



# From the Lecture Hall to the Food Office: Best Practice in Stunting Management and Food Safety Supervision in Pontianak City

Nawawi\*, Silveter Donata Melania, Meri Andani, Milanda, Veronika Jenita

*Biology Education Study Program, Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology, Universitas PGRI Pontianak, Jl. Ampera No. 88, Pontianak, West Kalimantan, Indonesia*

\*Corresponding author's email: [nawawi@ikippgriptk.ac.id](mailto:nawawi@ikippgriptk.ac.id)

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## ABSTRACT

Higher education in the era of Industry 4.0 and Society 5.0 is expected to produce graduates who are competent, adaptive, and work-ready. The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) certified internship offers one pathway toward this goal, yet how such internships integrate with partner institutions' real needs and what students actually gain still deserve closer documentation. This article describes and analyses the participation of Biology Education students of Universitas PGRI Pontianak in food security and food safety programmes at the Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Office (DPPP) of Pontianak City, covering the Diverse, Nutritious, Balanced and Safe Food (B2SA) programme for stunting prevention and fresh-food safety supervision. Using a descriptive qualitative case-study approach, data were collected over four months through participatory observation and documentation, then analysed following the Miles, Huberman and Saldaña interactive model. The findings show that students were actively involved in preparing and distributing B2SA food packages, delivering nutrition education, taking anthropometric measurements, conducting qualitative formalin and pesticide-residue tests on fresh produce, and supporting administrative tasks. Through these activities they built a contextual understanding of food, nutrition and food-safety issues while developing both technical and non-technical skills, and translated their experience into a community-based follow-up plan. The internship proved effective in connecting classroom theory with field practice and produced mutual benefits for the students and the partner institution, supporting its continuation with structured monitoring and evaluation.

## Introduction

Higher education in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0 is required to produce graduates who not only master theory but are also skilled, adaptable, and possess a professional work ethic in line with the needs of the world of work (Wardina et al., 2019; Wicaksono, 2020). The Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy emerged as one response to these demands (Yanuarsari et al., 2022), and a number of studies report its positive impact on participating students (Arsyad & Widuhung, 2022; Kholik et al., 2022). Through MBKM, students can develop themselves outside their study programme and home campus (Hasibuan, 2023; Maulana et al., 2022). One of its main

forms is the certified internship, designed as a vehicle for experiential learning to apply knowledge, sharpen soft and hard skills, and become acquainted with the world of work directly (Dona et al., 2024). Internships undertaken before graduation consistently offer students experiential learning, broader employment opportunities, and a clearer understanding of real work environments (Ndamase & Lukman, 2024).

Although MBKM and certified internships have been widely implemented to bridge the competency gap of graduates (Suryana et al., 2025), the way the programme operates in specific contexts and its contribution to real problems in society still need to be documented. Two matters remain unresolved: ensuring the integration of student learning with the partner's work programmes, and recording and analysing the real impact of student involvement in the field.

The Biology Education Study Program, Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology of Universitas PGRI Pontianak implemented the MBKM policy through a partnership with the Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Office (DPPP) of Pontianak City in 2024. This partnership rests on the synergy between academics and practitioners. The DPPP of Pontianak City handles guidance, provision, and supervision in the fields of food, agriculture, and fisheries. Two issues that concern the office and at the same time are relevant to students' competencies are stunting management and food-safety supervision.

Stunting remains a prominent chronic nutritional problem in Indonesia. Based on the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey, the national prevalence was recorded at 21.5% in 2023 and fell to 19.8% in 2024, yet it remains above the government target of 14% (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2024). At the provincial level, West Kalimantan recorded a stunting prevalence of 22.1% in 2024, still well above the national average, while cross-sectional evidence from within the province continues to identify household- and maternal-level risk factors that remain directly relevant to the DPPP's target groups (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2024; Trisnawati et al., 2024). Its management requires comprehensive intervention, among others through the Movement for Diverse, Nutritious, Balanced and Safe Food (B2SA) implemented by the DPPP of Pontianak City. Regional food security is closely related to the incidence of stunting in under-fives (Sihite, 2022), and prevention requires the fulfilment of nutrition accompanied by education for families (Saraswati et al., 2025). Dietary diversity is a key determinant of children's nutritional status, and children who fail to meet minimum dietary diversity are more likely to suffer from stunting (Aninditya, 2023). Food safety, especially residues of hazardous substances such as formalin and pesticides in fresh produce, requires continuous supervision to protect public health (Wahongan et al., 2021). The misuse of formalin as a preservative in fish is still found in various markets and remains a persistent food safety concern across Asian countries (Hermawan et al., 2024; Mehta et al., 2024), while pesticide residues on vegetables and fruit are of concern because they are cumulative in the body and frequently exceed maximum residue limits (El-Sheikh et al., 2022; Susanto et al., 2025). The gap between the efforts already made by the DPPP and the ideal outcomes opens space for student involvement through the MBKM certified internship.

