

Empowering Communities through Culinary Innovation: Enhancing Nutritional Status in Toddlers with Tempe- Based Supplementary Foods

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Tempe-Based
Supplementary Food,
Toddler Nutrition,
Economic
Empowerment

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This study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of tempe-based culinary training programs in improving the nutritional status of toddlers and empowering the local economy in Jati Sumberlawang village, Indonesia. The main objective of this research is to identify how tempe, a locally available and nutritious food, can be optimized as a supplementary food (PMT) to address malnutrition among toddlers while also providing economic benefits to the community. A qualitative research method with a case study approach was employed, involving in-depth interviews, participant observations, and documentation analysis. Data were collected from 20 mothers who participated in the training and were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and outcomes. The results indicate a significant improvement in the mothers' knowledge and skills in processing tempe into various child-friendly dishes, which led to increased acceptance and consumption among toddlers. Additionally, some participants began commercializing tempe-based products, leading to increased household income. The implications of this study suggest that community-based culinary training can serve as an effective model for improving child nutrition and promoting local economic development. This research highlights the potential for replicating similar programs in other rural communities facing similar nutritional challenges.

Please cite this article in APA style as:

Hikmawati, H., & Sutami. (2024). Empowering Communities through Culinary Innovation: Enhancing Nutritional Status in Toddlers with Tempe-Based Supplementary Foods. *Communautaire: Journal of Community Service*, 3(1), 108-121. <https://doi.org/10.61987/communautaire.v3i1.468>

INTRODUCTION

The nutritional quality of toddlers is one of the important indicators in determining the health and development of children in the future (Jones et al., 2021; Ahmed & Khan, 2020; Tan et al., 2022; Chuanchen, 2023; Norman & Paramansyah, 2024). In Indonesia, the problem of malnutrition and stunting is still a serious issue that needs immediate handling, especially in areas with

limited access to nutritious food (Widodo et al., 2021; Rahman & Hardiansyah, 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Rusdi et al., 2022; Susilawati & Astuti, 2022). According to UNICEF data (2021), around 27.6% of children under five in Indonesia are stunted, which is mostly caused by a lack of adequate nutritional intake from an early age (UNICEF, 2021; Smith & Smith, 2021; Adeyemi et al., 2021; Wijaya & Khoir, 2022; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023).

This shows the urgency to explore effective interventions in improving the nutritional status of toddlers in local communities (Rodríguez-Martín & Novalbos-Ruiz, 2021; Montgomery et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2020; Ansori et al., 2023; Hamidah, 2023). One of the relevant approaches is to optimize the use of local food resources, such as tempeh, which are rich in protein and easily accessible to the community (Wang et al., 2021; Choi & Lee, 2022; Ghosh et al., 2020; Maulidah et al., 2023). This study, with a focus on training on tempeh processing as Supplementary Feeding (PMT) in Jati Sumberlawang Village, offers a new perspective in understanding how community-based interventions can contribute to improving nutrition of toddlers (Ahmed et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2021; Hasanah & Hefniy, 2023). The theory of community empowerment and the theory of food diversification are important cornerstones in this study, as they both offer relevant frameworks for evaluating the impact of programs designed to improve nutrition quality through active community participation (Martinez et al., 2021; Ahmed & Tan, 2020; Wang & Lee, 2022; Rusdi et al., 2022; Maulidah et al., 2023).

The main problem that this study focuses on is the low level of knowledge and skills of mothers in Jati Sumberlawang Village in processing tempeh into nutritious food that is attractive to toddlers. Although tempeh is known as an economical and nutrient-rich source of protein, its use as an additional food for toddlers is still minimal. This is exacerbated by the lack of information and education about the correct and varied way of processing tempeh. This problem not only has an impact on the low nutritional intake of toddlers, but also on the less optimal use of local food resources that are actually abundant. Therefore, this study seeks to identify the factors that cause the low utilization of tempeh as PMT and explore how tempeh processing training can be an effective solution in overcoming nutritional problems in the community.

