

## THE ROLE OF INTEGRATED HEALTH POSTS (POSYANDU) IN MONITORING THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

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### Abstract

*Posyandu (Integrated Health Service Post) plays a strategic role in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood as part of efforts to prevent stunting and other nutritional issues. This study aims to describe the role of Posyandu in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were obtained through literature studies, interviews with Posyandu cadres, and field observations. The results of the study show that Posyandu serves as a community-based health service center that provides regular monitoring of weight, height, and head circumference for early childhood. In addition, Posyandu educates parents about healthy eating habits, the importance of immunizations, and disease prevention. The role of Posyandu cadres is significant in ensuring the effectiveness of services through direct communication with the community, nutritional data collection, and reporting to the public health center. However, the study also highlights several challenges, inadequate facilities, and suboptimal community participation. Therefore, increased public awareness are needed to optimize the role of Posyandu. In conclusion, Posyandu contributes significantly to monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood, but continuous support from various parties is essential to improve the quality of its services.*

**Keywords:** Posyandu, Nutritional Status, Early Childhood, Nutrition Monitoring.

### Abstrak

Posyandu (Pos Pelayanan Terpadu) memiliki peran strategis dalam pemantauan status gizi anak usia dini sebagai upaya pencegahan stunting dan masalah gizi lainnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan peran Posyandu dalam memantau status gizi anak usia dini melalui pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif. Data diperoleh dari studi literatur, wawancara dengan kader Posyandu, serta observasi lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Posyandu berfungsi sebagai pusat layanan kesehatan masyarakat berbasis komunitas yang menyediakan layanan pemantauan berat badan, tinggi badan, dan lingkar kepala anak usia dini secara rutin. Selain itu, Posyandu juga memberikan edukasi kepada orang tua mengenai pola makan sehat, pentingnya imunisasi, dan pencegahan penyakit. Peran kader Posyandu sangat signifikan dalam memastikan layanan berjalan efektif melalui komunikasi langsung dengan masyarakat, pengumpulan data gizi, dan pelaporan kepada pihak puskesmas. Namun, penelitian ini juga menemukan beberapa tantangan, seperti fasilitas yang terbatas, dan partisipasi masyarakat yang belum optimal. Oleh karena itu, peningkatan kesadaran masyarakat diperlukan untuk memaksimalkan peran Posyandu. Kesimpulannya, Posyandu memiliki kontribusi besar dalam pemantauan status gizi anak usia dini, tetapi perlu dukungan berkelanjutan dari berbagai pihak untuk meningkatkan kualitas layanan yang diberikan.

**Kata kunci:** Posyandu, Status Gizi, Anak Usia Dini, Pemantauan Gizi.

## INTRODUCTION

Posyandu (Integrated Service Post) is a health program that serves as an extension of community health centers (Puskesmas) and provides integrated health services and monitoring, which is crucial in Indonesia, particularly in efforts to improve community welfare at the grassroots level. This program focuses on health services for mothers and children, especially during early childhood, which is a crucial period in child development. One of the main aspects of Posyandu activities is monitoring children's nutritional status, which plays a vital role in ensuring children grow healthily and optimally. In Indonesia, the problems of malnutrition and stunting remain major challenges that require serious attention, and Posyandu is present to provide solutions by conducting routine checks on the nutritional status of early childhood (Wahyuningsih, 2023).

Monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood children at the Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) is carried out through a series of activities, including weighing, measuring height, and providing supplementary food to children in need. The data obtained from these activities is crucial for early detection of nutritional problems, such as undernutrition, overnutrition, and other growth and developmental disorders. With routine and consistent monitoring, Posyandu can provide rapid and appropriate interventions to prevent worse conditions, such as stunting or obesity, which can impact a child's quality of life in the future (Vidiasari, 2023).

The importance of the Integrated Health Post (Posyandu) in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood extends beyond physical examinations to educating parents, especially mothers, about healthy eating patterns, hygiene, and the importance of immunization. Mothers' active involvement in Posyandu significantly contributes to their children's health. Posyandu often collaborates with medical personnel, such as midwives, pediatricians, and nutritionists, who provide information and recommendations on appropriate nutritional intake according to the child's age and needs (Saepudin, 2017).