Based on the above, this study aims to describe and analyse the forms of activity, the implementation process, and the learning gained by students during the MBKM certified internship at the DPPP of Pontianak City, focusing on the B2SA programme for stunting management and food-safety supervision activities. These activities provide students with rich learning experiences while offering operational support to the DPPP. The results are expected to serve as a reference for developing similar programmes and as input for both educational institutions and partner agencies in optimising such partnerships.

To make the study's empirical positioning explicit, the research gap is that, although the benefits of MBKM certified internships are widely asserted in general terms, there is little documented, close-grained evidence of how a single internship's activities are integrated with a specific partner institution's live work programmes and what students concretely do within them. The intended contribution is a documented, category-based case account of how Biology Education students' learning was embedded in the DPPP's B2SA and food-safety routines, offering a transferable description of student-partner integration rather than an evaluation of programme effectiveness. Accordingly, this article is framed as a descriptive qualitative case study, not a programme-evaluation or community-service report, and its claims are limited to what participatory observation and documentation can support.

## **Research Methods**

This study used a case-study approach with a descriptive qualitative method (Sugiyono, 2018). The case-study approach was chosen because it allows for a deep and comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon in its real context, namely the implementation of the MBKM internship of students of the Faculty of Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Technology (MIPATEK) of Universitas PGRI Pontianak at the DPPP of Pontianak City.

The activities and primary data collection took place over approximately four months, from August to November 2024, at the DPPP Office of Pontianak City, Jalan Budi Utomo No. 29, Siantan Hulu Sub-district, North Pontianak District. The subjects of the study were the experiences, activities, and learning gained by the four (4) interning students of the Biology Education Study Program.

The learning gained by students, including the development of technical and non-technical (soft) skills, was not treated as a separate data source but was inferred from the same participatory observation and documentation described above: the DPPP supervisor directly observed and confirmed students' performance of each task on the field observation sheets, and these confirmed records were subsequently reported to and reviewed by the field supervising lecturer, whose feedback informed the interpretation of students' competency development. This procedure is elaborated further below as part of the study's credibility strategy.

Primary data were collected in two ways. First, participatory observation: students were directly involved in the daily activities of the office so that data were obtained at

their source. Observation covered (1) involvement in the B2SA programme, namely the preparation and distribution of supplementary food packages, nutrition education for parents of under-fives, anthropometric measurement of children (weight and height), and documentation, supported by recording forms, digital scales, a microtoise, and a camera; (2) testing of fresh-food samples following the DPPP's standard procedures, comprising qualitative formalin testing on animal-source foods (fish, chicken) and pesticide-residue testing on horticultural products, using qualitative test kits provided by the office; (3) office administrative tasks, such as drafting letters, recapitulating programme data, and managing archives; and (4) internal meetings and programme socialisation activities for the community and stakeholders. Second, documentation: the collection of daily field notes, activity photographs, official socialisation materials, and administrative planning and reporting documents.

Data were analysed descriptively and qualitatively following the flow of Miles et al. (2014), comprising data reduction, data display in descriptive narrative, and conclusion drawing. The analysis focused on understanding the types of activity, the implementation process, and their relevance to the internship's learning objectives and to the programmes of the DPPP of Pontianak City.

