Psychoeducation on Maternal Mental Health Literacy: A Stunting Prevention Strategy in Madura

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ABSTRACT

The Problem of Stunting is currently still the focus and attention of the Indonesian government. Stunting is a problem of chronic malnutrition in growth disorder of children, namely the child height is lower or shorter than the age standard. Bangkalan Regency is one of 38 regencies in East Java province which first ranks with a high prevalence of stunting at 38.9%. Participants in this research were Family Assistance Teams, called TPK, which accompanies families with stunting. This research aims to determine the effectiveness of interventions to increase maternal mental health literacy among the TPK member to prevent stunting cases. Collecting data uses Mental Health Literacy Questionnaire. The research method uses quasi experimental by psychoeducational treatment to the subject group. This Research hypothesis was tested using the paired sample t-test. The results show that psycoeducation has proven effective to increasing maternal mental health literacy among TPK members. The Significance value (2-tailed) is 0.028, which means therea is difference in the level of maternal mental health literacy before and after treatment. This research provides information regarding the importance of psychoeducation about mental health literacy to prevent stunting.

Keywords: *Maternal Mental Health Literacy, Family Assistance Team, Stunting.*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of stunting remains a focus and concern for the Indonesian government. The persistently high stunting rate is the responsibility of various elements of society and government sectors, both central and regional. Various efforts have been part of the government's strategic plan to address stunting among toddlers in Indonesia. This represents a concrete step taken to ensure the nation's next generation grows and develops healthily, both physically and

mentally. Stunting is also a concern for all healthcare providers, ensuring optimal growth and development for toddlers, especially during the First 1,000 Days of Life (HPK). The Ministry of Health (2018) states that stunting is a chronic malnutrition problem that results in growth disorders in children, characterized by a child's height being lower than the standard for their age. According to the WHO, as cited by Noviana and Ekawati (2019), stunting is defined as height-for-age (H/A) with a Z-Score Standard Deviation (SD) of less than -2.

The incidence of stunting globally remains relatively high. Globally, UNICEF (2019) recorded that stunting occurred in 144 million children, or 21.3%. The highest prevalence of stunting in the world in 2019 was in East Africa at 34.5%, South Asia at 31.7%, and Central Africa at 31.5%. WHO (2019) itself reported data on the prevalence of stunting in toddlers in Indonesia, including among the 3 countries with the highest prevalence in the Southeast Asia region. The results of the 2021 Indonesian Nutrition Status Study (SSGI) Regency/City stated that East Java Province ranked 14th out of 34 provinces for the percentage of stunted toddlers, at 23.5%. Bangkalan Regency is one of 38 regencies/municipalities in East Java Province that ranks first with a high stunting incidence of 38.9%. Furthermore, according to records from the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) (5), in 2022, 23.5% of toddlers in East Java Province experienced stunting. Of that number, the highest stunting rate was in Bangkalan Regency, reaching 38.9%. This was followed by Pamekasan Regency at 38.7%, Lumajang at 30.1%, and Sumenep Regency at 29%.

Several literatures summarized from the opinions of Black (2018), Mediani (2020), Stewart et al. (2013), and WHO (2014) indicate that factors causing stunting in toddlers include (1) maternal and antenatal care factors, (2) home environment factors, (3) breastfeeding practices, and (4) toddler feeding practices. According to Mediani (2020) and Stewart et al. (2013), maternal factors are factors present in the mother before and during pregnancy that can have a transgenerational, or direct, influence on the growth and development of her offspring during the first 1000 days of life (HPK). While numerous studies have been conducted on the causes and impacts of stunting, studies on preventive interventions for maternal factors remain scarce. In this regard, the role of integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, as the closest providers of support for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, needs to be strengthened. Preventing stunting requires those closest to the community to understand the various factors that can cause stunting, including the mother's mental state, as part of the maternal factor. By understanding the mother's mental state, it is hoped that conditions that are vulnerable to impacting child growth and development can be addressed promptly.

In Indonesia, Family Support Teams (TPK) have been established, which play a crucial role in addressing stunting cases. TPK is a group of people consisting of midwives, TP PKK cadres and village KB cadres who carry out assistance through a series of activities including counseling, facilitating referral services and facilitating social assistance as well as surveillance/supervision/observation aimed at increasing access to information and services for families and/or families at risk of stunting with priority targets of prospective brides/prospective couples of childbearing age, pregnant women, postpartum mothers and toddlers aged 0-59 months.