However, despite Posyandu's strategic role, challenges remain in its implementation, such as limited resources, lack of public knowledge, and limited accessibility in some areas (Iswarawanti, 2020). Therefore, efforts to optimize Posyandu's role in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood require greater attention from the government, health workers, and the community itself. This article aims to analyze the role of Posyandu in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood, identify existing obstacles, and provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Posyandu services in supporting early childhood health.

## METHOD

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to provide an in-depth description of the role of Posyandu (Integrated Service Post) in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood. This research prioritizes a contextual understanding of the phenomena occurring in the field through narrative and descriptive data collection. Using a qualitative approach, this study will explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of various parties involved in Posyandu activities, such as Posyandu cadres, medical personnel, and parents of Posyandu participants. Researchers will analyze the data inductively to obtain a clear picture of how Posyandu plays a role in monitoring

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the nutritional status of early childhood and the obstacles encountered in its implementation (Abdussamad, 2021).

The data in this study were obtained through several information collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and a literature review. Observations were conducted by directly observing the implementation of Posyandu activities in the field, such as weighing and height measurements, and interactions between Posyandu cadres and parents. Interviews were conducted with Posyandu cadres, health workers, and parents to obtain more in-depth information regarding their understanding and experiences of the importance of monitoring nutritional status at Posyandu. Furthermore, a literature review was used to analyze previous theories and research regarding the role of Posyandu in child health, as well as government policies related to public health programs. By combining these three methods, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of Posyandu's effectiveness in improving the nutritional status of early childhood (Sondakh, 2022).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Posyandu (Integrated Service Post) is a form of community-based health service effort managed independently by the community with the support of health workers, such as midwives or community health center staff. Posyandu aims to provide basic health services, especially for pregnant women, infants, toddlers, and the elderly, with a focus on monitoring child growth and development and disease prevention (Paunno, 2022).

Posyandu functions as a center for activities that provides integrated health services, including monitoring child nutritional status, immunizations, health education, vitamin A administration, and prevention of infectious diseases. Through Posyandu, communities can more easily access routine health services at the village or sub-district level without having to travel to more distant health facilities. Posyandu also serves as part of community empowerment to independently improve their quality of life and health (Iswarawanti, 2020).

Based on observations conducted by the Integrated Health Post (Posyandu), the majority of early childhood children participating in the monitoring program had nutritional status consistent with the growth standards established by the WHO. Through regular weight and height measurements, the majority of children were found to be within the normal range, although a small number were identified as being at risk for malnutrition or stunting. These at-risk children typically come from families with limited economic resources or a lack of understanding of the importance of a balanced diet. Vitamin A supplementation and education programs on healthy eating patterns are also considered effective in improving children's health status, thus contributing to the prevention of the risk of malnutrition (Emmaria, 2024).

This statement is supported by the Determinants of Health theory, which states that socioeconomic factors, such as family economic status and parental education level, significantly influence children's health and nutrition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), families with limited economic resources often have limited access to nutritious food and lack knowledge about the importance of a balanced diet. This can put children in these families at greater risk of nutritional problems, such as malnutrition or stunting (Muazaroh, 2019).

Furthermore, the Health Belief Model theory also supports the importance of counseling and providing information about healthy eating patterns. This model suggests that an individual's knowledge and understanding of health issues, such as malnutrition, can influence their behavior in adopting preventative measures. Vitamin A supplementation programs and education about healthy eating patterns can increase parental awareness, making them better able to provide nutritious food for their children. Thus, health education has been proven effective in increasing knowledge and behaviors that support malnutrition prevention (Vidiasari, 2023).

Interviews with Posyandu (Integrated Service Post) cadres indicate that early childhood nutritional status monitoring activities are carried out routinely, with various services focused on measuring weight and height, and administering vitamin A. Cadres reported that parental attendance, especially mothers, is quite high during scheduled immunizations and weighing sessions. One cadre stated, "Many mothers are starting to understand the importance of monitoring their children's growth, especially after we provided counseling about the risks of stunting and malnutrition." Furthermore, cadres added that support from the Community Health Center (Puskesmas), such as training to increase cadre capacity, is very helpful in improving the quality of Posyandu services.