Concretely, data reduction was carried out by sorting the daily field notes, photographs, and administrative documents collected over the four months into four analytic categories that emerged from the raw records: (1) participation in the B2SA programme, (2) involvement in fresh-food safety supervision, (3) administrative support and official activities, and (4) preparation of the follow-up plan (RTL). Data display took the form of a descriptive narrative organised around these four categories, supported by a summary table cross-tabulating each activity with its implementation schedule and the technical and non-technical competencies it developed (see Table 1 in the Findings section). Conclusions were then drawn by relating patterns across these four categories back to the internship's stated learning objectives and to the DPPP's ongoing work programmes, consistent with recommended practice for operationalising the reduction–display–conclusion sequence in applied qualitative research (Rofiah, 2022).

To support the trustworthiness of these findings, two credibility strategies were applied. First, member checking: the DPPP field supervisor reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the observation sheets and activity records against what students had actually carried out before these records were treated as data. Second, supervisor debriefing: the confirmed records and preliminary interpretations were subsequently reported to the field supervising lecturer, whose feedback and questions were used to refine the description and interpretation of the findings. Together, these strategies helped ensure that the interpretations presented below are dependable rather than solely the researchers' own reading of the field notes (Malik et al., 2025).

### ***Ethical Considerations***

This study obtained ethical approval from the institutional research ethics committee of Universitas PGRI Pontianak. Because part of the activity involved underfives, including anthropometric measurement and photography verbal informed

consent was obtained from the children's parents or the accompanying cadres at the time of each activity, in line with guidance that research involving children requires the prior permission of parents or guardians (Tengku Hamzah et al., 2025). All anthropometric measurement and food-safety sampling were carried out under the direct supervision of, and following the standard operating procedures of, DPPP officers, and the supervisory data used were handled with the office's permission. Children's identities are protected: no names are reported, and images are used only where consent was given, with identifying details minimised.

### ***Positionality and Reflexivity***

The authors hold an explicit insider position: four of the authors were the interns whose experience is described, and one was their field supervising lecturer. This insider stance gave close access to the setting and a detailed understanding of the activities, but it also carries a recognised risk that interpretations may favour the researchers' own account of the internship (Fleming, as discussed in Rinchen et al., 2025). To limit this influence, the observation records were confirmed by the DPPP field supervisor before being treated as data, and the descriptive claims in this article are deliberately kept close to what was directly observed and documented. Readers should nevertheless interpret statements about "mutual benefit" and the internship's value in light of this positionality: they represent the participants' and supervisor's situated perspective rather than an independent external evaluation. This limitation is acknowledged again in the Limitations of the Study.

## **Findings**

### ***Participation in the B2SA Program for Stunting Prevention***

Students were routinely involved twice a week in the series of B2SA activities aimed at preventing stunting in Pontianak City. This involvement included preparing and distributing balanced-nutrition food packages for targeted under-fives, assisting DPPP officers in delivering nutrition education to parents about the importance of balanced nutrition and the use of affordable local food, and monitoring child growth through anthropometric measurements (height, weight, arm circumference, and head circumference). Students also helped distribute rice aid and documented all activities through field notes and photographs.

To operationalise the data-display step of the analysis, Table 1 summarises how each category of internship activity, once reduced from the raw field notes, relates to its implementation schedule and to the technical and non-technical competencies it developed.

**Table 1.** Internship activities mapped to schedule and competencies developed

| No | Activity category                                                     | Schedule/frequency | Technical competencies                              | Non-technical competencies           |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1  | B2SA food-package preparation, distribution, nutrition education, and | 2x/week            | Anthropometric measurement; food-package portioning | Communication with parents; teamwork |

|   |                                                                      |                               |                                           |                                                         |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
|   | anthropometric measurement                                           |                               |                                           |                                                         |
| 2 | Fresh-food safety supervision (formalin & pesticide-residue testing) | Incidental, $\approx 1x/week$ | Field sampling; rapid test-kit procedures | Coordination with DPPP officers; attention to procedure |
| 3 | Administrative support (letters, data recapitulation, archiving)     | As needed, ongoing            | Office document administration            | Workplace communication; time management                |
| 4 | Internal meetings and community/stakeholder socialisation            | As scheduled by DPPP          | –                                         | Professional/public communication                       |
| 5 | Preparation of the community-based follow-up plan (RTL)              | End of internship             | Proposal writing                          | Critical, solution-oriented thinking; collaboration     |



**Figure 1.** Preparation and provision of B2SA food to targeted under-fives (left and right panels show the packing and hand-over of food packages). Source: authors' field documentation, 2024.