The existence of TPK provides access for mothers and toddlers to basic health services and counseling on maternal and toddler health. Therefore, in addition to the availability of health workers (such as village midwives), TPK personnel are also needed who have adequate knowledge of maternal and child health. This health knowledge is not limited to physical health, but equally important is mental health, which can affect child care and development. In line with the importance of mental health insights for TPK, mental health programs will be an effort to reduce stunting that targets mothers. In this regard, a program is needed to maintain the mental stability of mothers and mothers-to-be from a young age so that it does not interfere with providing parenting, affection, or nutrition during the First 1,000 Days of Life (HPK). Meanwhile, studies have found that 86% of pregnant women are at risk of experiencing postpartum stress, and 4 out of 10 mothers with baby blues experience prolonged depression. Based on these conditions, the Mental Health Center (TPK), as the frontline and closest provider of health services to prospective fertile couples, pregnant women, postpartum mothers, and toddlers, can become a health facility that implements an educational intervention model and mental health disorder detection.

Mental health is a crucial part of human life, enabling individuals to function both individually and socially. Mental health refers to a person's ability to lead a balanced life, thrive, and contribute to their family and society. Based on the 2018 Basic Mental Health Research (Riskesdas), the number of people with mental disorders in Indonesia has increased. This is in line with the increasing prevalence of households with People with Mental Disorders (ODGJ), with 17.08% of those neglected or untreated due to the still-high stigma associated with ODGJ in society. Among the various factors influencing mental health in the community, one is the persistently low level of mental health literacy.

According to Kutcher, Wei, & Coniglio (2018), mental health literacy is the knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders that facilitate recognition, management, and prevention. Awareness of the importance of mental health will impact general knowledge, including:

1. Knowledge of how to prevent mental disorders
2. Knowledge of underlying mental health conditions
3. Knowledge of available help-seeking and treatment options
4. Knowledge of effective self-help strategies for less severe problems, and
5. First aid skills to support others experiencing mental disorders or mental health crises.

If the public continues to be trained and their knowledge is improved, mental health issues will be more easily recognized, thereby improving their skills in accessing professional help. Furthermore, they will also be more responsive to mental health issues experienced by themselves and others, as well as their impacts. This way, treatment efforts can be implemented more quickly and the psychological well-being of the community can be achieved.

The role of the Mental Health Care Provider (TPK) in mental health literacy can be strengthened through a series of psychoeducational activities. Psychoeducation is a form of psychological intervention provided to a group of individuals with the aim of providing new knowledge and skills that impact the individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. Psychoeducational interventions are more appropriate for this study because they aim to improve mental health as a preventative measure against stunting in toddlers due to maternal mental health issues. According to Hartini et al. (2018), individuals with high mental health literacy tend to have more positive attitudes toward individuals with psychological disorders. According to Christner & Mennuti (2009), psychoeducational interventions are also part of the promotion and prevention of mental health issues. Through this mental health literacy psychoeducation, it is hoped that individuals will become aware of the importance of mental health, increase their willingness to seek help, reduce stigma against individuals experiencing psychological disorders, and provide knowledge on how to respond appropriately to individuals experiencing psychological disorders.

Based on the above phenomena, it illustrates that an understanding of maternal mental health is crucial for the TPK, as the closest provider of health services in the community. This strategy is considered effective in equipping the TPK (National Mental Health Research Team) to identify maternal mental health conditions and risk factors that can impact child development, one of which is stunting. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of interventions to improve maternal mental health literacy through psychoeducation.

METHOD

The research method used a quasi-experimental approach with psychoeducational treatment for the participant group. The research hypothesis was tested using a paired sample t-test. The effectiveness of the treatment was determined through a pre- and post-test using a Mental Health Literacy questionnaire. The research process began with the determination of the participant group. The participant population was the Mental Health Literacy Centers (TPK) in Madura, with Bangkalan Regency as the sample, which has the highest stunting rate. The researchers collected data on the number of TPK in Bangkalan Regency and then determined the TPK participant group in Socah District, considering that this location is currently the focus of stunting management in Bangkalan Regency in 2023. The sample group for this study was 26 individuals, consisting of midwives, paramedics, Family Welfare Movement (PKK) cadres, Family Planning (KB) cadres, and Integrated Health Service Post (Posyandu) cadres spread across several villages.

