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Relationship between Early Marriage and Maternal Nutrition Knowledge on Toddler Nutritional Status in Beleke Village West Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract

Early marriage still needs to be a concern due to the high incidence of cases and the impact it has on the health and nutritional status of toddlers. One of the long-term effects of early marriage is stunting, namely impaired growth and development in toddlers due to malnutrition. This study aims to explore the relationship between maternal age at marriage and nutrition knowledge levels with the nutritional status of toddlers. This research uses observational research with a cross-sectional design. The sample in this study was 48 mothers of toddlers with a history of early marriage. Data analysis used Spearman's Rank test. The results showed that most of the mothers of toddlers married in their early adolescence (14 to 18 years), namely 29 people (60.4%). As many as 58.3% of toddlers have poor nutritional status, and 1.7% are in the good nutritional status category. The majority of mothers' knowledge related to nutrition is lacking, as many as 24 (50%). There is a significant relationship between levels of a mother's knowledge about nutrition and the nutritional status of toddlers with a *p*-value of 0.001. However, mothers who marry early need to increase their understanding of balanced nutrition in toddlers to prevent malnutrition. Future research needs to look at the nutritional status of toddlers based on the education level of mothers of toddlers who marry early, which may be one of the causes of malnutrition status in toddlers.

Keywords: malnutrition in toddles undernutrition; maternal nutrition knowledge; toddler nutritional status

INTRODUCTION

Nutritional problems are still a global issue in many countries, especially Indonesia. Indonesia has three burdens of nutritional problems known as the Triple Burden of Malnutrition, which refers to deficiencies, excesses, and imbalances in micronutrient intake. Nutritional problems vary in age groups (Andriani et al., 2023). One age group vulnerable to experiencing nutritional problems is the toddler age group. The problem with toddler nutrition is that balanced nutritional needs are not achieved due to mothers' lack of knowledge about nutrition, including the lack of variety in food consumption that children need during the growth period (Prasetyo et al., 2023).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is estimated that as many as 41 million children under the age of 5 are overweight or obese. In comparison, around 159 million children experience stunting and 50 million children experience wasting in 2020 (Global Nutrition Report, 2021). Stunting is a disruption in

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the growth and development of children due to chronic malnutrition and recurrent infections, characterized by their length or height being below standard. Wasting is a combination of the terms severe malnourished and malnutrition (wasted). Wasting or acute malnutrition occurs due to weight loss of the body quickly, also called failure in weight gain, thus experiencing malnutrition (WHO, 2015).

According to the Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) in 2021, 17% of toddlers experienced malnutrition as calculated according to body mass index (BMI), while 3.8% experienced problems with excess nutrition (Ministry of Health of Republic of Indonesia, 2022). West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is one of the provinces in Indonesia that was ranked 2nd highest in toddler nutrition problems in 2019. In 2019 and 2020, toddlers in NTB, apart from experiencing acute nutritional problems, also experienced chronic nutritional issues. However, in 2021 and 2022, toddlers in NTB were still categorized as experiencing acute nutritional matters in terms of public health, including 29.5%, with the most significant figure in West Lombok Regency at 26% (Health Office of NTB Province, 2022).

Various factors influence the high level of nutritional problems among toddlers. Directly related to infectious diseases and inadequate food consumption, both quality and quantity. Causative factors indirectly influencing nutritional problems are socioeconomic status, birth spacing that is too close, insufficient level of education and parenting patterns, and low parental knowledge (Sholikah et al., 2017). Several factors influence maternal knowledge regarding nutrition, namely age, education, employment, income, local cultural food intake, and low maternal knowledge due to early marriage (Suriani et al., 2021). The role of agricultural intervention programs from the government was also crucial, such as promoting homestead food production, nutrition education, and cooking demonstrations to enhance food availability, accessibility, and consumption at the household level (Durga-Ch et al., 2024).

