

Analysis of Factors Causing Stunting in Toddlers: A Case Study in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the causes of stunting in toddlers in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih, Sutera District, Pesisir Selatan Regency. Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that remains a serious public health challenge in Indonesia. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected over a period of two months, from June to July 2024, through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The study involved 10 informants, consisting of five parents of stunted toddlers, two village midwives, and three community leaders. The results show that stunting is caused by multiple interrelated factors: economic factors (poverty and limited purchasing power), cultural factors (inappropriate feeding practices and traditional beliefs), social factors (low education levels and early marriage), and environmental factors (poor sanitation and lack of clean water facilities). Addressing stunting requires a multi-sectoral approach, including strengthening public education, improving family economic welfare, and enhancing collaboration between the government, health workers, and the community.

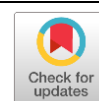
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INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition of failure to grow in children characterized by height that is not appropriate for their age due to chronic malnutrition for a long time. Globally, stunting is still one of the most serious nutritional problems and is widely experienced by children under the age of five. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), there are around 148 million children under five in the world who are stunted, most of whom are in developing countries. Stunting not only has an impact on physical growth, but also inhibits cognitive and motor development, as well as increases the risk of disease and decreases productivity in adulthood, thus threatening the quality of human resources and economic development of a country.

In Indonesia, stunting is still a major challenge in the field of public health. The government has made stunting reduction a national priority program as stated in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. Based on the 2022 Indonesian Nutrition Status Survey (SSGI), the prevalence of stunting nationally reached 21.6%, down from 24.4% in 2021, but still above the threshold set by the WHO of 20%. The government targets a reduction in stunting rates of up to 14% by 2024 through various cross-sectoral programs that include improving nutrition, health education, and family welfare (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Regionally, West Sumatra Province shows almost the same pattern. Based on the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI), the prevalence of stunting in West Sumatra decreased from 25.2% in 2022 to 23.6% in 2023. However, this figure still exceeds the WHO standard limit. Factors that affect the still high stunting rate include economic limitations, low parental education, unhealthy cultural practices, and inadequate sanitation and access to clean water.

At the local level, the problem of stunting is still found in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih, Sutera District, South Pesisir Regency. Based on the results of interviews at the Nagari Office (April 18, 2024), it was recorded that 171 children under five were stunting in 2022, increasing to 174 in 2023, and 193 in 2024. This condition shows that stunting cases have not been significantly suppressed. Based on the results of field observations, households with poor sanitation, limited access to clean water, and unhealthy living behaviors, such as smoking habits near children and pregnant women, are still found. In addition, low family economic factors cause some pregnant women to stay working late at night to help their family income, so that rest time and nutritional intake are not optimal.

Based on this description, it can be concluded that the stunting problem in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih is the result of the interaction of various factors, both economic, social, cultural, and environmental. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the main causes of stunting in the region. A comprehensive understanding of the factors that cause stunting will help local governments, health workers, and the community in designing integrated and sustainable intervention strategies to support the national target of reducing stunting rates in Indonesia.

Based on the interview data I conducted on Thursday, April 18 at the Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih Wali Office, there were 171 toddlers in 2022, and 174 toddlers in 2023, after that in 2024 there were 193 toddlers who were stunted, there was an increase and decrease every month, so in the last 3 years in 2024 there was an increase in stunting, which was 193. In Nagari Rawang, Mount Malelo Surantih is divided into 2 villages, namely Rawang and Mount Maleo, the stunting rate is also different, the high stunting rate is in the village of Mount Maleo.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of the causes of stunting in toddlers in Nagari Rawang, Gunung Malelo Surantih. The selection of informants is carried out by purposive sampling technique, which is the determination of informants based on certain considerations in accordance with the purpose of the research.

The informants in this study amounted to 10 people, consisting of 5 parents of stunted toddlers, 2 village midwives, 2 community leaders, and 1 state official. The criteria for informants include: (1) having children under five who are identified as stunting based on posyandu or puskesmas data, (2) domiciled in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih for at least the last two years, and (3) willing to provide information openly and honestly during the interview process.

Primary data was obtained through participatory observation and in-depth interviews with informants, while secondary data was collected from health agency documents, local government reports, and relevant previous research results.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994) which included three main stages, namely: (1) data reduction, to simplify and focus important information; (2) data presentation, to systematically organize findings in the form of narratives and tables; and (3) conclusion or verification, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that cause stunting at the research site.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An Overview of Stunting in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih

Based on the results of field research, the stunting rate in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih shows the difference between the two main villages. In 2024, there will be 127 cases of stunting in Kampung Gunung Malelo, while in Kampung Rawang there will be only 66 cases. This shows that stunting cases are more common in areas with lower economic and sanitation conditions.