A literature review shows that community-based interventions have great potential in improving children's nutritional quality. Research by Ahmed et al. (2020) shows that nutrition training programs involving mothers in rural areas can significantly improve child feeding knowledge and practices, which in turn reduces the prevalence of stunting. In addition, a study by Jones et al. (2021) found that diversifying local foods through training can increase nutritional intake and food acceptance by children, especially in areas with limited access to high-quality foodstuffs. The research of Tan et al. (2020) supports these findings by emphasizing the importance of education and training in empowering communities to create healthy foods that are in line with local nutritional needs.

However, these studies still lack to explore the use of local resources such as tempeh as a specific solution to nutrition problems in Indonesia, especially in the context of empowering women in rural communities. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on tempeh processing training as a strategy to improve nutrition for toddlers.

The gap identified in this study is the lack of focus on the use of tempeh as a local source of nutrition in nutrition intervention programs in rural communities in Indonesia. Although tempeh is a very common and accessible food, the full potential of tempeh as a PMT has not been explored in depth in the existing literature. Previous research has highlighted food diversification in general without paying special attention to tempeh, which has nutritional advantages and is very high in Indonesia. This research aims to fill this gap by developing a specific and community-based training model to increase the use of tempeh as PMT, which is expected to not only improve the nutrition of toddlers but also empower the family economy through the use of local resources.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific approach to the use of tempeh as the main source of nutrition in community empowerment programs. In contrast to previous studies that tend to discuss food diversification broadly, this study offers a focused and contextual approach to tempeh processing, with the aim of creating solutions that can be directly applied in rural communities in Indonesia. In addition, this study combines aspects of economic empowerment with nutrition education, which has not been explored much in previous studies. The training method developed in this study is not only designed to improve nutrition knowledge, but also to open micro business opportunities for mothers in villages, thus having a significant double impact on family health and well-being.

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of tempeh processing training as Supplementary Feeding (PMT) in improving the nutritional quality of toddlers and empowering the family economy in Jati Sumberlawang Village. This study identified changes in the knowledge, skills, and practices of mothers related to tempeh processing after participating in the training, as well as the economic impact resulting from the application of these new skills. Through this research, it is hoped that an effective and replicable intervention model can be produced in other communities, as well as make a meaningful contribution to efforts to improve the nutrition of toddlers and the economic empowerment of rural communities in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a case study approach, which was chosen because it is able to provide an in-depth understanding of complex phenomena in a specific context, namely the optimization of nutrition of toddlers through training in processing tempeh as Supplementary Feeding (PMT) in Jati Sumberlawang Village. This approach was chosen because it allows

researchers to explore the perceptions, experiences, and practices of mothers in processing tempeh, which cannot be expressed in depth through a quantitative approach. Case studies provide flexibility in collecting rich and detailed data, and allow researchers to capture the nuances and social dynamics in the local environment that affect the results of the study (Thomas, 2021; Baxter & Jack, 2020; Gustafsson, 2020). This qualitative approach is also more appropriate than the quantitative method because the focus of the research lies on the exploration of the social processes and interactions that occur during the training, as well as their impact on the knowledge, skills, and economic well-being of the women in the village.

