



## Family Diet and Stunting Risk: The Role of Parents in Creating Nutritional Health

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### ABSTRACT

Children's nutritional health is one of the main factors that determines the quality of children's growth and development and their future. In various countries, including Indonesia, stunting is a big challenge that needs serious attention. The aim of this research is to investigate family eating patterns and the risk of stunting, the role of parents in creating children's nutritional health, referring to the global context showing that stunting is still a serious children's health problem, with significant long-term impacts. The main focus of this research includes understanding the family diet implemented by parents in fulfilling children's nutrition, exploring the role of parents in selecting and compiling daily food menus that support children's nutritional needs, and identifying factors that influence family diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with parents and teachers, direct observation, and documentation analysis. Data analysis techniques include data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The validity of the data is maintained using source and method triangulation techniques. This research provides insight into the family eating patterns implemented by parents in fulfilling children's nutrition, the role of parents in preparing the daily menu, as well as the factors that influence eating patterns at Ceria Blora Kindergarten. The results of this research can be a reference in designing nutritional education programs for parents to prevent the risk of stunting in early childhood.

### INTRODUCTION

Stunting (Balla S, Goli S, Vedantam S 2021) is defined as a condition where a child has a height-for-age Z-score below -2 standard deviations (SD) based on the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards. This condition reflects chronic malnutrition and is typically caused by inadequate nutrition, repeated infections, and poor maternal health during critical growth periods, particularly within the first 1,000 days of life. Stunting is associated with long-term consequences, including impaired cognitive development, reduced educational achievement, and lower economic productivity in adulthood. Stunting is a major health problem in Indonesia that is experienced by many early childhoods. This condition is characterized by age-inappropriate height growth due to chronic malnutrition (Yulianti 2020). Stunting has an impact on children's physical, mental, and social health in the long term

(Permatasari and Iqbal 2021). Children who experience stunting are at risk of learning disabilities and various prolonged health problems (Djuwita 2018). Therefore, efforts to prevent and handle stunting are a national priority to improve the quality of human resources in Indonesia.

According to Basic Health Research (Riskesdas 2021), the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia reached 24.4%. This data shows that one in four children is stunted. This fairly high number is found in various regions, including in Central Java and Blora Regency. The high prevalence of stunting indicates the need for a deeper understanding of the causes and role of the family in preventing stunting. This understanding, especially regarding the diet applied in the household, can help reduce stunting rates.

Family diet has a direct impact on children's nutritional status (Djuwita 2018). Parents are responsible for ensuring that children get adequate and balanced nutritional intake. However, many parents still lack an adequate understanding of the importance of nutrition. Without this knowledge, they have difficulty developing a diet that supports the growth of children. This situation risks increasing stunting rates in malnourished children.

According to the theory of developmental ecology, children develop through various layers of the environment that affect each other (Septariana 2024). The family, as a micro environment, plays a big role in the growth and development of children. If families do not have the knowledge or resources to provide nutritious food, children are more likely to experience nutritional problems, including stunting. The family as the smallest unit of society needs to have understanding and knowledge to support children's health. Education about healthy eating is important so that families can protect children from the risk of malnutrition.

Educational institutions, such as Ceria Blora Kindergarten, can play an important role in supporting families to create healthy diets for children. Schools can serve as a platform to provide nutrition education to parents and children. Through this education, it is hoped that parents will gain knowledge that can be applied at home. This educational program can include counseling on balanced nutrition and the introduction of healthy menus (Sulistiawati, Pratiwi, and Fitriana 2019). In addition, parents will also learn how to cook nutritious food that is suitable for children's needs.

In addition to education, economic limitations are also one of the main causes of stunting. Many families in the Blora area have difficulty meeting the nutritional needs of their children due to economic limitations. As a result, they prefer cheap food that does not meet the nutritional needs of children. This lack of access can potentially cause children to lack protein, vitamins, and minerals essential for optimal growth. In this situation, better access to nutritious food should be a priority in efforts to reduce the risk of stunting.

World Health Organization (Organization 2014) suggest comprehensive interventions to prevent stunting. These interventions include education about nutrition, provision of nutritious food, and increased family access to health services. By increasing parents' knowledge and awareness about nutrition, it is hoped that they will be able to meet the nutritional needs of children. Parents need to be provided with information on how to prepare healthy foods that can meet the nutritional needs of children. This will help in preventing the risk of stunting from an early age.

Social learning theory (Bandura 1986) explain that children learn through observation and imitating the behavior around them. If parents adopt a healthy diet, children tend to imitate these habits. That way, a healthy diet is created and supports children's growth. Parents need to be role models in teaching healthy eating habits to their children. Education about the importance of healthy food should also be conveyed to children so that they understand the importance of choosing nutritious food from an early age.