The instruments used in this study were a Mental Health Literacy questionnaire and a Psychoeducation Module. The questionnaire was developed based on Jorm's (2000) Mental Health Literacy theory. Psychoeducation was chosen as a form of intervention (treatment) provided to improve understanding or skills as an effort to prevent or spread psychological disorders in a group, community, and society. After participants completed a questionnaire in the pre-test stage, the researcher then provided a psychoeducational intervention. The psychoeducational intervention methods provided included counseling (lectures), questions and answers, case studies, and discussions. The material in this psychoeducational intervention related to the definition of mental health, the benefits of mental health for mothers, types of mental health disorders in mothers, and efforts to maintain and preserve maternal mental health. After completing the psychoeducation, participants were given a post-test to determine the effects of the psychoeducational intervention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained in this study were in the form of scores on the mental health literacy measurement instrument in TPK which were compared between the pre-test and post-test stages.

Table 1. Difference in Pre-Test and Post-Test Means

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	131.23	26	15.688	3.077
	Posttest	137.85	26	14.321	2.809

Based on the table above, the pretest and posttest scores for the two samples studied show that the pretest and posttest scores showed a mean mental health literacy score of 131.23, while the posttest scores showed a mean mental health literacy score of 137.85. Descriptively, there was a significant increase in mental health literacy among participants before and after psychoeducation. Meanwhile, the results of the hypothesis testing were conducted using a paired sample t-test, with the following results:

Table 2. Paired Samples Hypothesis Test Results

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-6.615	14.097	2.765	-12.309	-.921	-2.393	25	.025

Based on the table above, the sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.025 < 0.05, indicating a difference in mental health literacy before and after participating in psychoeducation activities.

Furthermore, the researchers also conducted a descriptive analysis of the entire participant group based on their professions (healthcare workers) and non-healthcare workers, both in the pre- and post-test stages. In terms of pre-test scores, respondents in the health care profession category had a mean pre-test score of 138.78, while those in the non-health care profession category had a mean pre-test score of 127.24. Meanwhile, in terms of post-test scores, respondents in the health care profession category had a mean post-test score of 146.44, while those in the non-health care profession category had a mean post-test score of 133.29. Based on these data, it can be concluded that respondents in the healthcare profession had higher mean scores than respondents in non-healthcare professions on both the pre- and post-test scores.

The incidence of stunting is influenced by various factors, one of which is maternal factors. Maternal factors are factors present in the mother before and during pregnancy that can have a direct transgenerational influence on the growth and development of her offspring during the first 1,000 days of life (Mediani, 2020; Stewart et al., 2023, as cited by Mediani, 2023). Understanding maternal factors is crucial for all parties responsible for maternal and child health, including medical personnel and cadres/volunteers who provide support. Several studies have shown that stunting can be influenced by the mother's mental health status. Research by Girma et al. (in Mediani, 2003) found

that 53.7% of mothers with mental health problems were more likely to have stunted children. Mothers with mental health problems are three times more likely to have stunted children than mothers without mental health problems.

It is important to maintain and improve a mother's mental health so that they can care for and nurture their babies healthily. Maternal mental health is also a concern for many parties, including support groups, in this case the Family Support Team, which includes professional health workers and community health workers. It is crucial for this team to understand maternal mental health so they can take appropriate treatment steps. Research conducted by Afifah, Anganthi, and Asyanti (2016), involving a group of health workers, revealed that they have a low ability to recognize symptoms of mental disorders. This low level of mental health literacy among health workers can impact the diagnosis process, patient care, and treatment, as well as the family's understanding of the condition and how to treat the patient. Furthermore, the limited number of health workers in the region also presents a challenge, requiring stakeholders such as community health workers and volunteers to gain a common understanding.

Psychoeducation was chosen as the intervention method used in this study because this method is part of the promotion and prevention of mental health problems (Christner & Mennuti, 2009). The results of this study align with previous research conducted by Dwiyani & Widuri (2020) which used psychoeducation as an intervention to improve mental health literacy among teachers and students at SMPN "A" Yogyakarta. The results showed a significant difference between the pretest and posttest groups regarding knowledge about mental health and mental health stigma before and after psychoeducation. The effectiveness of this psychoeducation was previously demonstrated in a study by Amelia (2017) which examined psychoeducation to improve understanding of childcare among mothers who were members of a community health post (Posyandu).

CONCLUSION

The psychoeducation program has been effective in improving mental health literacy among Family Support Teams (TPK). It is hoped that the results of this intervention will also directly benefit efforts to address stunting cases in Indonesia, particularly in Madura. Equipped with an understanding of mental health literacy, the TPKs are expected to develop positive attitudes and actions to support families, particularly mothers, regarding their mental health.

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