The data collection techniques used in this study include in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 housewives involved in tempeh processing training in Jati Sumberlawang Village, Sumberlawang District, Sragen Regency, Central Java, Indonesia. This village was chosen because it has characteristics that are relevant to the research topic, namely the high dependence of the community on local resources and the challenges in fulfilling the nutrition of toddlers. The specific location that the research focuses on is in RT 11, an environment where the training is held regularly from July 15 to August 15, 2024. The selection of respondents was carried out by purposive sampling to ensure that they were mothers who were actively involved in training activities and had children under five, so that the data collected was relevant and in-depth. Participatory observation is carried out by participating in training activities, which allows researchers to directly observe the learning process and interactions between participants. In addition, documentation in the form of field notes and photos of activities is also used to enrich the data and provide visual context that supports the research results.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, which aims to identify the main patterns in the qualitative data collected. The analysis process begins with the transcription of interviews and observation notes, which is then followed by manually encoding the data to find recurring themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). Once the main themes were identified, the researchers grouped the data based on those themes and conducted an in-depth analysis to understand the relationship between the themes and how these themes reflected the mothers' experiences and perceptions regarding tempeh processing training. This analysis also involves triangulation of data from various sources to improve the validity and reliability of the findings. This technique was chosen because it allows researchers to dig deeper meanings from complex data, as well as provide a rich and contextual interpretation of the impact of training on nutrition and economic empowerment of mothers under five in Jati Sumberlawang Village.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the efforts to optimize the nutrition of toddlers in Jati Village, Sumberlawang, through a focused training program on tempeh processing as Supplementary Feeding (*Pemberian Makanan Tambahan*, or PMT). The intervention was designed to address the dual challenges of nutritional deficiency and economic empowerment within the local community. Through a qualitative approach, the study delved into the nuanced experiences of the participants, uncovering a series of significant findings that illustrate the effectiveness of the training program. These findings are meticulously organized into various sub-sections, each shedding light on a distinct aspect of the training and its broader impact on the community.

The first key finding of this study revolves around the substantial improvement in mothers' knowledge and skills regarding the nutritional value and versatile use of tempeh in toddler diets. Prior to the training, many mothers in the village had limited understanding and experience in utilizing tempeh beyond its basic forms. The training introduced them to innovative ways of processing tempeh into child-friendly dishes, such as tempeh nuggets, rolades, and balls, which not only enhanced the appeal of the food but also significantly increased its acceptance among toddlers. This newfound knowledge has had a direct and positive impact on the nutritional status of the children, as mothers reported a marked increase in the consumption of tempeh-based meals by their toddlers.

Moreover, the study reveals the broader socio-economic impact of the training program. Beyond improving nutritional outcomes, the skills acquired by the mothers during the training have opened up new avenues for economic empowerment. Several participants have leveraged their new skills to start small businesses, producing and selling tempeh-based products within the local market. This entrepreneurial activity has not only provided a supplemental income for these families but also contributed to the wider availability of nutritious food options within the community. The dual impact of improving child nutrition and empowering the local economy underscores the holistic benefits of community-based training programs.

Another significant aspect highlighted by this study is the community's increased awareness and proactive engagement in addressing nutritional challenges. The training program fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among the participants, encouraging them to take an active role in improving the health and well-being of their children. This shift in mindset has had a ripple effect within the community, as more families become aware of the importance of balanced nutrition and are motivated to adopt similar practices. The study illustrates how targeted interventions can catalyze broader social change, leading to sustainable improvements in public health.

The study also identifies some challenges and limitations encountered

during the implementation of the training program. While the overall outcomes were positive, certain logistical and cultural barriers were noted, such as initial resistance to adopting new dietary practices and limited access to resources for scaling up production. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing support and adaptation of the training model to ensure its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. Addressing these barriers will be crucial in replicating the program's success in other communities with similar nutritional and economic challenges.

Increasing Mother's Knowledge in the Utilization of Tempeh as an Additional Food

This study revealed a significant increase in the knowledge of mothers in Jati Sumberlawang Village about the importance of balanced nutrition and the benefits of tempeh as a basic ingredient for Supplementary Feeding (PMT) for toddlers. Before the training, most mothers had a limited understanding of the nutritional value of tempeh and only used it as a simple side dish without knowing how to process it into a food that would appeal to children. The training provided successfully changed this perspective by introducing various creative methods in tempeh processing, such as tempeh nuggets, tempeh rolades, and tempeh balls. Mothers not only learned about the nutritional content of tempeh but also how to present it in an attractive way and according to the tastes of toddlers, which ultimately increases the acceptance and consumption of tempeh by children.

The shift in knowledge among the mothers was not just about understanding the nutritional benefits of tempeh but also about recognizing its versatility as an ingredient. The training sessions emphasized how tempeh could be transformed into various dishes that are not only nutritious but also appealing to toddlers, who can be notoriously picky eaters. By learning to make foods like tempeh nuggets, which mimic the texture and taste of more familiar child-friendly foods, mothers found that their children were more willing to try and enjoy tempeh-based meals. This increased acceptance was crucial in ensuring that the nutritional benefits of tempeh could be fully realized in the children's diets.

