangers of early marriage. So the socialization regarding the issue of stunting and persuasion communication training held for Bintara Vocational High School, Linggar Village, became a strategy to instill an understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle as a stunt prevention, as well as provide provisions to be able to disseminate this information through various innovations that can generate interest among their peers on the issue of stunting.

The research aims to describe adolescents' understanding of stunting through outreach and persuasive communication training through social media that includes information about stunting. New knowledge is indirectly imparted through various kinds of training and outreach activities. This research is essential to do considering that West Java has the largest population in Indonesia, namely almost 50 million people with a high pregnancy rate of almost 880 thousand each year, and there are still many areas in West Java that have a reasonably high stunting rate (Humas Jabar, 2022 ). The conditions are generally the same as in Sukamulya Village, where adolescents still struggle to change a healthy lifestyle.

The results of this study are expected to be a reference for villages with the same characteristics. If there is a significant change in understanding, the format of forming an agent of change starting from high school can be an alternative solution.

## **METHOD**

This study used a quantitative method to find out the understanding of adolescents at Bintara Vocational High School, Rancaekek, Linggar Village-West Java; after socialization and communication training through social media, which included information about stunting. The quantitative research results are used to be studied together with other data and information obtained from field observations and literature studies. This study used total sampling, which is adolescents in grades X and XI who attended Bintara Vocational High School, totaling 137 students. The data analysis used is descriptive, and the variable uses an ordinal scale by providing four answer choices. Option 1= Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree and 4 = Strongly agree

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Taken from the SMK Bintara Rancaekek website, a vocational high school located in Linggar Village, Rancaekek District, Bandung Regency, West Java, was originally a High School. 1998 it changed to the Bintara Rancaekek Vocational High School (SMK). From year to year, the number of students at SMK Bintara Rancaekek increased; in 2008, it peaked at 364.

The increasing number of students and achievements made West Java Governor Ahmad Heryawan 2012 donate the construction of a new building, and so did the West Java government, who donated classrooms for SMK Bintara Rancaekek. SMK Bintara Rancaekek has three majors: Automotive Engineering, Electronic Engineering, and Office Management and Business Services.

Based on the questionnaire results regarding the characteristics of the respondents, totaling 137 students, the characteristics of the respondents can be identified based on gender, age, and sources of information regarding stunting or physical stunting. Based on Table 1 data, it is known that the sex of the majority of respondents is male, namely 76.6%. Most respondents are 16 years old, 49.6%, in classes X and XI. Related to sources of information regarding stunting or physical stunting, based on the questionnaire results, the majority of students got information related to stunting from social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, or TikTok 51.1%. Information related to stunting was also obtained from schools through socialization held by government bodies, health institutions, or other educational institutions, namely 41.6%.

**Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents**

Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	105	76.6
Female	32	23.4
<b>Age</b>		
15 years old	19	13.9
16 years old	68	49.6
17 years old	48	35.0
18 years old	2	1.5
<b>Stunting Information</b>		
Friends	15	10.9
Parents	6	4.4
Village Officials	6	4.4
Social Media	70	51.1
School	57	41.6
Television	42	30.7
Radio	3	2.2
Others	14	10.2

### **Adolescents' Understanding Related to Stunting Information**

Stunting is a primary concern of the government, which is not only related to height but also to the child's ability to learn and the child's weak body immunity so that he is susceptible to chronic diseases. This is due to a lack of nutritional intake over a long period, and the first 1000 days of life are essential for child development (Alveri, 2021).

Based on the Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia in 2022 shows a decrease of 21.6 percent compared to 24.4% in 2021. This is, of course, courtesy of the government's and various parties' hard work. The government has a stunting prevalence target of 14 percent by 2024 (Ali, 2023).

Acceleration to achieve the target of 14 percent in 2024, of course, must involve many parties, such as adolescents, young couples, prospective parents, pregnant women, and others. This study focuses on adolescents' understanding of stunting after socialization and persuasion communication training through social media. With a good understanding of stunting from various communication media that can be obtained, adolescents can become agents of change, and later, when they become parents, they will understand what must be done to prevent stunting, one of which is getting good nutrition from adolescents.

Based on the results of a survey conducted on 137 Bintara Vocational High School students who are currently in classes X and XI, the majority of respondents understand that stunting is the same as being physically stunted or a midget, which is caused by malnutrition and has a risk of not being smart, not optimal body growth, and susceptible to disease. This is shown by the majority of respondents who answered strongly agree and agree, as shown in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Adolescents' Understanding of Stunting**

No	Description	SA %	A %	DA %	SD %
1	Stunting is the same as physical stunting or midgets	27	65	6.6	1.5
2	Physical stunting means people who are small in stature due to malnutrition.	27	61.3	9.5	2.2
3	I understand that stunting or physical stunting has a risk of not being smart, not having optimal body growth, and being susceptible to disease	27	51.8	17.5	3.6

(SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)

An understanding of what a stunting child is like is followed by an understanding the factors that cause stunting in children. Based on the data in Table 3, most respondents (89.1 percent) understand that one of the causes of stunting or physical stunting is early marriage, or what we know as marriage at a young age of less than 19 years. In addition, 87.6 percent stated that stunting can also be caused by bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, lack of rest, eating irregularly, and not maintaining body hygiene. According to respondents, a healthy environment is not guaranteed for healthy children.