The prevalence of early marriage in Indonesia is relatively high. Indonesia ranks 37th globally and the 2nd highest in ASEAN after Cambodia. The ranking has been up dramatically since 2016. Based on UNICEF, Indonesia is ranked 7th in child marriage worldwide. It means that the practice of child marriage in Indonesia happens, especially to women at the age of 18 years, and there is no discrimination related to the age of marriage (Judiasih et al., 2018). According to data from Statistics Indonesia in 2021, around 1,220,900 children in Indonesia experienced early marriage (Statistics Indonesia, 2021). NTB Province is included among the seven provinces with the highest rate of early marriage in Indonesia. According to data from the NTB Province Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control and Family Planning Service (DP3AP2KB), the rate of early marriage in West Lombok in 2020 was relatively high, namely 135 cases compared to other districts (DP3AP2KB, 2020).

The results of the study show that the earlier a mother marries, the higher the percentage of children born who experience stunting and malnutrition (Khusna and Nuryanto, 2017). These results are also in line with research by Mustajab and Indriani (2023) which shows that there is a significant relationship between child marriage and the incidence of stunting in toddlers. From the results of both research, it was found that mothers who marry at an early age are at risk of having children with stunting in the future. It is due to the mothers who marry under the age of 19 having poor parenting and a lack of knowledge, especially about nutrition for children, which can affect the child's nutritional status. Research shows a significant relationship between maternal parenting patterns and knowledge and the incidence of stunting in toddlers (Hidayat, 2023). Although previous studies have found a general relationship between early marriage and child malnutrition, research that focuses specifically on the context of Beleke Village in West Lombok Regency may still be limited. This study aims to fill this gap by providing local data that can inform community-specific interventions.

The problem of malnutrition among toddlers is still high in the Dasan Tapen Community Health Center Working Area, specifically in Beleke Village, West Lombok Regency, namely 154 toddlers. In comparison, for overnutrition, there are 17 toddlers. Based on these problems, this research aims to analyze the relationship between early marriage and the level of a mother's knowledge about nutrition with the nutritional status of toddlers in Beleke Village, West Lombok Regency.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research design

This type of research study is analytical observation with a cross-sectional research design. This research method was chosen because it followed the objectives of this research. This research aimed to analyze the correlation between early marriage and the mother's level of knowledge regarding nutrition and the nutritional status of toddlers.

Population and sampling

Data was collected in Beleke Village, West Lombok Regency, in June 2023. The sampling technique in this research was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen because not all sample criteria matched the criteria studied, so the author determined the sample criteria selected in this study. Inclusion criteria include mothers who are classified as early married (age at marriage; 14 to 18 years or < 19 years) who have children under 5, aged 6 to 59 months, who live in operational areas, while exclusion criteria exclude those who are not willing to complete the questionnaire or do not meet the specified age range. In this study, the sample size of 48 samples represented the population. Apart from that, the 48 samples selected followed the criteria required in this research. The informed consent contains information regarding the research implementation procedures, as well as information regarding the confidentiality of the respondent's data.

Measurements

The mother's marriage age variable is divided into early adolescence (14 to 16 years) and late adolescence (17 to 18 years). The age at which the mother married early was taken because that age is a teenager, namely early teens aged 14 to 16 years and late adolescents aged 17 to 18 years, and mothers who marry in this age range are classified as early married. A body weight measurement of toddlers using a digital scale and body height using micro toise which was correlated with the z-score table according to WHO standards, with a good category score if the z-score is -2SD to +1SD, and the poor category is < -2SD to < -3SD. The mother's level of nutritional knowledge was measured using a modified questionnaire (Matsuroh and Anggita, 2018). The questionnaire contains 20 questions. Correct questions get a score of 1. The assessment criteria are calculated using the formula: score/total value * 100%. The mother's level of nutrition knowledge is divided into three categories: the good category if the score is 76 to 100% (16 to 20 correct answers), the sufficient category if the score is 56 to 75% (12 to 15 correct answers), and the poor category if the score is < 56% (< 11 correct answers). The study received a research ethical feasibility statement with letter number 4/EC-03/FK-06/UNIZAR/V/2023.

