



## Malnutrition Prevention in Islamic Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Malnutrition (malnutrition) is a major problem in the health sector, especially in developing countries. One of the health problems that threatens Indonesian children is malnutrition, therefore the government continues to take serious efforts to reduce the number of malnutrition, both in terms of economic health and education. Islam is a religion that upholds human values and emphasizes the importance of maintaining health and the food consumed by humans every day. Prevention of malnutrition related to the benefit of religion, it can be said that by consuming good and balanced nutrition that we have carried out Allah's commands in the Qur'an, to always eat good and halal food, pay attention to the nutrition contained, not to overdo it, and we know that Allah does not like and forbids us to leave a weak generation. Islam teaches how we choose food, consume food in moderation not excessively and recommends consuming food according to the diet taught by the Prophet SAW. Islam emphasizes that the food consumed by humans must meet two important criteria, namely good and halal, the food we consume must be selected so that it can help body growth and health.

**Keywords:** *malnutrition, prevention, Islamic perspective*

### Background

Malnutrition (malnutrition) is a major problem in the health sector, especially in developing countries. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), stated malnutrition as the cause of more than 1/3 of the 9.2 million deaths in children under the age of 5 in the world. (UNICEF, 2014) One of the health problems that threatens Indonesian children is malnutrition, therefore the government continues to take serious efforts to reduce the number of malnutrition, both in terms of economic health and education.

However, the case of malnutrition is still a homework for the Indonesian government. The conditions are very concerning, where, as the golden generation of future leaders of the nation, who will continue the relay of leadership in this country, they are not in a good condition and are not feasible. The problem of malnutrition that is currently happening in Indonesia is not a simple problem, but a complex problem and comes from various aspects. (WHO, 2017)

Islam is a religion that upholds human values and emphasizes the importance of maintaining health and the food consumed by humans every day. (Abdullah et al., 2020) Therefore, the problem of malnutrition cannot be separated from the problems discussed and solutions are sought in Islamic studies. (Apriani et al., 2018) Malnutrition comes from the word mal which means bad and nutrition which means nutrition, so malnutrition can be interpreted as poor nutrition or wrong nutrition. This wrong nutrition can mean

overnutrition or undernutrition. This understanding is in accordance with the understanding according to WHO, where malnutrition means a deficiency, excess, or imbalance of energy and/or nutrients that enter (energy intake) in a person. (UNESCO, 2020)

Several forms of malnutrition are, the first is undernutrition, which can take the form of stunting (low weight for age), wasting (low weight for height), underweight (low weight for age), and micronutrient deficiency/vitamin and mineral deficiency. Stunting or what we know as growing short is a failure to achieve optimal growth potential in a person. This is caused by chronic malnutrition conditions and diseases that occur repeatedly in children so that it can permanently affect a person's physical and cognitive capacity. The second form of malnutrition is wasting or being thin, where wasting is the result of rapid weight loss or a person's failure to gain weight. A child who is classified as thin or fat has a higher risk of death than a child of normal weight. Other forms of malnutrition are overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. If the BMI (body mass index) of a child is more than equal to the 85th percentile and below the 95th percentile, then the child is said to be overweight. Meanwhile, a child can be said to be obese if he already has a BMI above the 95th percentile. (Choge, 2020)

Malnutrition in Indonesia is one of the health problems that threaten Indonesian children. This condition is enough to pay attention to where the child should be the golden generation and will continue the leadership relay. Malnutrition itself also increases the risk of various diseases and death, especially in children. Indonesia still has homework related to nutritional problems in Indonesia known as the Triple Burden of Malnutrition (overnutrition, undernutrition, and micronutrient deficiency). (De Silva & Sumarto, 2018) According to FAO, Indonesia is one of the seven countries in the Asia Pacific that are public health concerns regarding nutritional conditions. Where Indonesia has an overweight rate of more than 11% in 2017 and a high prevalence of chronic malnutrition (more than 30%). (FAO, 2017)

Acute malnutrition is the most common nutritional problem in Indonesia. According to WHO, under-nourished toddlers means toddlers with an index of BB/PB or BB/TB between -3 SD to less than -2 SD or age 6-59 months, the UAC (Upper Arm Circumference) measurement is between 11.5 cm to less than 12.5 cm. Meanwhile, the definition of severely malnourished toddlers is a toddler with a BB/PB index (BB/TB) of less than -3 SD or an UAC measurement of <11.5 cm or the presence of bilateral edema that is pitting. There are two direct factors that cause malnutrition in children under five, namely food factors and infectious diseases, where these two factors are interrelated. Children under five are very susceptible to infectious diseases if they do not get enough balanced nutritious food, where their immune system is low. Likewise, infectious diseases such as diarrhea and upper respiratory tract infections (ARI) can cause the nutritional intake obtained by children cannot be absorbed by the body properly, which can also result in

poor nutrition. Therefore, prevention of infection can also reduce the incidence of malnutrition. (Younis et al., 2015)

### Islam About the Importance of Nutrition and Health

Islam regulates all aspects of life, including health, one of which is nutrition. In terms of nutrition, Islam strongly regulates its people to consume halal food that is good and not excessive. (Yani & Suryaningsih, 2019) This is stated in the Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 168:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

Meaning: "O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth and do not follow Satan's footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy."

