

## Study of Hegu Point Stimulation in Increasing Toddler's Appetite as a Complementary Local Wisdom Therapy

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### ABSTRACT

Toddlers require a balanced diet for their growth and development. Child growth and development can be disrupted if a child experiences stunting due to unmet food needs. To meet food needs, it is necessary to increase the toddler's appetite. To increase appetite, one alternative is to provide stimulation. The research aims to provide Hegu point stimulation to increase appetite in toddlers. This research used a descriptive method with 15 toddler participants. The population of this study consisted of toddlers aged 13 months to 60 months. Sampling technique with total sampling. The participants will have their appetite measured before and after being given Hegu stimulation. Stimulation was given once a day with 30 rounds for 30 days. The results showed that the number of female toddlers was 8 (53%) and the number of male toddlers was 7 (43%). The increase in appetite was observed in 8 toddlers (53%) and more than twice as many toddlers (7, 47%). Thus, there is an increase in toddlers' appetite after giving Hegu stimulation, so that in future research, the duration of stimulation can be considered.

### Introduction

The quality of a nation's human resources will determine its life. Qualified humans under five years of age are called toddlers. Toddlers are the next generation who are physically and spiritually healthy. Toddlers are children aged 0-5 years or 0-59 months. The toddler age is a critical stage in an individual's growth and development (Yulitasari, 2020). Toddlers who will grow and develop into adults need food to stimulate their appetite, allowing them to gain weight. Many factors influence a toddler's weight, including genetic factors, health level, environment, physical exercise, and nutritional status. For optimal growth and development, toddlers require a diet that meets their specific nutritional needs. Food given according to need will increase the toddler's weight. The food toddlers consume plays a crucial role in determining their nutritional status and supporting their physical growth and cognitive development (Wuna et al., 2023). Infancy is a golden age because it is very short and cannot be repeated. Infancy is also a critical period because during this time, babies are highly sensitive to the environmental conditions around them. Hence, they require nutrition and stimulation that support their growth and development (Amru et al., 2022). Optimizing the provision of food according to needs will help optimize the growth and development of toddlers. To achieve this, it is necessary to increase the toddler's appetite, and one way to do so is by applying pressure or massage. Massage is one of the alternatives offered as

a measure to increase appetite and can prevent or improve the condition of stunted toddlers. The golden period can be achieved by receiving an appropriate amount of nutrition for optimal growth and development (Intarti et al., 2024). Not everyone has the same level of hunger or difficulty eating, which can be a problem, especially for toddlers. Eating difficulties related to appetite are often associated with growth and development, particularly in toddlers, and can impact weight gain (Hidayat et al., 2021). The toddler years are a crucial period for optimizing growth and development. A fast-paced period that will become the basic foundation for growth and development in life. This period is known as the "Golden Age," a time of rapid intellectual, mental, emotional, physical, and social development for toddlers (Zukhra & Amin, 2019).

The process of building the immune system and brain development requires perfect nutritional intake for toddlers. Children under 5 years of age or toddlers are a group that is vulnerable to malnutrition. The issue of malnutrition is significant and must be addressed promptly (Putri et al., 2024). One way to increase food intake is through stimulation. Stimulation is a stimulus given at a certain point that helps regulate appetite, thereby supporting growth and development (Septimar et al., 2020). A condition in which a child refuses or does not want to or has difficulty consuming food and drinks in amounts and types appropriate to their physiological age, starting from the child opening their mouth voluntarily, followed by chewing and swallowing until the digestive system absorbs it without the addition of certain drugs or vitamins. Optimal child growth and development require a healthy and intelligent body. To achieve this, a balanced nutritional intake is necessary, tailored to the child's specific needs.

Malnutrition in Indonesian children is currently a significant problem, especially among those who experience low body weight, thinness, and stunting (Sari et al., 2024). Stimulation to increase appetite can be done by applying rotating pressure to the Hegu point. The location of the Hegu point is on the back of the hand, between the base of the thumb and the base of the forefinger. This point can be used to relieve digestive problems, alleviate pain, headaches, and symptoms associated with other facial and head-related diseases (Revianti & Yanto, 2021). The massage technique can be done by pressing or rotating using the thumb and index finger. In a weak condition (yin), a maximum of 30 presses or rotations clockwise. This pressing is done by rotating with a light or gentle pressure (Taslim, 2020). The pressure or massage therapy often used is based on the technique and principles of acupressure, a traditional Chinese medicine therapy that stimulates the toddler's body. Acupressure is a non-invasive technique that utilizes the fingers to apply pressure to specific acupressure points on the body through techniques such as squeezing, rubbing, pinching, and gentle manipulation. Acupressure involves stimulating acupoints on the body's surface to activate energy or chi, thereby providing comfort and promoting positive health benefits. One solution to increase appetite and improve the digestive process in toddlers is to provide massage stimulation, which can help resolve nutritional problems that cause stunting (Suaib & Kurniawan, 2022). The baby's weight is one of the key assessments and is a crucial indicator of the baby's growth. In optimizing body weight attainment in infants and toddlers, in addition to meeting the nutritional needs provided by their mother, other methods can also be used to stimulate

their appetite, such as massage or applying pressure to specific points (Kumaeroh & Hasanah, 2024). The toddler years will be a period of rapid growth and development that passes quickly and will never happen again in human life; therefore, this period is often referred to as the golden age. In this golden age, every parent who has children will want to achieve optimal and normal growth and development (Karmila et al., 2023). The research aims to provide Hegu point stimulation to increase appetite in toddlers.