Data analysis

Skilled researchers conducted statistical analysis using IBM SPSS version 21, a highly sophisticated software program frequently employed in scientific studies. The researchers meticulously utilized the Spearman's Rank test correlation analysis to determine the relationships between the variables under study. This method is widely recognized for its accuracy and ability to uncover meaningful patterns and trends within the data, with significance levels p-value < 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study gathered information from a total of 48 mother participants who had toddlers; 25 (52.1%) of the toddlers were boys and 23 (47.9%) were girls. Most respondents, precisely 31 (64.6%) of the mothers, had a middle-high school education as their highest degree of schooling. Most mothers' jobs, 43 (89.6%) worked as housewives. Most of the mothers' knowledge levels, 24 (50%), were in the poor category, and most of the nutritional status of 28 (58.3%) toddlers was in the poor nutritional status category.

The findings of this study showed that as many as 28 (58.3%) toddlers had poor nutritional status with mothers who married early (Table 1). Based on the rank Spearman test, the results of this research study obtained a p-value of 0.067 (> 0.05), which means there is no significant relationship between the age at which mothers marry early and the nutritional status of toddlers in Beleke Village, West Lombok Regency. Due to the mother's lack of education, mothers who marry early decide to get married by leaving school, so the ability to gain more knowledge is significantly less. In addition, mothers who marry early do not have enough ability to give more attention to their toddler children, including in eating parenting patterns,

which are related to the mother's ability to provide nutritionally balanced food intake. Most mothers who married early had their last education at the junior high school level, namely 31 (64.6%) and the previous education of mothers at the primary school level was 7 (14.6%). The findings of this research align with research conducted by Harahap and Zendarto (2024) and Nurbaena (2019), which stated that there is no relationship between a mother's age at marriage and the nutritional status of toddlers.

Tests of the relationship between variables in this study showed no relationship between the mother's age at marriage and the toddler's nutritional status based on BW/A (body weight for age) However, if you look at the trend, the earlier the age of marriage is, the higher the incidence of malnutrition in children. It can be seen in the 14 to 16-year age group, the percentage of malnourished children is 68.9%, higher than the 17 to 18-year age group, which is only 42.1%. The results of this research align with research by Khusna and Nuryanto (2017), which looked at the relationship between the mother's age at marriage and the nutritional status of toddlers, which can be seen from the tendency that the younger the mother is at marriage. The proportion of toddlers with poor nutritional status is increasing. Early marriage will result in pregnancies that also occur at an early age, which can affect the health of the mother and child. One of the effects that can occur is that mothers at an early age are at risk of giving birth to children with nutritional problems such as stunting (Susilawati and Yuliwati, 2023).

Based on research studies, the mother's age is not related to the nutritional status of toddlers. It is not the mother's age that is the determining factor in the nutritional status of toddlers, but rather the mother's seriousness in caring for, nurturing, and raising her child (Harahap and Zendarto, 2024). Attitudes and knowledge about adequate child nutrition will impact the feeding patterns given to children under five, influencing the nutritional status of children under five. Marriage at an early age has contributed to an increase in cases of stunting due to the unpreparedness of underage husband and wife regarding adequate nutritional intake during pregnancy, psychological maturity, and reproductive organs, as well as knowledge about proper parenting (Duana et al., 2022).

Although no significant relationship was found in this study between the mother's age at marriage and the nutritional status of toddlers, several things that need to be considered are the consequences for children born to mothers who marry early. One of the causes of iron deficiency anemia in adolescents is early marriage in adolescents. Early pregnancy can increase the need for iron, increasing the risk of iron deficiency (Dartilawati et al., 2021). The incidence of iron deficiency is often found in adolescents, especially young women (Budiarti et al., 2021). Premature birth and the birth of babies with low birth weight are also some of the consequences of early marriage, even in cases of maternal and infant death, and at the age of five, can cause stunting (Purwandari et al., 2021). The results showed that 6.4% of toddlers had low birth weight and 9.6% had short birth length (< 48 cm). The first age of pregnancy to the first two years of a child's birth is a critical period for a child's growth and development (Setiawan and Machmud, 2018), so it is necessary to pay attention to the readiness of a mother or prospective mother in seeking a healthy pregnancy.