**Figure 2.** Measurement of an under-five's height by an MBKM student Source: authors' field documentation, 2024 (image used with parental consent; identifying details minimised).

### ***Involvement in Fresh-Food Safety Supervision***

Students took part in the food-safety supervision that constitutes a core task of the DPPP of Pontianak City. This activity included taking samples of fresh food in the field, such as at traditional markets and from food vendors, then testing them qualitatively with rapid test kits to detect formalin in fresh fish and chicken, as well as pesticide residues in

horticultural products, among them grapes. This testing was part of the office's efforts to ensure that the food in circulation is safe for consumption.

Sampling and testing were carried out incidentally, approximately once a week over the internship period. A total of 25 fresh fish and chicken samples were tested qualitatively for formalin, and 22 randomly selected vegetable and fruit samples were tested for pesticide residues. All 25 formalin tests and all 22 pesticide-residue tests returned negative results (Table 2), indicating that none of the sampled products showed indication of formalin or pesticide-residue contamination above the qualitative detection threshold of the test kits used during the observation period. While these results are reassuring for the specific batches and vendors sampled, they should be read as a qualitative screening snapshot rather than a representative surveillance estimate for the city, given the incidental and relatively small sample.

**Table 2.** Summary of qualitative food-safety screening results during the internship

| No | Test type                                        | Samples tested | Sampling frequency                   | Result                  |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1  | Qualitative formalin test (fresh fish & chicken) | 25 samples     | Incidental, $\approx 1x/\text{week}$ | 25 negative, 0 positive |
| 2  | Pesticide-residue test (vegetables & fruit)      | 22 samples     | Incidental, $\approx 1x/\text{week}$ | 22 negative, 0 positive |



**Figure 3.** Qualitative formalin test on a fresh-fish sample



**Figure 4.** Residue test on grapes accompanied by a DPPP officer

### ***Administrative Support and Official Activities***

In addition to technical activities, students assisted with office administrative work: drafting official letters, recapitulating activity data, preparing meeting and socialisation materials, and managing archives. Students also attended internal meetings of the food division, socialisation activities for local food businesses, and non-formal activities such as morning exercise with staff. This experience complemented the internship with a practical understanding of office management, coordination flows in government agencies, and the dynamics of professional interaction in the workplace.



**Figure 5.** Internal meeting and completion of administrative tasks by MBKM students Source: authors' field documentation, 2024.

### ***Follow-up Plan as a Form of Internalised Learning***

As the culmination of learning, particularly in the B2SA programme, students together with their field supervising lecturer and DPPP supervisor prepared a Follow-up Plan (Rencana Tindak Lanjut or RTL) in the form of a proposal for a B2SA-based healthy-eating campaign involving the women of the Family Welfare Development (PKK) as cadres. This idea was aimed at maintaining the sustainability of stunting prevention through community empowerment. The preparation of the RTL showed that students were able to absorb field experience and transform it into critical, solution-oriented ideas.

### **Discussion**

The students' direct involvement in the B2SA programme gave them a more complete understanding of the problem of stunting and of nutrition-intervention strategies at the community level. This experience is consistent with the principle of experiential learning, that is, learning through reflection on action (Suharto et al., 2022). Students did not merely observe but carried out the stages of the programme from food preparation and counselling to anthropometric measurement all of which relate directly to food and nutrition science. The B2SA programme itself is a national strategy for accelerating the reduction of stunting that emphasises diversification of consumption, balanced nutrition, and food safety. The emphasis on family education is important because changes in household eating behaviour help determine the risk of stunting (Saraswati et al., 2025), and dietary diversity has been shown to be significantly associated with children's nutritional status in Indonesia (Aninditya, 2023). Internships

before graduation likewise offer students experiential learning and a clearer understanding of real work environments (Ndamase & Lukman, 2024).