Previous research on the implementation of the Mentawai Anti Stunting Malnutrition Caring for Children (Masgiburdua) Movement Program in Stunting Prevention in the Mentawai Islands Regency (Erick Maulana Putra Nide 2023) shows that the Mentawai Islands Regency Government implements stunting prevention by implementing the Masgiburdua program in several forms of activities, namely providing education and improve the nutritional status of the community and the quality of resources, establish a diet improvement post, regular monitoring of toddlers. Expert System for Early Detection of Stunting in Toddlers Using the Naïve Bayes Method (Alwie et al. 2020) shows an expert system that can detect early stunting in toddlers using the naïve Bayes method and the percentage of suitability of early detection from expert testing by comparing the results of expert screening and significant systems

The relationship between diet and stunting in children aged 3-5 years in Mengani Village (Guarango 2022) shows that there is a relationship between diet and stunting. And it is hoped that the community can carry out a balanced diet program so that children do not experience stunting. The relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, duration of breastfeeding, and diversity of maternal food consumption with the incidence of stunting among toddlers in Muaro Jambi Regency (Sari et al. 2022) shows that there is a relationship between exclusive breastfeeding, duration of breastfeeding, and diversity of maternal food consumption with numbers. Incidents of Stunting in Toddlers in Muaro Jambi Regency. And it is hoped that mothers can provide exclusive breastfeeding and a balanced variety of food so that stunting does not occur in children. Psychoeducation regarding stunting in children and the parenting role of parents to increase knowledge about stunting (Rachmah et al. 2022) shows that participants felt the benefits of this activity and provided new knowledge about stunting, especially parenting.

Cultural factors also influence family eating patterns. In some areas, there are certain eating habits that are unhealthy or non-nutritious (Nasrul 2020). For example, fried or sweet foods are often preferred by children, while vegetables are less desirable. For this reason, an approach that is sensitive to local culture is needed so that family diets can be improved. Ceria Blora Kindergarten can be a place where children and parents learn positive values in appreciating healthy food.

Efforts to increase awareness of healthy eating patterns among families should be carried out on an ongoing basis. Nutrition education programs in schools can be expanded to the community level for wider impact. Activities such as parent meetings with nutritionists, healthy food festivals, and parent discussion groups can help spread knowledge about nutrition (Indonesia 2019). By involving the community, it is hoped that an environment will

be created that supports parents to adopt healthy eating patterns at home. This collective awareness is very important to create an environment that supports children's health.

Apart from the role of families and educational institutions, government support is also important to overcome stunting. The government can provide assistance through policies that support low-income families' access to nutritious food. Food assistance programs and nutritional interventions from the government must reach the communities who need it most. Policies that increase access to healthy food need to be prioritized, especially in areas with high stunting prevalence (Nugroho, M., & Suryandari 2020). With this support, it is hoped that families will be able to provide for their children's nutritional needs.

Research at the Ceria Blora Kindergarten in preventing stunting should be part of the school curriculum. Learning programs that involve knowledge about nutrition and health can be included in children's daily activities. In this way, children will learn about the importance of a healthy diet and how to choose nutritious foods. Parental involvement in this learning will strengthen the knowledge that children receive. The research effort will have an impact on the family diet implemented by parents in fulfilling children's nutrition, explore the role of parents in selecting and compiling a daily food menu that supports children's nutritional needs, and identify factors that influence family diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten, this will reduce stunting rates in society.

This research aims to investigate family eating patterns and the risk of stunting, the role of parents in creating children's nutritional health, referring to the global context showing that stunting is still a serious children's health problem, with significant long-term impacts. Overall, the role of parents in creating healthy eating patterns for children is very important. Through education, parental involvement and support from various parties, it is hoped that the prevalence of stunting can be reduced. Children can grow healthily and develop optimally if families adopt a healthy eating pattern. Collaboration between schools, families and government is the key to creating a generation free from nutritional problems. With this collaboration, children are able to contribute optimally to the future of the nation.

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative method with a type of field research that emphasizes a deep understanding of natural phenomena. The data collected is in the form of verbal descriptions, images, and related documents. The data was obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation at Ceria Blora Kindergarten to study family diets and stunting risks as well as the role of parents in maintaining children's nutritional health (Moleong, 2020). As the main instrument, the researcher is responsible for the validity of the data collected by selecting informants using the purposive sampling technique (Sugiyono, 2020).

