



## Adolescent Girls Attitudes Toward My Plate as a Strategy to Prevent Stunting

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem caused by prolonged inadequate nutrient intake and recurrent infections, leading to impaired growth and development in children. Globally, stunting remains a major public health challenge, particularly in developing countries, including Indonesia. Stunting does not only affect physical growth but also impacts cognitive development, productivity, and future health risks. Adolescents, especially girls, are an important target group in stunting prevention because they are future mothers who will determine the nutritional status of the next generation. Adopting positive attitudes and behaviors regarding nutrition during adolescence is crucial to break the intergenerational cycle of stunting. The Indonesian Ministry of Health has introduced the My Plate guidelines as a practical approach to promote balanced nutrition, emphasizing the importance of appropriate food portions that consist of vegetables, fruits, protein, and carbohydrates. **Objective:** This study aimed to determine adolescent girls' attitudes toward the My Plate program as one of the strategies to prevent stunting. **Method:** This descriptive study involved 214 adolescent girls at SMPN 1 Ciamis, selected using accidental sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire on attitudes toward My Plate. The data were analyzed using univariate methods to obtain frequency distributions. **Result:** The findings showed that 112 respondents (52.3%) had negative attitudes, while 102 respondents (47.7%) demonstrated positive attitudes. Although the difference was slight, the results indicate that most adolescent girls still have a less supportive attitude toward the implementation of My Plate in daily life. **Conclusion:** Adolescent girls' attitudes toward My Plate remain predominantly negative, highlighting the need for strengthened nutrition education. Schools and health services are encouraged to collaborate in conducting routine counseling on balanced nutrition and the importance of My Plate to foster more positive attitudes and support stunting prevention efforts.

**Keywords:** adolescent girls, attitude, my plate, stunting prevention

## Introduction

Stunting is a nutritional issue that persists as a national concern. Stunting is a chronic condition of malnutrition that affects growth and development. In 2020, according to UNICEF data, globally, there were 149.2 million children suffering from stunting (De Onis and Branca 2016) (UNICEF 2021).

Some of the determining factors of stunting include low exclusive breastfeeding, low socioeconomic status, prematurity, short birth length, and low maternal education. Nationally, the prevalence of stunting has decreased in recent years, but it remains a fundamental problem (Nshimyiryo et al. 2019; De Onis and Branca 2016; Keino et al. 2014; Mamay 2023). The 2024 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI) reports a decline in the national prevalence of stunting to around 19.8%, marking progress compared to previous estimates but still far from ambitious public health targets (e.g., <14%). This decline reflects the accumulation of nutrition intervention programs, but it also confirms that nearly 1 in 5 children under five still suffer from chronic growth disorders that require multisectoral attention (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara RI 2024) (Badan Kebijakan Pembangunan Kesehatan 2025).

Prevention of stunting can be carried out during the adolescent stage of the life cycle, especially among adolescent girls, as preparation for future mothers from an early age. Adequate maternal nutrition can be provided starting from adolescence. This adolescent age is preparation for entering the preconception period. Nutritional status during the preconception period can affect pregnancy and infant welfare. One of the effects of adolescent girls being malnourished is stunting (Noviasty, R., Mega I., Fadillah R. 2020; Patimah 2021).

Adolescents, especially adolescent girls, have a great opportunity to prevent stunting. Efforts to address stunting, especially among adolescents, include nutrition education, improving healthy lifestyles, balanced nutrition, and communication tailored to their needs. Balanced nutrition practices among adolescents can be promoted through the “isi piringku” (fill my plate) movement. Isi piringku is a guideline designed to promote food consumption in accordance with balanced nutrition guidelines (Organization 2018; Kementerian Kesehatan 2022; Mubarak et al. 2022).

Optimizing nutrition education for adolescents will have a positive impact on their eating habits and behavior in the future. Attitude is a very important factor in bringing about change. Attitude is the foundation for behavioral change in adolescents (Organization 2018; Anjaswarni et al. 2022).

Attitude is one of the factors that influence behavior before and during the occurrence of behavior. A good attitude can influence the way one behaves. Attitude is a predisposing factor in doing or not doing certain behaviors. Attitude can be influenced by other people who are considered important, personal experiences, culture, mass media, various institutions such as religious and educational institutions, as well as emotional factors (Rizkiana 2022).

## Objective

The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of adolescent girls toward the contents of their plates as a means of preventing stunting.

## Method

This study is descriptive in nature, aiming to describe the attitudes of adolescent girls toward the contents of their plates as a means of preventing stunting. The population in this study consisted of 431 adolescent girls attending SMP Negeri 1 Ciamis.

The sampling technique used was accidental sampling, with the sample size calculated using the Slovin formula. The sample size obtained was 214 people. The measuring instrument used was a questionnaire to measure adolescent girls' attitudes towards the contents of my plate as a means of preventing stunting. Data analysis was performed using univariate analysis to obtain frequency distributions.