The results of a cross-tabulation between the variable levels of nutritional knowledge of the mother's early marriage and the nutritional status of toddlers are shown in Table 2. The findings of this research study showed a *p*-value of 0.001 (< 0.05) was obtained, which means there

Table 1. Cross tabulation between mother's age at marriage and nutritional status of toddlers

Mothers age at marriage	Nutritional status of toddlers				Total		*p*-value
	Poor		Good				
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Early adolescence (14–16 years old)	20	68.9	9	3.1	29	100.0	0.067
Late adolescence (17–18 years old)	8	42.1	11	57.9	19	100.0	
Total	28	58.3	20	41.7	48	100.0	

Table 2. Cross tabulation between mother's level of knowledge and nutritional status of toddlers

Mothers level of knowledge regarding nutrition	Nutritional status of toddlers				Total		*p*-value
	Poor		Good				
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Good	0	0.0	6	100.0	6	100.0	0.001
Sufficient	7	38.9	11	61.1	18	100.0	
Lack	21	87.5	3	12.5	24	100.0	
Total	28	58.3	20	41.7	48	100.0	

is a significant relationship between the level of mother's knowledge regarding nutrition and the nutritional status of toddlers in Beleke Village, West Lombok Regency. The results of this research are supported by research conducted by Nurmaliza and Herlina (2019), Ayuningtyas et al. (2021), Conterius and Avelina (2022), which states that there is a significant relationship between the mother's level of knowledge and the nutritional status of toddlers (*p*-value < 0.05).

The study results showed that as many as 28 mothers had a poor level of knowledge about nutrition, and the majority of their toddlers, namely 21 (87.5%), experienced poor nutritional status. From these results, it is known that mothers who marry early with poor knowledge of nutrition can be a contributing factor to poor nutritional status in toddlers. Research shows that mothers who marry early with a poor level of nutritional knowledge can cause the risk of stunting in toddlers (Yusnia et al., 2022). Overall, food consumption for toddlers is the responsibility of a mother. The mother's level of nutrition knowledge is closely related to fulfilling the nutrients toddlers need (Conterius and Avelina, 2022). Malnutrition in children occurs due to poor family economic conditions and the mother's lack of knowledge about nutrition in her children. A mother with a high level of nutritional expertise will help determine good nutritional consumption for a mother's toddler (Hartono, 2018).

Knowledge tends to be obtained from how someone can receive and understand the information. Age influences a person's maturity in thinking (Zahra et al., 2023). It includes processing health information, especially knowledge about nutrition, which is a mother's principal capital in meeting the nutritional needs of her toddler. Mothers who marry early have poor nutritional expertise due to the mother's ability to absorb information related to nutrition. It can affect the nutritional status of toddlers. The knowledge about nutrition obtained by the mother is very beneficial for the mother's health and the baby she is carrying if the mother successfully applies it (Hanifah and Stefani, 2022).

The knowledge of mothers of toddlers about nutrition, especially nutrition for toddlers, needs to be improved because this can increase the ability of mothers of toddlers to provide good food intake for their toddlers. Mothers' lack of knowledge regarding toddler nutrition will impact nutritional fulfillment for toddlers because knowledge is an essential element in shaping a person's behavior, including nutritional fulfillment behavior (Simamora and Hutabarat, 2023). Previous research results show that if a mother has insufficient nutritional knowledge, the food intake given to her toddler will also be inappropriate and can affect the status of the toddler (Puspasari and Andriani, 2017). The nutritional status of children under five is directly influenced by the food intake they receive and the presence of infectious diseases (Istiono et al., 2009). Mothers, as the leading food provider for toddlers, must have good knowledge of nutritious and balanced food to support the growth and development of their toddlers (Jauhari and Ardian, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

There is no significant relationship between the mother's age at marriage and the nutritional status of toddlers, and there is a significant relationship between the mother's level of knowledge about nutrition and the nutritional status of toddlers. Seeing this tendency needs to be underlined as a focus for treatment or intervention. Suggestions for future research need to analyze the correlation between the educational levels of mothers who marry early and toddler's nutritional status. In nutritional education to young women as prospective brides and mothers who marry early, the risks of marrying early

and the importance of knowledge about toddler nutrition to maintain optimal nutritional status for toddlers are discussed. At the government level, regulations regarding marriage age limits are needed. The rules must be firm in setting the age limits for marriage to prevent mothers from marrying early by looking at the various risk factors that cause this.

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