This qualitative approach is applied in the natural conditions of the object, with inductive data analysis to capture the depth of meaning rather than generalizations (Abdussamad, 2022). The data obtained came from field facts, without any limiting theoretical guidance, allowing researchers to develop hypotheses based on empirical data found in the field (Choiri, 2019). This approach allows researchers to explore the deep meaning related to diet and the role of parents in preventing stunting in early childhood.

The location of this research is Ceria Blora Kindergarten, where the active presence of researchers allows direct observation and involvement in helping teachers face learning challenges (Sugiyono 2020). This participation helps researchers collect representative and relevant data from direct interactions with the research subjects. This data describes the real conditions at Ceria Blora Kindergarten and provides an in-depth understanding of the factors that affect children's nutritional health.

The data collected comes from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include interviews with principals, teachers, and guardians, while secondary sources include documentation in the form of photos and videos related to diet and nutritional health (Choiri, 2019). The selection of this data source is carried out by considering the quality and credibility of the data, so that the research results are accurate and representative.

Data analysis is carried out through three stages: condensation data, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2019). The data obtained is filtered and summarized to provide a clearer picture. The presentation of data is carried out in narrative form to show the relationship between categories. Triangulation techniques are used to ensure the validity of data through the comparison of different sources, methods, and times (Abdussamad, 2022), so that the results of the research can be trusted and consistent.

## **RESULT**

### **1. Family Diet Applied by Parents at Cheerful Blora Kindergarten in Fulfilling Children's Nutrition**

The diet applied by parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten has a significant influence on children's nutritional fulfillment and supports their physical and mental development. Choosing a balanced menu, including various nutritional components such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, has become a major concern for parents (Khoirotun 2024b). Menus containing complex carbohydrates (Agustina 2021) Such as brown rice, sweet potatoes, as well as proteins from animal and vegetable sources, such as fish, meat, and legumes, play an important role in ensuring that children get enough energy for their physical and mental activities. Last but not least, healthy fats derived from natural sources such as avocados, olive oil, and nuts, are carefully selected so that children not only get energy but also support hormonal function and absorption of fat-soluble vitamins. Parents (Laela 2024) At Ceria Blora Kindergarten, they also actively introduce various types of fruits and vegetables that are rich in fiber and vitamins needed by the child's body, to maintain digestive health and their immune system.

In addition, the habit of a regular meal schedule is also one of the aspects that parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten pay great attention to. According to the results of the study, consistent eating habits at the same time every day help children be more structured in carrying out daily activities, including study and play time. A regular meal schedule supports the stability of children's blood sugar levels, which is important for maintaining energy and concentration throughout the day. Therefore, parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten not only ensure that children eat three meals a day, but also provide

healthy snacks between main meal times to keep their energy intake stable. In addition, this regular eating habit also plays a role in supporting digestive health, by preventing problems such as constipation or other digestive disorders that are often experienced by children.

The importance of avoiding unhealthy eating habits, such as the consumption of fast food and sugary drinks, was also highlighted in this study. Parents (Handayani 2024) at Ceria Blora Kindergarten is well aware of the health risks posed by foods that contain high calories, saturated fats, added sugars, and preservatives. Consumption of fast food that is high in fat and salt can contribute to obesity and other health problems in children, while sugary drinks containing added sugar can damage children's teeth and increase the risk of metabolic diseases such as diabetes. Therefore, parents try to limit unhealthy feeding and prefer natural foods that are rich in nutrients to support their child's long-term health. This also includes avoiding the habit of giving your child sugary drinks and replacing them with water, which also helps reduce the intake of empty calories that can lead to unhealthy weight gain.

In addition, restrictions on the consumption of unhealthy snacks, which are often a habit of children, are implemented to prevent further health problems. High-sugar and fat snacks, such as sweets and processed snacks, are often the more appealing option for children because of their sweet or savory flavor. However, excessive consumption of these snacks can interfere with appetite during the main meal time and cause children to lose the opportunity to obtain more complete nutrition (Imam 2021). Parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten are aware of this and have replaced unhealthy snacks with more nutritious options, such as fresh fruits, nuts, or low-sugar yogurt, which are not only healthier but also more appealing to children. Thus, children can consume beneficial snacks without sacrificing their healthy diet.

Providing enough water is also an important aspect of the diet applied by parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten. Water not only supports the digestive and metabolic processes, but also plays an important role in maintaining the balance of children's body fluids, especially when doing physical activity or in hot weather. Children who are well hydrated will focus more on learning and playing, and avoid dehydration problems that can cause fatigue, dizziness, or other health problems. Parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten replace the habit of giving sugary drinks with water, which helps maintain healthy teeth and prevent unhealthy weight gain. By educating children about the importance of consuming water, parents also help them understand the optimal hydration benefits for their bodies, which will continue into adulthood (Adit 2022).