Q.S. Al-A'raf verse 31:

يَبْيِئَ عَادَمَ خُدُوًا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

Meaning: "O Children of Adam! Dress properly whenever you are at worship. Eat and drink, but do not waste. Surely He does not like the wasteful."

In terms of breastfeeding is also regulated in the Qur'an in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 233,

وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ حَوْلَيْنِ كَامِلَيْنِ ۖ لِمَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُتِمَّ الرَّضَاعَةَ ۗ وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ لَا تُكَلَّفُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَا تُضَارَّ وُلْدَةٌ بِوَلَدِهَا وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ لَهُ بِوَلَدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ ۚ فَإِنْ أَرَادَا فِصَالًا عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْهُمَا وَتَشَاوُرٍ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا ۗ وَإِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تُسْتَرْضِعُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا سَلَّمْتُمْ مَا آتَيْتُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

Meaning: 'Divorced' mothers will breastfeed their offspring for two whole years, for those who wish to complete the nursing 'of their child'. The child's father will provide reasonable maintenance and clothing for the mother 'during that period'. No one will be charged with more than they can bear. No mother or father should be made to suffer for their child. The 'father's' heirs are under the same obligation. But if both sides decide—after mutual consultation and consent—to wean a child, then there is no blame on them. If you decide to have your children nursed by a wet-nurse, it is permissible as long as you pay fairly. Be mindful of Allah, and know that Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.

The verse explained that breastfeeding for two years will complete the breastfeeding period. Although this two-year period of breastfeeding is not an order or obligation, the appeal contained in the Qur'an shows how important breast milk is for human survival in the beginning of life. Where there is no single food substance that has a perfect content except breast milk. (Mehrpiشه et al., 2020)

Rasulullah SAW also said, "When filled with food, the stomach becomes the worst container for the children of Adam. It's enough for humans to have a few bites to keep themselves fit (which means it's enough to have only what they need to maintain strength and well-being). If a person has to eat, then let him use a third for food, a third for drinking and a third for breathing." (HR At-Tirmidhi). In this hadith,

Rasulullah SAW also emphasized that good food will be able to maintain the stamina of the human body which will directly or indirectly affect the strength and welfare of the person. This illustrates that eating in moderation, not excessive, as well as other words of the Prophet who ordered us to stop eating before we were full. Because something in excess will not provide benefits, it is even feared that it will cause disease. (Siti et al., 2015)

Several other surahs also explain that we must eat enough, neither lack nor excess, this is explained in QS At Taha: 81. Allah SWT has also provided sustenance in the form of fruits and meat for us to consume so that our nutritional needs are fulfilled which is written in QS At Thur: 22 and QS Al Waqi'ah: 20-21. Some of these verses explain that Islam in the Qur'an also regulates good nutrition for consumption, namely balanced nutrition. Among other things, the balance of animal and vegetable protein, as well as the nutrients contained therein. In Islam we are also required to consume halal food for our good and health, but besides that eating halal food is also intended to show our faith where it is written in QS Al-Maidah: 88 and QS An Nahl: 114, In both verses We are also told to always be grateful for the blessings and food that Allah has given us.

### **Malnutrition in Islamic Perspective**

In Surah Annisa verse 9:

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَفًا خَافُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

Meaning: "Let the guardians be as concerned 'for the orphans' as they would if they were to 'die and' leave 'their own' helpless children behind. So let them be mindful of Allah and speak equitably."