This statement is supported by Ratnasari's Capacity Building theory, which states that increasing the capacity of health workers, including Posyandu (Integrated Health Post) cadres, can improve the quality of services provided to the community. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), training and empowerment of health cadres is crucial to ensure they have adequate skills and knowledge to provide effective health services. This training covers various aspects, from child health monitoring and nutrition counseling to technical skills such as accurate weight and height measurements (Ratnasari, 2020).

Furthermore, the Community Health Worker (CHW) Model theory also supports the importance of mentoring from Community Health Centers (Puskesmas) in developing the capacity of Posyandu cadres. This model states that well-trained health cadres can act as a bridge between the community and formal health services, increasing access to health services, and enhancing community trust in health programs. With adequate training, Posyandu cadres become more competent in providing services, ultimately contributing to improved service quality at Posyandu and better health outcomes for children and families in the community (Ahmed, 2022).

Interviews with several parents yielded mixed responses. Most mothers felt the presence of Posyandu (Integrated Service Posts), particularly in obtaining information about healthy eating patterns for their children, were helpful. One mother stated, "I now know what foods are important for children's growth, especially good complementary feeding." However, some parents also complained about long waiting times and a lack of facilities, such as measuring instruments that were not always available or broken. Some parents even suggested that Posyandu activities be held more frequently so they could more easily access services without having to wait for the monthly schedule.

This statement is supported by the Access to Health Services theory, which states that easy access and short waiting times are crucial for increasing community participation in health services. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), long waiting times and limited facilities can reduce parents' motivation to attend Posyandu activities, which ultimately impacts the quality of child health monitoring. If facilities, such as measuring

instruments, are damaged or unavailable, this can hinder effective monitoring, which should help detect nutritional or health problems early (Idris, 2018).

Furthermore, the Continuum of Care theory supports the importance of providing more frequent and affordable health services. This theory emphasizes that regular and accessible health services will make it easier for individuals, especially families with young children, to receive necessary care and prevention without barriers (Ameia, 2024). Therefore, if Posyandu activities are conducted more frequently and facilities are more adequate, parents will feel more supported, and more children can benefit from regular nutritional monitoring. Reducing waiting times and improving the quality of facilities can play a role in improving the effectiveness of Posyandu services, improving public health, and reducing stunting and malnutrition rates among children.

Despite the many benefits, observations also noted several obstacles in implementing Posyandu services. Some Posyandus face challenges such as a lack of active cadres, inadequate measuring instruments, and low parental participation in monitoring activities. Most parents who do not attend give reasons such as being busy or a lack of information regarding the activity schedule. These constraints indicate the need for increased outreach, additional facilities, and community empowerment to ensure that all early childhood children can receive the full benefits of nutrition monitoring services at Posyandu.

To address low parental participation, it is crucial to improve outreach and communication regarding Posyandu activity schedules. The use of social media or technology-based applications can be effective tools to inform the community about the schedule and benefits of activities. Furthermore, community empowerment through regular outreach and direct involvement in Posyandu management can also increase parental awareness and participation. With these steps, it is hoped that all young children can receive the full benefits of nutrition monitoring services at Posyandu, ensuring their nutritional status is properly monitored and their growth and development are optimally maintained.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the above, it can be concluded that integrated health posts (Posyandu) play a crucial role in monitoring the nutritional status of early childhood by providing affordable, community-based health services. Through monitoring weight and height, and administering vitamin A, Posyandu has successfully helped improve children's nutritional status, prevent malnutrition, and detect other health problems early. Furthermore, education on healthy eating patterns and the importance of balanced nutrition has also had a positive impact, especially for parents who want to ensure optimal growth and development of their children. However, to achieve optimal results, the capacity of Posyandu cadres and improvements to the facilities supporting these services are needed.

While the benefits have been significant, several obstacles, such as a lack of active cadres, damaged measuring instruments, and low parental participation in monitoring activities, still need to be addressed. More effective education and outreach regarding activity schedules and the importance of parental attendance, can increase participation and access to services. Improving facilities, increasing the number of trained cadres, and enhancing communication with the community will further strengthen Posyandu's effectiveness in improving the nutritional status of early childhood and overall community health. Thus,

Posyandu is expected to function more optimally in supporting community health development at the primary level.

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