In the end, the provision of healthy food options that are easily accessible to children is also the main factor in forming good eating habits. Parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten consistently provide healthy meals that children can easily access, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as healthy snacks that are low in sugar and fat. By placing healthy food in an easily accessible place, such as on the table or in front of the refrigerator, children are more likely to choose nutritious foods without having to be asked. Parents also involve children in the process of selecting and preparing meals,

which not only improves children's understanding of different types of healthy foods, but also makes them feel more responsible for their food choices. Overall, parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten managed to create an environment that supports healthy eating, which in turn helps children grow up with balanced, healthy, and optimal nutrition, as well as form eating habits that they will carry with them throughout their lives.

## **2. The Role of Parents in Choosing and Compiling Daily Food Menus in Supporting Children's Nutritional Needs at Ceria Blora Kindergarten to Reduce the Risk of Stunting**

The results of this study show that the role of parents in choosing and compiling children's daily food menus at Ceria Blora Kindergarten has a significant impact on meeting children's nutritional needs and reducing the risk of stunting. Parents have a great responsibility in choosing nutritious food ingredients (Dina 2024), such as animal and vegetable protein sources, complex carbohydrates, healthy fats, and vegetables and fruits that are rich in vitamins and minerals. A nutritious food menu not only supports children's physical growth, but also strengthens their immune system, prevents anemia, and supports optimal brain development (Saraswati 2019).

Choosing the right ingredients and preparing a balanced menu are important steps to support children's growth (Maulida 2020). The results of the study show that parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten are very concerned about ensuring that their children get a complete and balanced intake. A food menu that includes different types of essential foods, in appropriate proportions, can reduce the risk of malnutrition that can hinder a child's physical and mental development. Variety in the daily menu is also an important concern so that children do not feel bored and always get nutritional benefits from various types of food.

In addition, this study revealed that parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten also pay attention to the frequency and schedule of children's meals. Children need three main meals and two healthy snacks every day. Healthy snacks like fruit, yogurt, or nuts help fill energy gaps without disrupting the main appetite (Suhardjo 2020). Parents ensure their children get enough meal time and a supportive environment so that they can eat calmly and digest food properly.

Avoiding unhealthy foods such as fast food, sugary drinks, and snacks high in sugar and salt are also the main concerns of parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten. The results of the study show that parents prefer to avoid feeding which can increase the risk of obesity, metabolic disorders, and other diseases that have the potential to hinder children's growth and development (Dinda 2024). By choosing healthier and more nutritious foods, parents contribute greatly in minimizing the potential for stunting in children.

Counseling and education about healthy eating is also very important in this study. Parents not only play a role in choosing and compiling food menus, but also in providing children with an understanding of the importance of eating nutritious food. Education provided through practical means, such as inviting children to choose healthy foods with their parents, can build good eating habits from an early age (Kusuma, D. & Syafiq

2019). Thus, children will be more aware of the importance of good nutrition and form healthy eating habits that can last throughout life.

Overall, the results of this study show that the role of parents in choosing, arranging, and providing nutritious food is very important to reduce the risk of stunting in children. By providing a healthy food menu, avoiding non-nutritious foods, and educating children about good diets, parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten can ensure that their children grow up healthy, strong, and avoid stunting problems that can affect their future.

### **3. Factors Affecting Family Diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten**

The family diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten has a significant influence on the prevention of stunting in children. Several internal and external factors play an important role in shaping a healthy diet for children in these environments.

The most dominant internal factor is parents' knowledge of balanced nutrition. Parents who have a good understanding of the importance of balanced nutritional intake tend to be more selective in choosing food ingredients and putting together a nutritious menu for their children. They understand that children need foods that contain carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, and vitamins and minerals that support growth and development. Limited knowledge about nutrition, on the other hand, can lead to mistakes in choosing foods that do not support the nutritional needs of children. In addition, eating habits in the family also affect children's diets. Families that have the habit of eating together by providing healthy food regularly play a role in forming a good and healthy diet for children. Conversely, unhealthy eating habits in the family, such as frequent fast food consumption, can be imitated by children and negatively impact their diet. Children's health conditions also affect diet, especially in terms of special dietary needs for children with certain health disorders, such as food allergies or digestive disorders.