Where in the verse we can see that Allah does not like people who have weak offspring, which if it is associated with a state of malnutrition, undernourished or over-nourished children will put them at risk of disease. Children who are malnourished will not grow well physically or intellectually and directly or indirectly, their welfare will be disrupted over time. From this, we can see how important nutrition is in Islam, especially to give birth to strong and good offspring. (Siti et al., 2015)

The main causes of malnutrition itself are inadequate nutritional intake, health conditions in children, low access to purchasing power in families, and the lack of parental knowledge regarding the fulfillment of nutritious food. In the Islamic perspective, meeting the nutritional needs of a child is the fulfillment of his rights and it is also the obligation of parents to fulfill them. The first thousand days of a child's life is an important time for a child's growth. In Islam, it is explained about the obligation of Muslims to fear Allah SWT and forbid to leave children in a weak state. Therefore, with the fulfillment of child nutrition, it is hoped that it will produce healthy, strong and noble Muslims. Eating halal and nutritious food is God's command to all mankind. In addition, choosing halal food is the same as protecting yourself from bad behavior. (Santoso, 2016)

### **Maqashid Sharia and the Role of Government in Prevention of Malnutrition**

Maqashid Syariah is defined by Abu Ishaq Asyatibi in Islam as values that are the ultimate goal of Islamic law, namely *maslahah* or goodness and welfare for mankind, or what is known as the end of result. Where this benefit consists of 5 things, namely, religion, soul/*nafs*, reason, lineage and property. In the eyes of Islam, the good and bad of a leadership is seen from the policies taken whether they have an impact on the welfare of the people, which is none other than the benefit of the people which is the goal of the Maqashid Syariah. The scholars agree that the teachings of Islam are very concerned, and even aim to maintain all aspects of the most basic needs for humans, namely religion, body, mind, honor (descendants), and property. Efforts to improve the physical quality of Muslim humans through improving food nutrition, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle or other means, are part of efforts to realize these main goals Referring to the above, the nutritional problems of the Indonesian people are clearly the responsibility of the government, where the fulfillment of nutrition for the Indonesian people must be a serious concern of the government. This is because ensuring the fulfillment of community nutritional intake is one part of fulfilling the benefits of maqashid sharia. (Kasdi, 2019)

Prevention of malnutrition related to the benefit of religion, it can be said that by consuming good and balanced nutrition that we have carried out Allah's commands in the Qur'an, to always eat good and halal food, pay attention to the nutrition contained, not to overdo it, and also we know that Allah does not like and forbids us to leave a weak generation. Where this strong young generation will become Mujahid defenders of religion. (Pooneh et al., 2020)

When we look at the benefits of preventing malnutrition from a hereditary point of view, it is clear. The verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet have explained the relationship between halal and *thayyib* food with the quality of offspring. Where the selection of halal and *thayyib* foods will clearly prevent malnutrition, while also protecting themselves from bad behavior, where families who care about children's health will always provide healthy, halal and nutritious food, because this can prevent many problems that arise. more serious in the future, namely by providing halal and nutritious food besides having a positive impact on children's health and behavior, it can also save every family member from the threat of hellfire. (Ambali & Bakar, 2014)

The benefits of preventing malnutrition on the health of the mind/*nafs* and the soul or mentality of children will be influenced by eating behavior, this is very likely to occur because of the nutritional intake consumed, whether appropriate and balanced or not. Someone who has a healthy and good nutritional status will have good thinking power so that it will give strength to his soul and mind. Islam teaches how we choose food, consume food in moderation not excessively and recommends consuming food according to the diet taught by the Prophet SAW. (Siti et al., 2015)

The word of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Araf verse 96; "And if the people of the land had believed and were pious, We would surely have bestowed upon them the blessings of the heavens and the earth, but if they denied Our signs, then we will punish us according to what they do." This verse explains one of the benefits of consuming halal food and drink, Allah SWT will promise abundant blessings (treasures), and it is categorized as worship. So for those who consume it will get a reward from Allah SWT.

Malnutrition in Indonesia itself does not arise independently, but because of several factors including poverty, limited food, low education and also limited employment opportunities. The factors mentioned above are the root cause of the problem of malnutrition in Indonesia. Therefore, the government's policy must be simultaneous and strategically targeting the root of the problem.

## Conclusion

Every family must pay attention to a healthy lifestyle, so that the increase in cases of Malnutrition can be suppressed. Knowing the nutritional content of the food consumed will have a direct impact on the amount of nutritional intake we have. Islam emphasizes that the food consumed by humans must meet two important criteria, namely good and halal, the food we consume must be selected so that it can help body growth and health. Islam as a religion that upholds human values emphasizes the importance of maintaining health and the food consumed by humans everyday. Islam has given an overview of the importance of health and nutrition. Some verses and letters even provide detailed explanations and benefits of eating nutritious foods.

The Qur'an has stated that humans are commanded to eat food that is lawful and good from what is on earth. Allah has also ordered his people not to overeat which means that it is also in accordance with the concept of balanced nutrition, namely the appropriate proportion of food, in sufficient quantities, not excessive and carried out regularly. In Islam, malnutrition is the responsibility of the community together with the government. There are 3 important aspects in suppressing the problem of malnutrition in social life, namely the availability of quality food, social equity and community empowerment.

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