Additionally, the training helped demystify the process of cooking with tempeh, which some mothers had previously found intimidating. Before the training, the preparation of tempeh was often limited to basic cooking methods, such as frying, which, while easy, did not fully exploit the potential of tempeh as a versatile food. The introduction of new cooking techniques, such as baking and steaming, along with the incorporation of various spices and seasonings, expanded the mothers' culinary repertoire. This not only made tempeh more palatable for their children but also empowered the mothers with a sense of creativity and confidence in the kitchen, fostering a more positive attitude towards meal preparation.

Moreover, the training highlighted the economic advantages of using tempeh as a staple in the family diet. Given that tempeh is an affordable and locally available food, mothers were taught how to maximize its use in various dishes, which can help reduce overall food costs while still providing high nutritional value. This aspect of the training resonated strongly with the participants, many of whom were responsible for managing their household's food budget. By learning to create multiple dishes from a single, cost-effective ingredient, the mothers were able to stretch their resources further, ensuring that their children received nutritious meals without placing undue strain on the family's finances.

The impact of the training extended beyond just nutritional knowledge; it also fostered a sense of community among the participants. As the mothers shared their experiences and challenges with each other during the training, they formed a support network that encouraged the exchange of ideas and recipes. This communal aspect of the training not only reinforced the lessons learned but also created a sense of collective responsibility for improving the nutritional status of their children. The shared goal of enhancing their children's health through better nutrition helped to strengthen the bonds within the community, leading to a more cohesive and supportive environment for raising healthy children.

In an interview, one of the mothers stated, "In the past, I only fried tempeh for my daily side dish. But now, after training, I can make tempeh nuggets that my kids love and they eat tempeh more often." (Interview, 2024).

Another resource person added, "I didn't know that tempeh can be processed into various kinds of interesting foods for toddlers. Now I know, and my son is more interested in eating." (Interview, 2024).

This improvement in skills is also seen in the ability of mothers to create tempeh menus that are tailored to children's tastes. One mother revealed, "My child likes crispy ones, so I love being able to learn to make tempeh nuggets that are crispy on the outside but soft on the inside. Now he's not fussy about eating anymore." (Interview, 2024).

The results of the interview indicated that the training on processing tempeh as Supplementary Feeding (PMT) in Jati Sumberlawang Village has succeeded in improving the knowledge and skills of mothers in utilizing tempeh as a source of nutritious nutrition, as well as encouraging their creativity in creating a variety of processed tempeh that is preferred by children. In addition to the nutritional benefits, the training also opens up new economic opportunities for mothers, who now see the potential to sell processed tempeh products in the local market, thereby not only improving the nutritional quality of their children but also boosting family income. The awareness built through this training shows a double impact, namely improving the nutritional status of toddlers as well as

empowering the family economy through optimizing local resources.

Table 1: Changes in Mother's Knowledge and Skills in Tempeh Processing Before and After Training

Knowledge Aspect	Before Training (%)	After Training (%)
Getting to Know the Nutritional Benefits of Tempeh	40%	95%
Tempeh Processing Skills	30%	90%
Toddler's Acceptance of Processed Tempeh	50%	85%

The interpretation of the table presented shows that the tempeh processing training in Jati Sumberlawang Village has had a very significant impact on the improvement of the knowledge and skills of mothers in utilizing tempeh as an additional food for toddlers. Before the training, only 40% of mothers knew the nutritional benefits of tempeh, but after the training, this figure jumped dramatically to 95%, showing an extraordinary increase in awareness of the importance of tempeh in meeting the nutritional needs of toddlers. In addition, the skills of mothers in processing tempeh have also increased significantly, from 30% before the training to 90% after the training, indicating that the training has succeeded in providing practical skills that can be directly applied in daily life. Toddlers' acceptance of processed tempeh also increased, from 50% before the training to 85% afterwards, which shows that mothers not only understand and master tempeh processing, but also succeed in making it more attractive and acceptable to toddlers, thus potentially increasing their overall nutritional intake.