External factors that affect the family's diet (Khoirotun 2024) at Ceria Blora Kindergarten includes the social environment where they live, family economic factors, and the influence of food advertisements. Social environments such as peers, extended family, and community can influence a family's food choices. Children who frequently interact with friends who consume fast food or sugary drinks may be influenced to adopt the same diet. Family economic factors (Wado 2019) It also plays an important role in determining the type and quality of food that can be provided. Families with limited incomes may be more likely to buy more affordable but less nutritious foods, such as processed or fast food. Finally, the influence of food advertising in the media, especially those aimed at children, can influence children's and parents' decisions in choosing food. Ads promoting unhealthy foods often attract children's attention and encourage them to ask their parents to buy these products, even if the food is not nutritious.

Overall, this study indicates that the family's diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten is greatly influenced by internal factors such as parental knowledge, eating habits in the family, and children's health conditions, as well as external factors such as the social environment, family economy, and media influences (Khoirotun 2024). Therefore, to prevent stunting, it is important for parents to have good knowledge of nutrition,

implement healthy eating habits in the family, and pay attention to external factors that can affect their diet. Education on balanced nutrition and healthy eating also needs to be extended to families to raise awareness about the importance of providing nutritious food for their children.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Family Diet Applied by Parents at Cheerful Blora Kindergarten in Fulfilling Children's Nutrition**

Nutritional fulfillment in early childhood is one of the important aspects in their growth and development. At preschool age, especially in kindergarten, children's nutritional needs need to be well considered by parents so that they grow up healthy, active, and have optimal learning abilities. One way that parents can do in meeting their children's nutritional needs is to implement a healthy and regular family diet. Through a balanced and planned diet, children will get the nutritional intake needed for their physical and mental development.

Fulfilling optimal nutrition in early childhood is a fundamental aspect in supporting the process of holistic child growth and development. Childhood, especially at preschool ages such as in kindergarten, is a golden period in which a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development occurs rapidly. To ensure that this developmental process takes place properly, the role of parents in implementing a balanced and healthy family diet is very important. The diet applied in the family environment provides an initial foundation for children in building healthy eating habits and encouraging the achievement of children's daily nutritional needs.

At preschool age, children are in an exploration phase where they begin to get to know a wide variety of foods and tend to develop certain eating preferences. In this situation, parents have a crucial role in introducing a variety of foods rich in nutrients, as well as managing a structured and scheduled diet. Parental involvement in directing children's diets not only affects their physical health but also affects children's ability to concentrate, readiness, and social behavior. In this case, the principal together with the village midwife provides education to the parents of the guardians of the students, the diet applied by parents at the Ceria Blora kindergarten in fulfilling child nutrition to prevent stunting in its implementation includes several important aspects that support including:

#### **a. Balanced Menu Selection**

Balanced nutrition is the main foundation in supporting early childhood growth and development. Nutritional components consisting of carbohydrates, proteins, fats, fiber, vitamins, and minerals have an essential role that cannot be replaced by each other in the process of children's growth and development. Carbohydrates, for example, serve as the main source of energy needed for daily physical and mental activities. Protein, which is found in foods such as meat, fish, and nuts, helps in the formation and repair of body tissues and is important for the development of children's muscles and organs. By paying attention to the balance of these nutritional components, children can get a complete intake of nutrients to grow and develop optimally (Damayanti 2018).

In addition, fat is a source of energy reserves that are also needed to support hormonal function and the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins, such as vitamins A, D, E, and K. Healthy

fat sources such as avocados, nuts, and olive oil can be given in appropriate portions so that children can get the benefits without the risk of excess saturated fat. Fiber contained in fruits, vegetables, and grains also has an important role in maintaining children's digestive health. Fiber helps prevent constipation and maintain a healthy digestive tract, so that children are more comfortable and avoid indigestion. By adding a variety of vegetables and fruits to your child's daily menu, parents can increase their fiber intake and make their child's diet more balanced and enjoyable.

Vitamins and minerals are no less important because they both help the metabolic process and the child's immune system. Vitamin C, for example, supports immunity, while iron is important in the process of blood formation to prevent anemia that often occurs in children. Minerals such as calcium and phosphorus are necessary for the formation of strong bones and teeth. By paying attention to the variety of natural food ingredients that contain these nutritional components, parents can help children to grow healthy and active. Avoiding processed foods that are high in sugar and preservatives is also an important step to maintain the quality of children's daily nutritional intake and make their diet healthier overall.

#### b. Habit of Regular Meal Schedule

Getting into the habit of a regular meal schedule is very important in regulating children's diets as well as supporting their physical and mental growth. Wahyuni, in his book, emphasizes that a consistent diet can help children feel more organized in daily activities, from learning to playing (Murni 2019). By eating at the same time every day, children will have healthier eating habits, as well as help their bodies adapt to biological rhythms that support metabolic and digestive processes.