The characteristics of stunted children found in posyandu include height that is not appropriate for age, slow motor development, fatigue easily, and low level of activity compared to other children of their age. This condition is influenced by unbalanced nutritional intake since pregnancy, suboptimal breastfeeding, and poor nutrition of MP-ASI.

Factors Causing Stunting

Economic Factors

Limited family income is the main cause of low purchasing power for nutritious food. Many parents prioritize daily basic needs over children's nutritional needs. In addition, some people use water sources that have not been tested for feasibility for consumption because they cannot afford to buy clean water.

The distance of residence to the market and limited access to transportation also hinder families from obtaining nutritious foodstuffs. Weak economic conditions make some pregnant women not routinely check their pregnancy because they consider the cost of transportation and health services.

Cultural Factors

Traditional culture and beliefs have a great influence on people's lifestyles. Some pregnant women still do strenuous physical activities or work late at night, and eat foods that lack nutritional value because they follow old habits.

In addition, there are still traditional medicine practices such as "massage" during pregnancy or taking a sick child to a shaman rather than to a midwife. This is done because the cost of traditional medicine is cheaper and is considered proven based on hereditary experience. This kind of mindset causes people to be reluctant to take advantage of formal health services.

Social Factors

The low level of education of parents, especially mothers, hinders the understanding of the importance of child nutrition and health. Some mothers get married at a young age, so they do not have enough knowledge about parenting and reproductive health.

In addition, awareness to carry out pregnancy checks and bring children to posyandu regularly is still low. This shows the need to increase public education about the importance of maternal and child health from pregnancy.

Environmental Factors

Unclean environmental conditions are also a significant factor in the cause of stunting. There are still many families who do not have healthy latrines and defecate around the house. Behaviors such as smoking indoors also increase the risk of respiratory tract infections in children, which has an impact on impaired growth.

Lack of access to clean water and proper sanitation makes children more susceptible to diarrheal diseases and other infections, which directly affect the absorption of nutrients.

Government and Health Workers Efforts

The Nagari government and village midwives have made various efforts to prevent stunting, such as:

- Hold a regular posyandu every month*
- Providing nutritious supplements to toddlers*
- Organizing socialization of a clean and healthy lifestyle*
- Assisting pregnant and breastfeeding women in an ongoing manner.*

However, the results of the study show that these efforts are not fully effective because they are still hit by people's mindsets and habits that are difficult to change. Many families only participate in health activities temporarily without applying them consistently in their daily lives.

Theoretis Analysis

Based on the theory of symbolic interactionism by Herbert Mead, the phenomenon of stunting in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih can be understood through social interaction and symbolic meaning formed in society. The elements of mind, self, and society explain that people's mindsets and actions are formed from social habits and cultural beliefs that are inherited from generation to generation.

In this context, symbols and social interactions, such as "belief in shamans" or "massage habits", become a strong social meaning and influence people's health behaviors. Therefore, behavior change efforts require a more participatory socio-cultural approach so that health messages can be accepted and internalized by the community.

The problem of stunting in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih is influenced by economic, cultural, social, and environmental factors that interact with each other. Although the government and health workers have made efforts to reduce stunting rates, changing people's behavior is still a major challenge. Improving education, strengthening the family economy, and improving sanitation and a clean lifestyle are the keys to success in reducing stunting rates in this region.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of a study on the Analysis of the Causes of Stunting in Toddlers in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih, Sutera District, South Pesisir Regency in 2025, it can be concluded that the problem of stunting in this region is caused by various interrelated factors, namely parenting and low maternal knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, and proper provision of MP-ASI; environmental factors and limited access to clean water that lead to an increased risk of infections such as diarrhea; socio-economic factors in the form of low levels of education and family income that affect the ability to provide nutritious food and access health services; as well as cultural factors and traditional customs that are still strong such as "massage" during pregnancy and taking sick children to a shaman, which has the potential to ignore important medical aspects. Overall, the stunting phenomenon in Nagari Rawang Gunung Malelo Surantih reflects the relationship between knowledge, economy, culture, and the environment in shaping people's behavior towards maternal and child health. Therefore, it is recommended that the government and health workers increase socialization and continuous education about nutrition, sanitation, and care for pregnant women, as well as strengthen posyandu programs and provide nutritious supplementary food. The public, especially the elderly, are expected to better understand the importance of nutrition and healthy parenting by abandoning old habits that are not in accordance with health principles. Meanwhile, for future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the research area and add quantitative analysis to measure more deeply the influence of each factor that causes stunting.

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