Implementation of Tempeh Processing Techniques in Daily Life

This training not only increases the knowledge of mothers but also encourages them to apply tempeh processing techniques in their daily lives. Mothers began to use the skills they acquired to make a variety of tempeh meals as a snack and main meal for toddlers. This implementation has a direct impact on improving the nutritional quality of toddlers in the village. In addition, these new skills also give mothers the ability to utilize local resources more effectively, which ultimately also has the potential to be developed as a micro-enterprise.

One mother shared her experience, "Now, every day I try to make a new menu from tempeh that my children love. They don't get bored of eating, and I'm happy to be able to provide them with healthy food." (Interview, Mrs. A, 2024).

In another interview he said, "I also thought of selling these tempeh nuggets in the market, because it turns out that many people like it." (Interview, Mrs. B, 2024).

The interviews showed that tempeh processing training not only succeeded in increasing the creativity of mothers in serving healthy food for their children, but also opened up new economic opportunities. Mothers now feel more confident in trying various variations of tempeh menus that are liked by children, so that they are able to maintain children's interest and appetite for healthy food. In addition, the success in creating attractive processed tempeh also motivated some mothers to explore the business potential of the product, seeing an opportunity to sell processed tempeh such as nuggets in the local market. This indicates that the training not only has a positive impact on improving the nutrition of toddlers, but also contributes to the economic empowerment of mothers in the village.



Figure 1. The Process of Making Tempeh Nuggets by Mothers in Jati Village, Sumberlawang

The picture shows the enthusiasm and active participation of mothers in Jati Sumberlawang Village in the process of making tempeh nuggets, which is one of the results of the tempeh processing training as Supplementary Food (PMT) for toddlers. From this picture, it is clear that these mothers have mastered the technique of processing tempeh into an interesting and nutritious food, shown by the preparation of complete ingredients and the final result of the tempeh nuggets that are neat and ready to be consumed. This process not only shows the success of the training in improving the cooking skills of mothers, but also indicates the potential for the application of these skills in daily life to improve the nutrition of toddlers and, in fact, open up new economic opportunities through the sale of processed tempeh products. This image visually strengthens the narrative about the positive impact of training in improving the quality of life of the community through the effective use of local resources.

Socio-Economic Impact of Maternal Empowerment Through Tempeh Processing

Another finding of the study is the significant socioeconomic impact resulting from this training. Mothers who initially only focused on processing food for family consumption are now starting to see the economic potential of processed tempeh products. Some mothers have started small businesses by selling processed tempeh products in local markets, which not only helps increase family income but also expands people's access to nutritious food. Thus, this training has created a double impact: improving the nutrition of toddlers and economic empowerment of the mothers in the village.

In an interview, a mother stated, "I started making and selling tempeh nuggets at the market. It turns out that many people like it, and this helps increase my family's income." (Interview, 2024).

Another resource person added, "We now have new activities that produce results. The kids are healthy, and I also have an extra income from selling this food." (Interview, 2024).

The interpretation of this interview shows that tempeh processing training is not only successful in terms of improving nutrition, but also has a real economic impact for women in Jati Sumberlawang Village. Mothers who previously only focused on family consumption are now starting to develop small businesses by selling processed tempeh products, such as nuggets, in the local market. This success not only helps to increase family incomes, but also creates new, sustainable economic activities. This training, therefore, serves as a catalyst for economic empowerment as well as the improvement of children's health, demonstrating a positive relationship between the new skills acquired through training and their impact on overall family well-being.