A regular meal schedule also serves to maintain the stability of children's blood sugar levels. When children eat regularly, their bodies can regulate their energy supply more efficiently, which is important to support their concentration during learning activities. Avoiding eating too long between main meal schedules can prevent excessive hunger that can interfere with the child's focus. For example, a good breakfast in the morning will give you the energy to start activities, while lunch and dinner will provide enough intake to keep their energy steady throughout the day.

Consistency of the meal schedule also plays a role in preventing unhealthy eating habits. Without a clear meal schedule, children may tend to snack on less nutritious foods, such as sugary snacks or processed foods that are high in sugar and salt. With a regular meal schedule, children will find it easier to manage their meal time and reduce the habit of eating unhealthy snacks. It also teaches them to enjoy more nutritious main foods rather than relying on snacks that don't provide optimal nutritional benefits.

Furthermore, getting used to a regular meal schedule also creates a diet that supports children's digestive health. Children who eat at consistent times tend to have more regular bowel patterns, which is a sign of a healthy digestive system. It helps prevent digestive problems such as constipation and other stomach upsets. Therefore, parents who ensure their children eat regularly not only support nutritional adequacy, but also better digestive health for their children.

#### c. Avoiding Unhealthy Eating Habits

Avoiding unhealthy eating habits is an important thing that parents need to pay attention to in maintaining their children's health. Hidayat emphasized that the consumption of fast food and sugary drinks needs to be significantly reduced to prevent health problems in children, such as obesity and cavities. Fast food is generally high in calories, saturated fat, and salt, which when consumed in excess can lead to unhealthy weight gain. Similarly, sugary drinks rich in added sugar can damage children's dental health, cause cavities, and increase the risk of diabetes later in life (Hidayat 2017).

The consumption of unhealthy foods also has a negative impact on children's energy and concentration, especially in daily activities such as learning and playing. Foods high in sugar, such as sweets and fizzy drinks, can provide instant energy, but often cause an energy "crash" shortly after. This makes children feel tired quickly and lack focus. In contrast, healthy foods rich in fiber, such as fruits and vegetables, provide more stable and long-lasting energy. By limiting the consumption of fast food and sugary drinks, parents not only help maintain children's physical health but also support their performance in activities that require concentration.

Building healthy eating habits early on also helps children understand the importance of a good diet and its impact on their body. Parents can explain to children about the negative effects of fast food and sugary drinks, for example, how they can cause toothache or make the body unhealthy. By understanding the reasons behind unhealthy food restrictions, children are more likely to follow healthy eating rules voluntarily and carry these habits into adulthood.

#### d. Restrictions on Consumption of Unhealthy Snacks

Limiting the consumption of unhealthy snacks that contain excessive sugar and fat is very important to maintain children's health and development. According to Suryani, early childhood children tend to prefer sweet foods or savory snacks that are high in fat because of their attractive taste. However, if left unrestricted, the consumption of snacks like this can have a bad impact on children's health. High sugar content can increase the risk of obesity and dental problems, such as cavities, while snacks high in saturated fat can negatively impact a child's cardiovascular system early on (Suryani 2019).

In addition to long-term health risks, the habit of eating snacks high in sugar and fat can also affect a child's daily diet. Children who are used to snacking on sweet or savory foods in large portions often lose their appetite when the main meal time arrives. This causes them not to get a complete and balanced nutritional intake, because they are full from low-nutrient snacks. Limiting unhealthy snacks allows children to have more room to consume nutritious foods during their main meals, such as vegetables, protein, and complex carbohydrates, which are essential for their growth.

Parents can replace snacks that are high in sugar and fat with healthy snack options that are still attractive to children. For example, fresh fruits, low-sugar yogurt, or nuts can be more nutritious snack alternatives. In addition to providing healthy snacks, it is also important for parents to educate their children about the benefits of choosing foods that are good for their body. By introducing healthy snacks and limiting unhealthy snacks, children

will learn to be wiser in choosing foods, which will help them maintain a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle from an early age.

e. Giving Enough Water

Providing enough water is very important for children's health, as expressed by Suryadi. Water is the main source of hydration needed by the body to carry out various vital functions, including supporting digestion, metabolism, and body temperature regulation. Children need enough water to maintain their body's fluid balance, which is especially important during physical activity or hot weather. Lack of water intake can lead to dehydration, which can interfere with a child's concentration and lead to fatigue, dizziness, or even other health problems (Suryadi 2020).

