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**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PREVENTING STUNTING IN
TODDLERS IN BODDIE VILLAGE, MANDALLE SUBDISTRICT,
PANGKEP DISTRICT**

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ABSTRACT

Stunting, a condition of impaired growth due to chronic malnutrition, remains a critical health issue in Indonesia, particularly among children under five years old. This study examines community participation in preventing stunting in toddlers in Boddie Village, Mandalle Subdistrict, Pangkep District. The research highlights the role of local government, health professionals, and community members in raising awareness about the importance of nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, and appropriate complementary feeding. It also explores the socio-economic factors influencing the prevalence of stunting and discusses collaborative efforts among various stakeholders to address this public health challenge. The findings suggest that while there is a general understanding of the problem, there are gaps in knowledge and resources that hinder effective stunting prevention. The study recommends strengthening education, socio-economic support, and multi-sectoral collaboration to enhance community involvement in stunting prevention efforts.

Keywords: Stunting, Community Participation, Health, Nutrition.



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A. INTRODUCTION

Stunting is the most common condition resulting from malnutrition (micronutrient deficiencies), affecting infants both before and after birth. It is closely related to maternal size, maternal nutrition during pregnancy, and fetal growth. Stunting in children under five serves as a chronic nutritional status

indicator that reflects the socioeconomic challenges of the past and has lasting impacts on a child's development within the first two years of life, which are often irreversible.

One socioeconomic factor influencing stunting is the economic status of parents and family food security. According to Government Regulation No. 68 of 2002 and the Food Law No. 18 of 2012 concerning Food Security, food security is defined as the condition in which food availability for households is adequate, safe, nutritionally sufficient, and accessible. It is a prerequisite for achieving household food security. Conversely, food insecurity manifests in reduced food consumption, both in quantity and quality, including changes in the frequency of staple food consumption. Family food security is intricately linked to food availability, which indirectly affects a child's nutritional status.

Malnutrition results in impaired growth in children under five, characterized by a height that does not match their age, a condition referred to as "short children" or stunting. Health is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, as only a healthy population can contribute effectively to nation-building. However, a large population with a high growth rate and poor health quality complicates development efforts and contributes to increased mortality rates.

Health challenges are prevalent in developing countries, including Indonesia, where growth and development are two interconnected processes. Growth refers to changes in size, volume, number, or dimensions at the cellular, organ, or individual level. It can be measured in units such as weight (grams, kilograms), length (cm, m), bone age, or metabolic balance (calcium and nitrogen retention in the body) (Soetjiningsih, 2012).

To address child nutritional issues such as stunting, the government has implemented various policies and programs, including *Posyandu* and Early Childhood Growth and Development Detection (DDTK). However, these initiatives have been insufficient in resolving malnutrition issues, possibly due to a lack of evaluation and intervention mechanisms. In 2012, the government introduced the "Nutrition Awareness Movement," focusing on the first 1,000 days of life, aiming to address the alarming rise in stunting cases in Indonesia. This initiative requires collaboration across sectors, encompassing both health-specific and non-health-sensitive programs.

In South Sulawesi Province, the Health Office reported a decline in stunting rates. In 2019, the number of malnourished children decreased compared

to the previous year. Consequently, the government expanded its accelerated stunting reduction efforts to 260 districts/cities in 2020, up from 160 in 2019, including South Sulawesi. The South Sulawesi branch of the Indonesian Nutritionist Association (PERSAGI) identified seven districts with severe malnutrition issues: Enrekang, Sinjai, Tana Toraja, North Toraja, Pangkep, Maros, and Bone (Ministry of Health, 2020).

In addressing this issue, Oscar (RPJMN 2020–2024) emphasized the need to reduce stunting rates to 19% by 2024, down from 30.8% as recorded in Riskesdas 2018. This target necessitates maximum efforts through specific nutritional interventions and sensitive measures. RPJMN mandates these actions, detailed in the Strategic Plan (Renstra), aiming to ensure a healthy, productive, and independent population.

Stunting originates in the womb and becomes evident after a child reaches two years of age. UNICEF defines stunting as the percentage of children aged 0–59 months with height-for-age below minus two standard deviations (moderate and severe stunting) and minus three standard deviations (chronic stunting) of the WHO Child Growth Standards. Besides growth inhibition, stunting is often linked to impaired brain development (Ministry of Health, 2020).

