ABSTRACT

The Effect of Citronella Aromatheraphy on Appetite among Stunted Toddlers at Gunung Rampah Health Center

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Background : Stunting constitutes a nutritional growth disorder associated with inadequate nutrient intake, frequently compounded by diminished appetite among toddlers. In 2022, the incidence of stunting within the working area of Gunung Rampah Health Center increased by 19.37%. Citronella aromatherapy has been proposed as a complementary approach to stimulate appetite through relaxation and neurochemical responses associated with serotonin and endorphin activity.

Objective :This study aimed to determine the effect of citronella aromatherapy on appetite among stunted toddlers in the working area of Gunung Rampah Health Center.

Research Methods/ Implementation Methods : A quasi-experimental study employing a one-group pretest-posttest design was conducted. The sample comprised 55 stunted toddlers selected through total sampling. Appetite was assessed using the Child Eating Behavior Questionnaire (CEBQ). Data were analyzed using the paired t-test to compare appetite scores before and after the intervention, with a significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Results : The mean appetite score prior to citronella aromatherapy was 23.72, which increased to 60.74 following the intervention. Statistical analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in appetite scores before and after citronella aromatherapy ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion/Lesson Learned : Citronella aromatherapy was associated with a significant increase in appetite among stunted toddlers in the working area of Gunung Rampah Health Center, West Kutai Regency. These findings suggest that citronella aromatherapy may be considered a complementary intervention to support appetite improvement among toddlers experiencing stunting. However, further research employing controlled designs is necessary to confirm its effectiveness, and future studies should additionally assess safety, adherence, and the mechanisms underlying appetite-related behavioral changes.

Keyword : Citronella Aromatherapy, Appetite, Stunting, Toddlers