What this internship adds analytically, beyond confirming the general benefits of experiential learning, is a picture of how student learning was actually integrated with the DPPP's existing work programme rather than run alongside it. Students were not assigned observer or shadowing roles; they were embedded directly into the office's recurring B2SA schedule and its incidental food-safety sampling routine, so that the pace and content of their learning were set by the partner's operational calendar rather than by a separate campus-designed activity plan. This arrangement meant that the two gaps identified in the introduction, aligning student learning with the partner's work programme, and documenting the real impact of student involvement, were addressed through the same mechanism: continuous placement within core DPPP tasks, checked through the member-checking and supervisor-debriefing procedure described in the Methods. Coordination of this kind, in which the academic and partner sides jointly own the internship schedule rather than treating it as a one-way placement, has been identified elsewhere as a determinant of internship quality (Melati, 2024), and the RTL produced at the end of this internship can be read as evidence that the integration extended beyond task completion into students' own programme-design thinking.

Although the food-safety testing was qualitative and served as an initial screening, the activity gave students a concrete picture of food-supervision work and the relevant technical skills, from representative sampling to the use of test kits. Such testing is important because the misuse of formalin as a preservative in fish is still found in various markets and persists as a food-safety problem in many Asian countries (Hermawan et al., 2024; Mehta et al., 2024), while pesticide residues on vegetables and fruit are cumulative and, as monitoring data show, frequently exceed maximum residue limits, posing health risks if consumed continuously (El-Sheikh et al., 2022; Li et al., 2025; Susanto et al., 2025). This experience showed students how local government protects consumers from exposure to hazardous substances.

Overall, the MBKM internship at the DPPP of Pontianak City combined the theory learned in class with practice in the field. Students gained work experience relevant to their field of study, applied academic knowledge to real work situations, practised tasks associated with technical and non-technical skills, and understood the role of the DPPP in addressing regional issues such as stunting and food safety. As reported by the participants and confirmed by the DPPP supervisor, the collaboration between Universitas PGRI Pontianak and the DPPP of Pontianak City appeared to produce mutual benefits: students developed their competencies and work readiness, while the office gained operational support and fresh ideas. The follow-up plan produced is a sign that learning during the internship can continue as a real contribution to stunting management and food safety in Pontianak City. This finding reinforces the view that a regional food-security strategy is closely related to efforts to prevent stunting (Sihite, 2022).

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, evidence on students' learning and soft-skill development was drawn from participatory observation and documentation confirmed through supervisor member checking, rather than from a dedicated instrument such as structured reflective journals or a formal competency-assessment rubric; future studies of MBKM internships would benefit from incorporating such instruments to allow a more direct, learner-reported account of competency growth. Second, the qualitative food-safety screening (15 formalin and 12 pesticide-residue samples) was incidental and relatively small in scale, so the negative results describe the specific batches and vendors sampled during the internship period rather than providing a representative estimate of food-safety conditions across Pontianak City. Third, as a single-site case study of one internship cohort at one partner institution, the transferability of the findings to other MBKM placements or other government partners should be established through further comparative research rather than assumed.

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## **Conclusion**

The MBKM internship of students of the Faculty of MIPATEK, Universitas PGRI Pontianak, at the DPPP of Pontianak City functioned as a means of experience-based learning. Students were actively involved in the office's core programmes, especially B2SA for stunting prevention and the supervision of fresh-food safety through qualitative formalin and pesticide testing and supported administrative tasks. This internship connected classroom theory with field practice, deepened students' understanding of food, nutrition, and food-safety issues, and at the same time developed professional competencies and soft skills. The collaboration between higher education and a government agency through MBKM provided mutual benefits and supported regional development goals. This programme should be continued and strengthened with structured monitoring and evaluation mechanisms so that student learning and the contribution to partners can be further optimised.

## **Author Contributions**

Silveter Donata Melania, as the leader of the MBKM student team, coordinated the implementation of the internship activities in the field, ensured the smooth collection of

data, and contributed to data analysis and the drafting of the manuscript framework. Meri Andani collected primary data through documentation and participatory observation and drafted the general activity description. Milanda was responsible for the implementation, data collection, analysis, and reporting of the B2SA programme and its contribution to the related results and discussion. Veronika Jenita was responsible for the implementation, data collection, analysis, and reporting of the food-safety supervision activities and the related discussion. Nawawi, M.Pd., as the supervising lecturer, provided conceptual direction, designed the methodology, supervised data collection and analysis, and revised and finalised the manuscript.

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