The Ministry of Health has developed a national strategy to reduce stunting through specific and sensitive nutritional interventions during the first 1,000 days of life. Specific interventions include providing supplements and nutritious food to pregnant women and infants aged 0–23 months. Sensitive interventions involve activities beyond the health sector, such as providing clean water, sanitation, nutrition education, and food security. Reducing stunting requires synergy among ministries, agencies, and coordinated efforts between central and local governments.

Stunting is a cumulative process that begins during pregnancy, extends through childhood, and persists throughout life. Research has identified direct causes, such as inadequate nutrition and infectious diseases, and indirect causes, including caregiving practices, health services, food availability, cultural factors, and economic conditions (Ministry of Health, 2012).

B.METHODOLOGY

1. Type of Research

This research employs a normative descriptive approach. Normative research examines existing legal principles, norms, and regulations as the basis for addressing an issue systematically and critically (Marzuki, 2020). The study explores relevant legal frameworks, including laws, government policies, and regulations, to understand their role in addressing stunting issues and promoting food security in Indonesia.

2. Data Sources

The research primarily relies on secondary data, including legislation, government reports, and academic literature related to stunting and food security (UNICEF, 2021; BPS, 2023). The normative analysis aims to identify gaps in policy implementation and provide recommendations for more effective interventions.

3. Research Design

The descriptive nature of this study seeks to systematically describe the role of food security laws and government programs in reducing stunting rates. Using a legal normative method, this research critically evaluates policy effectiveness and intersectoral coordination mechanisms (FAO, 2020; Rahmawati & Suryani, 2022).

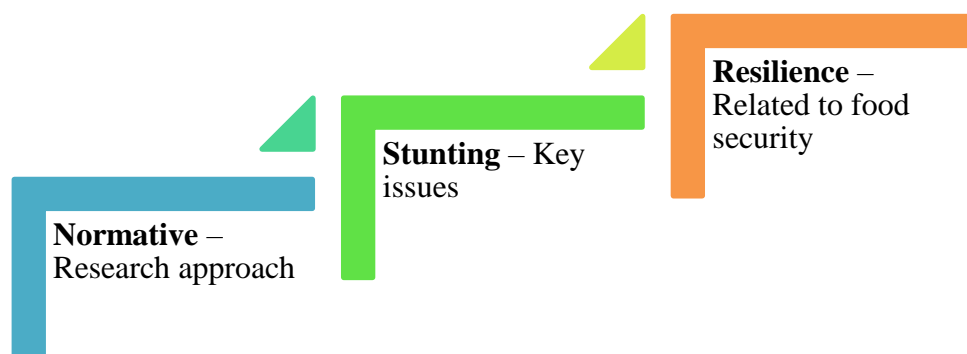


Figure 1 Thinking Framework Diagram

C. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

➤ RESEARCH RESULTS

This study aimed to identify the level of community participation in preventing stunting among toddlers in Boddie Village, Mandalle Subdistrict, Pangkep Regency. It also analyzed the factors influencing community participation using systematically organized indicators. Data was collected through interviews and observations, providing a basis for normative conclusions.

1. Community Participation in Stunting Prevention

a. Level of Community Awareness

Community awareness about the importance of nutrition and a healthy lifestyle is crucial in preventing stunting. Awareness includes understanding the risks of inadequate nutrition and its impact on child development. Efforts by health workers and local authorities aim to cultivate a culture of nutritional awareness to reduce stunting rates.

b. Community Knowledge

Community knowledge reflects their understanding of stunting, its causes, and preventive measures. This knowledge is significantly shaped by socialization efforts from the local government and health practitioners. Continuous education and dissemination of information have contributed to an increased understanding among community members.

c. Community Occupations

Community members' occupational engagements often limit their participation in stunting prevention programs. Busy work schedules may hinder their ability to attend health-related socialization events or consistently monitor their children's nutritional needs. Addressing this requires tailored approaches that accommodate their time constraints.

d. Poverty Levels

Poverty significantly impacts families' ability to provide adequate nutrition for their children. Financial constraints often limit access to nutritious food and healthcare services, which are critical for preventing stunting. Collaborative efforts between local governments and health services are essential to mitigate the effects of economic challenges on nutrition.

e. Socialization by Local Authorities

Socialization programs are integral to building community awareness and participation. These programs emphasize health education, proper nutrition, and clean living practices. Initiatives such as exclusive breastfeeding, early initiation of breastfeeding, and the provision of iron supplements for pregnant women are vital components of these efforts.