In addition to supporting physical health, providing enough water also plays a role in reducing the consumption of sugary drinks that contain added sugar. Sugary drinks such as soda, packaged juices, and energy drinks contain empty calories that can lead to unhealthy weight gain as well as increase the risk of diseases such as obesity and type 2 diabetes. If children are used to consuming sugary drinks, they will tend to find it more difficult to reduce their sugar intake, which is a risk to their dental health and metabolism. By replacing sugary drinks with water, children not only avoid the negative impact of sugar, but also obtain optimal hydration benefits.

In addition, water helps maintain the health of children's skin. Dehydration can cause a child's skin to become dry and dull, and prone to irritation or inflammation. Giving enough water every day will help maintain skin moisture and increase its elasticity, so that children's skin remains healthy and avoids skin problems. Therefore, teaching children to prioritize water consumption early on is an important investment for their long-term health, both in terms of body hydration and natural skin care.

## **2. The Role of Parents in Choosing and Compiling Daily Food Menus in Supporting Children's Nutritional Needs at Ceria Blora Kindergarten to Reduce the Risk of Stunting**

The role of parents in choosing and compiling daily food menus for children in Kindergarten (TK) Ceria Blora is vital in supporting children's nutritional needs and preventing stunting. Stunting, which results from chronic malnutrition, can inhibit a child's physical growth and brain development, which will have an impact on his or her quality of life in the future (Sumarwan 2019). Therefore, parents have a huge responsibility in ensuring that children get adequate and balanced nutritional intake, especially at an early age, which is a critical period for a child's growth and development.

The role of parents in choosing nutritious foodstuffs is responsible for choosing foodstuffs that are in accordance with the nutritional needs of children. The selection of good food depends not only on the price or availability of foodstuffs, but also on the nutritional content contained in them (Hidayati 2018). Kindergarten-aged children need nutrition that includes carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, and vitamins and minerals that are important to support their growth. Highly nutritious and appropriate food will help children grow optimally, avoid various health problems, and reduce the risk of stunting.

Some food ingredients that should be in a child's daily menu (Farida 2017): a). Protein is very important in supporting the development of children's muscles and body tissues. Parents can choose protein source foods such as fish, chicken, eggs, tempeh, tofu, and beans. Animal proteins such as fish and eggs are very beneficial because they contain amino acids that are easily absorbed by the body. b). Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for active children (Nguyen and Nguyen, Susana Santos 2020). Parents can provide rice, bread, sweet potatoes, or corn as a source of complex carbohydrates that are rich in fiber and help keep children's blood sugar levels stable. c). Healthy Fats are also very important for children's brain development. The omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids found in fish, olive oil, avocados, and nuts help improve brain function and support overall growth and development. d). Vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber that are very important for maintaining the child's immune system and preventing disease. Vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, and carrots, as well as fruits such as oranges, apples, and bananas, can support children's eye, skin, and bone health. Vitamins A, C, and iron contained in vegetables and fruits also play a role in preventing anemia and strengthening children's immune systems.

Parents need to develop a balanced daily food menu for their children. A balanced menu should include all important food groups in the right proportions to support the child's growth and development. Menu preparation must pay attention to variety, so that children do not feel bored and always get various nutritional benefits from various types of food (Salim 2016). Parents also need to pay attention to the number of portions of food given, so that it is not too much or too little. Following the balanced nutrition guidelines from the health office or a nutritionist can be a good reference in compiling a food menu that is suitable for the child's age and nutritional needs. In addition, it is very important to provide food that is easy to digest and in accordance with the child's ability to chew and swallow, considering that kindergarten-age children are still in the stage of developing their oral motor skills.

It is important for parents to pay attention to the frequency and schedule of their children's meals. Children of Ceria Blora Kindergarten need 3 main meals and 2 healthy snacks every day. Healthy snacks like cut fruit, yogurt, or nuts can help fill in the energy gaps between main meals, without disrupting the appetite during large meals. Parents need to make sure that children get enough meal time, as well as give them the opportunity to enjoy food quietly without interruption, so that they can digest food properly (Sulaiman 2015).

**Avoid Unnutritious Foods** In addition to choosing healthy foods, parents also need to avoid giving foods that can be detrimental to children's health, such as fast food, foods high in sugar and salt, and foods that contain excessive preservatives. Foods such as candy, chips, or sugary drinks are not only less nutritious, but they can also increase the risk of obesity, metabolic disorders, and various other diseases that can hinder children's growth and development.

**Counseling and Education for Parents** Parents not only play a role in choosing and compiling food menus, but also in providing children with an understanding of the importance of eating healthy and nutritious food (Farida 2017). Good education about healthy food, such as inviting children to choose nutritious foods with their parents, can help children build healthy eating habits from an early age. In addition, parents can teach children about the

benefits of certain foods for their health, which can encourage them to be more aware of what they are eating.