**Table 3. Adolescents' Understanding of the Causes of Stunting**

No	Description	SA %	A %	DA %	SD %
1	Early or young marriage is one of the causes of stunting or physical stunting	43.1	63	10.2	0.7
2	Bad habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, lack of rest, eating irregularly, and not maintaining body hygiene are causes of stunting or physical stunting	35.8	51.8	10.9	1.5
3	In my opinion, an unhealthy life can cause stunting children or physical stunting	26.3	64.2	6.6	2.9
4	In my opinion, a healthy environment is not a guarantee for healthy children	12.4	61.3	23.4	2.9

(SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)

Understanding stunting prevention is also essential for adolescents who will take on the role of parents in the future. In this case, adolescents know and understand stunting for themselves and can also become agents of change for society or their environment through disseminating information about stunting. Based on Table 4 below, some stunting prevention is understood by adolescents, including the youngest age at marriage, which is 19 years, and understanding the preparation and responsibilities when marrying well, such as economic readiness.

**Table 4. Adolescents' Understanding of Stunting Prevention**

No	Description	SA %	A %	DA %	SD %
1	Being economically ready before a marriage	74.5	21.9	2.9	0.7
2	Everyone should understand what stunting or physical stunting is	51.1	44.5	4.4	0
3	Adolescents must understand what stunting or physical stunting is	56.2	38	4.4	1.5
4	In my opinion, adolescents should understand the preparation for marriage properly	70.6	27.2	0.7	1.5
5	In my opinion, the youngest age at marriage is 19 years	24.8	51.1	19	5.1
6	Being economically ready is not a necessity before a marriage	10.9	16.8	41.6	30.7
7	In my opinion, adolescents must understand responsibility when they are getting a marriage	64.2	29.2	5.8	0.7

(SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)

Most adolescents who were respondents to this study wanted to participate in stunting prevention through various means, such as seeking information about stunting from various sources to enrich and gain a deeper understanding of stunting issues. In addition, most respondents (above 80%) wanted to tell others what stunting is, its causes, and its prevention. This is as we can see from the data in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Adolescents' Participation in Stunting Prevention**

No	Description	SA %	A %	DA %	SD %
1	I am looking for information about stunting or physical stunting	27.7	61.3	7.3	3.6
2	I want to tell others what stunting or physical stunting is	27	58.4	14.6	0
3	I am willing to help explain the causes of stunting or physical stunting	22.6	60.6	16.1	0.7
4	I want to help spread the risk of having stunting or physically stunting children	28.5	59.9	10.2	1.5

(SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; DA: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree)

### Adolescents as Agents of Change

Adolescents, as future parents, are the primary key to preventing stunting. Education on stunting is carried out in various forms and mediums tailored to the target audience. In today's digital era, using various digital platforms with audio and visuals is exciting. Referring to research conducted by Valeriani et al. (2022), education and socialization regarding stunting issues are not only carried out face-to-face but can also be carried out using digital media such as Instagram, Podcasts, TikTok, YouTube, and so on. Likewise,

research conducted by Trisnowati, Susanti, and Nuraini (2021) stated that to persuade and provide an understanding of health awareness for young people, a method that is as attractive as possible is needed so that it is easier to understand.

Associated with social learning theory, sees that adolescents' social behavior can occur through the learning process of observation and imitation of other people's behavior. Adolescents' attention is formed when they receive socialization, education, and communication training that incorporates the issue of stunting. Adolescents then absorb information related to the observed behavior, which, in this case, enters the retention stage. These behaviors include a healthy lifestyle, marriage over 19, etc. This can be used as an example to apply to oneself (reproduction), and there is motivation to participate as an agent of change in stunting prevention.

## CONCLUSION

The role of adolescents as prospective parents is needed to help voice the issue of stunting. Stunting, packaged in educational programs and persuasive communication training using social media, can attract adolescents to understand more about stunting.

Most respondents had a good understanding through socialization and persuasion communication training, which included information about stunting. In this case, adolescents already understand the characteristics of children who experience stunting, as well as causes, prevention, and participation as agents of change.

Of course, continuous efforts are still needed to make adolescents the driving force and bring about change in stunting prevention. In this digital era, it is necessary to maximize the use of digital media, especially social media or various educational and communication programs that are light, delivered in a fun way, and not seeming pushy; besides that, it should also use simple and easy-to-understand language.

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