2. Factors Influencing Community Participation

a. Gender

Stunting affects both male and female children without significant differentiation based on gender. The primary determinant is nutritional fulfillment, which depends on parental awareness and ability to provide adequate nutrition during pregnancy and childhood.

b. Education Level

Educational attainment plays a crucial role in influencing community participation in stunting prevention. Higher levels of education enhance knowledge and awareness about the importance of nutrition and healthcare. Educated individuals are more likely to engage actively in health programs and adopt preventive measures.

c. Income Levels

Income levels directly affect families' ability to meet nutritional needs. While families with higher incomes are better positioned to provide sufficient nutrition, even low-income families can address stunting risks with the support of targeted interventions, such as subsidized nutrition programs and free healthcare services.

- Normative Conclusion

Community participation in stunting prevention in Boddie Village is influenced by awareness, education, income levels, and the effectiveness of socialization programs. Normatively, strengthening collaborative efforts between local governments, healthcare providers, and the community is imperative to address the challenges of stunting prevention comprehensively. Enhanced educational campaigns, targeted financial support, and inclusive program designs

are recommended to increase community involvement and reduce stunting rates effectively.

- Additional Analysis

The role of cultural norms in shaping health behavior is also an essential factor. In some communities, traditional practices and beliefs may conflict with modern health recommendations, limiting the effectiveness of socialization programs. Understanding and addressing these cultural dynamics can improve the community's acceptance and implementation of stunting prevention initiatives.

Moreover, the accessibility and quality of health services significantly influence community participation. In rural areas, limited infrastructure and resources often hinder the delivery of effective health programs. Enhancing healthcare infrastructure and ensuring equitable access to nutrition and maternal care are vital to reducing stunting prevalence.

Finally, the sustainability of stunting prevention programs depends on continuous evaluation and adaptation. Monitoring community participation levels and outcomes allows local authorities to identify gaps and implement timely interventions. Sustainable efforts must include consistent funding, training for healthcare workers, and community empowerment to achieve long-term results in combating stunting.

➤ DISCUSSION

After collecting all the research data and interview results, this section provides a detailed discussion of the findings based on the research indicators used, as follows:

1. Community Participation in Preventing Stunting in Toddlers in Boddie Village, Mandalle Subdistrict, Pangkep Regency

The awareness and understanding of nutrition and healthy lifestyles remain significant challenges for the local government of Boddie Village in improving public health. Recognizing the importance of the younger generation as the nation's future and the need to enhance child health indicators in Indonesia, the government is intensively addressing stunting cases, which still affect a considerable number of Indonesian toddlers and children.

Stunting refers to a condition of growth failure in children under five caused by chronic malnutrition, leading to shorter stature and developmental delays. According to the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia remains high, reaching 30.8%. Knowledge about appropriate complementary feeding (MPASI) following WHO recommendations is still lacking among many communities.

This serious issue requires urgent action to increase the knowledge, understanding, and awareness of mothers with children under two years old about the importance of adequate nutrition for children aged 6–23 months to prevent stunting. Efforts to enhance maternal awareness and understanding of adequate child nutrition must involve all stakeholders. This includes not only the government but also universities, individuals, health-focused NGOs, and other organizations. Collective efforts are essential to address this issue, as it concerns Indonesia's future, particularly its next generation.

The nutritional problem of stunting in toddlers can hinder child development, with negative effects that persist throughout their lives. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), stunting is a linear growth disorder caused by insufficient nutritional intake or chronic infectious diseases, characterized by a height-for-age Z-score (HAZ) below -2 standard deviations (SD). Poverty is still considered a significant factor contributing to stunting in toddlers. Poor households often struggle to meet their children's nutritional needs, increasing the risk of stunting. Such conditions inhibit children's growth and development, potentially resulting in a lower quality of human resources.