Table 2: Increase in Family Income from Sales of Processed Tempeh Products

Types of Processed Tempeh Products	Average Sales per Day (Units)	Daily Income (Rp)
Nugget Tempe	50	150.000
Rolade Tempe	30	90.000
Tempeh Balls	40	120.000

This table shows that the tempeh processing training in Jati Sumberlawang Village has succeeded in having a significant economic impact on the families of the participants. By utilizing new skills in making various processed tempeh products, such as tempeh nuggets, tempeh rolades, and tempeh balls, the women in this village are able to generate a meaningful daily income. Tempeh nuggets, which have the highest sales rate with an average of 50 units per day, provide revenue of IDR 150,000 per day, followed by tempeh balls with revenue of IDR 120,000 from sales of 40 units per day, and rolade tempe which generates IDR 90,000 from 30 units sold per day. This shows that

processed tempeh products are not only well received in the local market, but also have the potential to become a stable source of additional income for families, as well as empowering mothers to play a more active role in the household economy.

From the findings of this study, it is clear that the tempeh processing training conducted in Jati Sumberlawang Village not only succeeded in improving the knowledge and skills of women in tempeh processing, but also created a positive socio-economic impact. The increase in tempeh consumption among toddlers shows that mothers are able to integrate this new knowledge into their daily routines, which directly contributes to the improvement of the nutritional status of their children.

The results of this study show that the training on processing tempeh as Supplementary Food (PMT) in Jati Village, Sumberlawang has had a significant impact on both improving the nutrition of toddlers and empowering the family economy. These findings are in line with previous research that states that community-based interventions can strengthen local capacity and contribute to improving children's nutritional status. For example, a study by Ahmed et al. (2020) showed that food processing training programs involving mothers in rural communities successfully improved nutritional knowledge and cooking skills, which directly affected children's diets and nutritional status.

In addition, these findings are also consistent with research by Jones et al. (2021), which found that diversifying local foods through training programs can increase food acceptance by children and have a positive economic impact on families, especially in communities with limited access to high-quality foodstuffs. Furthermore, research by Tan et al. (2020) supports these results by stating that community-based training is not only effective in improving cooking knowledge and skills, but also opens up opportunities for sustainable micro-enterprises, which in turn can improve family well-being. While these findings strongly support the existing literature, it is important to continue to monitor the implementation of these programs and evaluate their long-term impacts to ensure the sustainability of the benefits obtained, as well as to understand the contextual factors that may affect the effectiveness of programs in various other community settings.

This research makes a significant contribution in two main aspects: improving the nutrition of toddlers and empowering the family economy through training in processing tempeh as Supplementary Feeding (PMT). By focusing on the use of local foodstuffs, namely tempeh, this research not only succeeded in improving the knowledge and skills of mothers in creating a variety of processed foods that are nutritious and liked by children, but also opened up new economic opportunities for families in Jati Sumberlawang Village. This study shows that structured and sustainable community-based interventions can have a dual impact, namely improving the nutritional status of toddlers and increasing family incomes, thus offering a model that can be replicated in other

communities facing similar challenges. In addition, the study also enriches the literature on community empowerment through balanced nutrition and food diversification approaches, and strengthens the argument that targeted local interventions can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals in health and well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the training on processing tempeh as Supplementary Feeding (PMT) in Jati Sumberlawang Village has had a significant impact in improving the knowledge and skills of mothers, as well as encouraging positive changes in the diet and nutritional status of toddlers. These findings suggest that community-based interventions that combine nutrition education and practical training can effectively improve quality of life through the utilization of local resources. An important lesson from this study is that innovations in the processing of simple food ingredients, such as tempeh, can be an effective solution to overcome nutritional problems and at the same time empower the family economy. The study also strengthens understanding of the importance of food diversification and the role of maternal empowerment in achieving optimal child health goals, providing new insights that are relevant in the context of improving public health.

This research contributes significantly to science by offering intervention models that can be replicated in other communities, as well as enriching the literature on community empowerment and local food-based economic development. By focusing on tempeh processing training, this research renews the perspective on how to improve nutrition through a sustainable and practical local approach. However, this research also has limitations, such as a limited scope to one specific community and a narrow focus on housewives. This limitation opens up opportunities for further research that can explore gender and age variations, as well as expand survey methods to other communities to get a more comprehensive picture. Future research is expected to overcome these limitations and provide a stronger basis for the development of broader and more effective policies in efforts to improve nutrition and economic empowerment of communities.

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