**Method**

This research employs a descriptive method, with the research population consisting of toddlers aged 13 months to 60 months. Sampling technique: total sampling with 15 toddler participants. The participants will have their appetite measured before Hegu stimulation is carried out. Stimulation is given once a day on the back of the left or right hand, namely between the index finger and thumb. Pressure is applied 30 times, with light pressure and rotation clockwise. The pressing and playing time is 30 days. After 30 days, the toddler's appetite will be measured again (Fauzi & dkk, 2024). The stages of this research included three phases: the first stage involved coordination with the toddler's mother at Atma Home care, followed by data collection on the toddler. In the second stage, researchers and Atma Home Care staff provided Hegu point stimulation to toddlers daily, sharing a common perception. The third stage was evaluated to collect data on the toddler's appetite after stimulation of the Hegu point.

This ethical approval encompasses four basic principles in research, namely respecting each individual, providing ideas or solutions to do good, minimizing the existence or occurrence of harm experienced by the subject, and ensuring protection for the subject. Justice for every individual is the right to get something based on fair distribution. The ethical permit number is 0316/EC/LPPM/STIKES/KH/IX/2024.

**Results**

The results of research on the study of Hegu point stimulation as a complementary therapy to increase toddlers' appetite, based on local wisdom, are explained in the table below.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Toddlers Based on Gender at Atma Home Care

Gender	Amount	Percentage (%)
Woman	8	53
Man	7	47
Total	15	100

Table 1 explains that the number of toddler respondents with a female gender is eight toddlers (53%), and more than the number of respondents with a male gender is seven toddlers (47%)

**Table 2.** Increased Appetite in Toddlers After Hegu Point Stimulation at Atma Home Care

Appetite	Amount	Percentage (%)
Increased 1 time	9	60
Increased > 2 times	6	40
Total	15	100

Table 2 explains that after being given Hegu point stimulation, the majority of toddlers' appetite increased by 1 (one) time, with a total of 9 toddlers (60%), more than the increase in appetite, which was 2 times, namely six toddlers (40%).

## Discussion

The results of the research, as shown in Table 1, indicate that the female respondents comprised eight toddlers, or 53%, compared to the male respondents, who comprised seven toddlers, or 43%. This situation arises because there are many visitors to children under five at Atma Home Care compared to boys. There are more visitors to toddlers because toddler girls enjoy the games prepared by Atma Home Care, tailored to their likes and interests. The games for toddler boys provided at Atma Home Care are still being organized and improved to include non-dangerous games that help optimize toddler growth and development. A balanced diet supports optimal growth and development. If babies and toddlers have a good appetite, their nutritional needs will be guaranteed for life. Another study by Dwi Nur Octaviani Katili, who carried out massage on low-birth-weight babies, showed results that supported increasing the babies' weight (Octaviani et al., 2017)

Table 2 shows that giving stimulation at the Hegu point results in a change in appetite, where the appetite that increases once, in 9 toddlers (60%), is greater than the appetite that increases twice, namely six toddlers (40%). There is a difference in the increase in toddlers' appetite because each mother has an educational background and knowledge in providing food to her toddler. Apart from that, knowledge from the family, especially mothers of toddlers, about Hegu point stimulation also helps in making decisions to stimulate increased appetite. Toddlers have their own characteristics. Toddlers have a golden period because it cannot be repeated, and toddlers also have a critical period during which they experience physical and mental growth and development that will impact their future lives. To observe the growth of toddlers, it is necessary to measure their weight and height, as well as their head circumference, and assess their development through their abilities, including motor skills, language, cognitive skills, and social-emotional development (Sani et al., 2023). These results suggest that mothers and families require increased knowledge of stimulation to enhance toddlers' appetite. Giving this message has been shown to increase body weight in children. Another study on infant massage, conducted by Naomi Putri Rosari, showed a significant relationship between infant massage and weight gain in infants aged 0-3 months at PMB X, with a P value of 0.006 ( $p < 0.050$ ). This suggests that massaging a baby can help stimulate appetite, leading to increased weight gain (Rosari, 2024). Research conducted by Mulyana found that baby massage can help increase a baby's weight. Baby massage also has beneficial effects, including increased blood circulation and respiratory function, improved digestive system function, and increased body weight (Mulyana & Herlina, 2025). Growth is part of a continuous development process. Baby massage is a way to provide direct touch to the body, creating a sense of comfort and security in the baby. The touch received by babies and toddlers from their mothers becomes a basic need that creates a sense of comfort and security. If massage is done regularly, there will be an increase in catecholamine hormones (epinephrine and norepinephrine) (Arsfandi et al., 2022).

## Conclusions

After examining the results of this research study, it can be concluded that giving Hegu point stimulation to toddlers increases their appetite. This state of change occurs because stimulation of the Hegu point is carried out regularly and in a timely manner, and the right emphasis is applied by turning it clockwise.

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