To raise community awareness about early childhood development, the village government has implemented socialization activities on stunting prevention and management in collaboration with local health centers (Puskesmas) and the Pangkep Regency Health Office. These programs, involving village officials, local institutions, and community leaders, aim to disseminate information to the broader community, emphasizing the importance of sufficient nutritional intake for toddlers.

As stunting has become a national issue, it has drawn attention from all levels of government, from the national and regional levels to local villages. Efforts are being made to minimize stunting cases, contributing to the creation of a healthy and superior human resource base.

2. Factors Influencing Community Participation in Preventing Stunting in Toddlers in Boddie Village, Mandalle Subdistrict, Pangkep Regency

Stunting is a linear growth disorder, and when it occurs during the critical period of brain development (0–3 years), it can adversely affect cognitive and physical development. In the long term, it may reduce intellectual capacity and productivity, increase the risk of degenerative diseases, and lead to low birth weight or premature births in the next generation. Growth is influenced by direct factors such as nutrition and indirect factors, including exclusive breastfeeding, gender, maternal height, maternal education, and economic status.

The study findings align with Jayasman (2012), who stated that an individual's education level can influence work quality. Higher education enhances the ability, knowledge, and behavioral changes that positively affect community participation in stunting prevention. Similarly, Thara (2014) observed that individuals with adequate education levels exhibit higher work motivation and commitment.

One of the indirect causes of stunting is the family's socioeconomic status, which is closely tied to parental education levels. Higher education increases the likelihood of earning sufficient income, enabling families to live in healthier environments and provide quality nutrition. However, parents with demanding jobs often neglect their children's health needs, even though these children require attention and care to thrive.

This observation aligns with Sulistyoningsih's perspective that increased income enhances the ability to purchase higher-quality and more nutritious food. Conversely, reduced income limits access to nutritious food, both in quality and quantity, which can exacerbate stunting risks. Addressing stunting requires a holistic approach that incorporates improved education, economic support, and sustained community engagement, alongside proactive health and nutritional interventions.

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Conclusion**

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that community participation plays a crucial role in preventing stunting in toddlers, particularly in Boddie Village, Mandalle Subdistrict, Pangkep Regency. A lack of awareness and understanding about nutrition and healthy lifestyles remains a significant challenge. Efforts to address stunting require comprehensive and collaborative

initiatives involving various stakeholders, including the government, educational institutions, NGOs, and the community itself.

The main factors influencing community participation include education, socioeconomic status, and maternal knowledge about proper nutrition and child development. Higher levels of education and income are associated with better nutritional practices and health outcomes for children, while poverty and insufficient awareness exacerbate the risks of stunting. Addressing these challenges is essential to improving the quality of human resources and ensuring the nation's future.

Stunting prevention is not merely a health issue but also a developmental priority that requires sustained efforts at all levels, from local communities to national policymaking. Raising awareness, improving education, and providing access to nutritious food are fundamental strategies for combating stunting and fostering a healthier, more productive generation.

- **Recommendations**

To address the issue of stunting in toddlers, several actions should be taken. First, health education programs need to be conducted regularly, particularly targeting mothers and caregivers, to raise awareness about the importance of adequate nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, and complementary feeding practices for children under two years old. These programs should be tailored to the local context and easily accessible to all members of the community.

Additionally, it is essential to foster partnerships between the government, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and NGOs to create comprehensive stunting prevention initiatives. Such collaborations should include the training of healthcare workers, organizing community outreach efforts, and implementing long-term nutritional interventions that address the root causes of stunting.

Another important aspect is the improvement of socioeconomic conditions for families, especially those facing economic hardships. Providing economic empowerment opportunities, such as vocational training and microfinance programs, can help increase household income, thereby reducing the barriers to access nutritious food and healthcare.

A robust monitoring and evaluation system is crucial for assessing the effectiveness of stunting prevention efforts. Regular data collection and analysis

will allow stakeholders to identify challenges and take corrective actions as needed to ensure the programs are reaching the desired outcomes.

Finally, advocacy for policies that prioritize child health and nutrition is necessary. Local and national policies should focus on increased funding for health services, enhancing maternal education, and developing infrastructure to support healthy environments for children. These steps will collectively contribute to reducing stunting and promoting better health outcomes for future generations.

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