Thus, the role of parents in choosing and compiling daily food menus for children in Ceria Blora kindergarten is very crucial in reducing the risk of stunting. By providing nutritious food, paying attention to appropriate portions, and avoiding unhealthy foods, parents can help ensure that children are getting the nutritional intake necessary for optimal growth and development. Education about healthy diets, as well as consistency in providing nutritious food, is very important so that children grow up healthy, strong, and avoid stunting that can affect their future.

### **3. Factors Affecting Family Diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten**

The family diet at Ceria Blora kindergarten plays a very important role in supporting children's health and development in stunting prevention. A good diet is not only related to the type of food given, but is also influenced by various factors that exist in family life and the surrounding environment. Therefore, it is important for parents to understand the factors that can affect their children's diet, including both internal and external ones.

The internal factors that affect the diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten:

- a. Parents' knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition greatly affects the diet of families, including children. Parents who have a good understanding of nutrition tend to pay more attention to their children's nutritional intake. They choose foods that contain carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals that suit the child's needs to support optimal growth and development. On the other hand, parents who are less knowledgeable about nutrition may pay less attention to the balance of food that their children consume. Parents' knowledge of nutrition also influences their decisions in choosing food ingredients and providing appropriate menus for their children (Andini 2018).
- b. Eating habits in the family also affect the child's diet. If families have the habit of eating together and providing healthy meals regularly, children are more likely to adopt those habits. Parents who set an example of a healthy diet and encourage children to eat nutritious foods will form a good diet for their children. On the other hand, if parents often eat fast food or do not maintain a healthy diet, children are more likely to imitate these habits (Murni 2019).
- c. Children's health conditions can also affect the family's diet. Children who have food allergies or certain health conditions, such as indigestion or metabolic problems, may need a special diet that is different from other children (Hidayat 2017). In cases like this, parents need to adjust their food choices to meet the nutritional needs of the child. If the child has difficulty eating or has a low appetite, this can also affect the food choices at home.

Internal factors that affect the diet at Ceria Blora Kindergarten include:

- a) Influences The social environment in which the family lives, including peers, extended family, and the community, can affect the family's diet in kindergarten (Suryani 2019). For example, if children interact a lot with friends who are used to eating fast food or sugary drinks, they can be influenced to adopt the same diet. In addition, the views of

the community or local cultural norms can also affect eating habits in the family, such as the tendency to serve certain foods at family events or celebrations.

- b) Family economic factors play an important role in determining the type and quality of food that can be provided at home. Families with lower incomes may find it more difficult to afford healthy groceries such as quality fruits, vegetables, and animal protein. Alternatively, they may rely on processed foods or more affordable fast food, even if they are less nutritious. In some cases, economic factors can also affect a family's ability to access education about healthy eating (Mardiani 2022).
- c) Food ads in the media, especially those aimed at children, can affect their diet (Kurniawan 2020). Ads promoting fast food, sugary drinks, and unhealthy snacks often attract the attention of children, who then ask parents to buy those products. These excessive food advertisements, coupled with the influence of social media that often promote a consumptive lifestyle, can affect food choices in families, especially when parents find it difficult to respond to their children's requests.

Thus, it can be concluded that the family diet in Ceria Blora kindergarten in stunting prevention, namely internal factors include parents' knowledge about nutrition, eating habits in the family, and the health condition of the child itself. Good parents' knowledge of the importance of balanced nutrition can encourage them to provide nutritious food that suits the needs of their children. On the other hand, external factors such as the influence of the social environment, family economic factors, and even the influence of the media can influence the family's decision to choose and serve food at home.

## CONCLUSION

The healthy and regular eating patterns implemented by parents at Ceria Blora Kindergarten are a crucial factor in supporting early childhood nutrition, which has a direct effect on children's physical, mental and social growth. By choosing a balanced menu, regular eating schedule, and limiting unhealthy snacks, parents can ensure that their children get enough nutrition to support optimal growth and development. Availability of water and healthy eating habits from an early age also contribute to establishing a sustainable healthy lifestyle. Open communication about the importance of nutrition helps children understand the benefits of healthy food, build a balanced diet, and create a healthy lifestyle. In addition, internal influences such as parental knowledge and family eating habits, as well as external influences such as the social environment, economic conditions and advertising, also influence family eating patterns. Parents' awareness of the importance of nutrition in preventing stunting, as well as the skills to prepare a balanced nutritional menu that includes protein, carbohydrates, healthy fats, vegetables and fruit, are the main keys. By paying attention to the variety, frequency and correct portion sizes, the risk of stunting in children can be significantly minimized.

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