## Result

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Attitudes Among Female Adolescents at SMPN 1 Ciamis

Attitudes	f	%
Positive	102	47,7
Negative	112	52,3
Total	214	100

Based on the study's results, adolescent girls' attitudes toward the contents of their plates as a means of preventing stunting exhibited a negative trend. Of the total 214 respondents, 112 (52.3%) had negative attitudes, while 102 (47.7%) had positive attitudes. This slight difference illustrates that although nearly half of the respondents already have a positive view, the majority still do not fully support the optimal implementation of the "My Plate" program in their daily lives.

## Discussion

Attitude refers to a person's overall disposition, how they feel, think, or behave in relation to health, being healthy or sick, and factors affecting health. It encompasses emotional responses, beliefs, attention, and other psychological aspects.

This study reveals that, on average, young women still hold a negative attitude (52.3%) toward My Plate, compared to a positive one (47.7%). This slight difference indicates that respondents have relatively balanced views, but there is still a tendency towards negativity. This may be due to a lack of socialization and nutrition education related to MyPlate, both from schools and health care workers.

Based on the questionnaire analysis, the majority of respondents agreed with statements about the importance of preventing stunting, consuming a balanced diet, eating vegetables and fruit every day, and reducing fast food consumption. However, there were still misconceptions about some statements, such as the assumption that My Plate is not important for preventing stunting and that breakfast is not important for energy. The answers to these two statements indicate that some adolescents still lack understanding of the technical application of My Plate in their daily diet.

The results of this study are in line with the World Health Organization (2018), which emphasizes that adolescence is a crucial period for nutritional intervention, as nutritional attitudes and behaviors during this period will affect reproductive health and pregnancy in the future (Organization 2018b). Nutrition education has been proven effective in improving adolescents' attitudes toward stunting prevention (Sriwiyanti et al. 2022). Teenagers' attitudes toward nutrition are influenced by knowledge, personal experience, educational

environment, and emotional factors. This shows that if the information received by teenagers is limited, their attitudes tend to be less appropriate (Heryani, Lestari, and Suhanda 2023).

Positive attitudes among adolescents can be formed through the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the school environment. Thus, schools play an important role as a means of health education that can shape better nutritional attitudes (Brown KM 2018). Through the Isi Piringku program, the government emphasizes that a balanced meal consists of  $\frac{1}{2}$  vegetables and fruit,  $\frac{1}{4}$  protein, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  carbohydrates. This must be intensively promoted so that teenagers truly understand how to apply it in their daily lives (Kementerian Kesehatan 2022b).

Thus, although many respondents already showed positive attitudes, the proportion of negative attitudes was still slightly higher. This confirms the need for more intensive nutrition education, particularly regarding nutritional composition and the importance of breakfast, so that positive attitudes can dominate and have an impact on the actual behavior of adolescents.

The attitudes of these respondents were measured using a questionnaire containing 10 statements about stunting and the contents of their plates. The questions covered the importance of stunting prevention, factors that cause stunting, ways to prevent stunting, eating patterns, and the nutritional composition of the contents of my plate. There were several questions that received mostly negative responses regarding the importance of preventing stunting and the distribution of nutritional composition on every meal in my plate. According to the researcher's assumption, the respondents' attitudes towards stunting and my plate are still insufficient due to the lack of socialization about stunting prevention through my plate education conducted by health service centers and schools. Based on interviews with schools, counseling, or health education about stunting is still very rare, as is the content of my plate. From interviews with several respondents, they learned about stunting and the content of my plate partly from social media, but even then, they rarely took the initiative to find out for themselves.

Attitudes among adolescents, especially those related to adequate nutrition, can be developed from an early age in preparation for preconception. Education is very important for adolescents to increase positive perceptions and motivation in preventing stunting. Strengthening attitudes among adolescents is expected to improve behaviors related to health maintenance. One strategy for behavioral change is to provide information to improve attitudes so that awareness will emerge, and ultimately, behaviors will be in line with the attitudes acquired (Sriwiyanti et al. 2022).

Adolescence attitudes toward the contents of their plates greatly determine the success of stunting prevention. Adolescents with positive attitudes tend to have healthier nutritional behaviors, such as consuming a balanced diet and reducing unhealthy eating habits. Attitudes and behaviors are closely related to stunting prevention in adolescent girls (Shafira Azzahra, Sukmawati, and Witdiawati 2024)

My Plate is a daily food guide from the government. The Ministry of Health uses this campaign to promote balanced nutrition, emphasizing a variety of foods. The guide divides the plate into three sections: 50% fruits and vegetables, with the remaining half split between protein-rich foods (both animal and plant-based) and carbohydrates (Kementerian Kesehatan 2022b).

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, mental, emotional, and social growth and development. During this period, many issues can have a negative impact on adolescents' health and nutrition, resulting in malnutrition or obesity. One factor that affects nutrition in

adolescents is attitude. A positive attitude will support them in improving their health (Brown KM 2018).

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study show that the average attitude of adolescent girls towards My Plate as a means of preventing stunting tends to be negative. It is hoped that schools will collaborate with health workers to implement regular nutrition education programs, so that a detailed understanding of My Plate and breakfast habits can further strengthen positive attitudes among adolescents.

### **Conflict of Interest**

No declare.

### **Ethical Consideration**

This research has received ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Commission of the STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis number 011/KEPK-STIKESMUCIS/IX/2023.

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