

The Role of the Community and Health Workers in Preventing Stunting in Tuapeijat Village, Mentawai Province

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*Lise Asnur, Siti Sahara, Tega Sukardi, M Abdurrahman Effendi, Lidia Ramatul Fadila, Diva Tri Delviyanti^{abcdef}

¹²³⁴⁵⁶Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: liseasnur1@gmail.com

A B S T R A C T

This article presents a qualitative analysis of the collaborative roles between the community and health workers in stunting prevention efforts within Tuapeijat Village, Mentawai Islands, a region confronting significant geographical challenges and limited healthcare facilities. Through interviews with key informants (parents, Posyandu cadres, midwives, and health center staff), the study found that the community actively participates in Posyandu and nutrition counseling, although effectiveness is constrained by limited knowledge and access to nutritional resources. Meanwhile, health workers function as facilitators and educators by monitoring child growth and providing interventions, but are hindered by constraints in personnel and facilities. Therefore, the success of stunting prevention highly depends on a strong synergy between these two parties, implemented through culturally appropriate approaches, thus emphasizing the need to focus on community empowerment and capacity building of health workers to foster a healthier future generation.

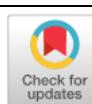
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INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a complex and urgent public health problem, influenced by various factors including parenting, maternal nutritional status during pregnancy, environmental sanitation, and access to health services (Hatijar, 2023). Nationally, the prevalence of stunting is still at an alarming rate [e.g., 21.5% in 2024], while in West Sumatra Province, the figure reaches [e.g., 23.0%], well above the global target. More specifically, in the Mentawai Islands region, extreme geographical challenges and limited health facilities are the main obstacles that exacerbate stunting prevention intervention efforts. Therefore, in Tuapeijat Village, strengthening the active role of local communities is very crucial in optimizing existing resources to reduce stunting rates and support healthy child growth.

The people of Tuapeijat Village have a strategic role as the front line in increasing awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition and good parenting. Through mutual cooperation activities and Posyandu groups, residents can share information and experiences with each other regarding the provision of nutritious food, environmental cleanliness, and the importance of immunization. The active involvement of parents, especially mothers, in participating in child nutrition and health counseling is the main key to preventing stunting from an early age (Syafrianto et al., 2024).

Collaboration between the community and health workers is also seen in the implementation of government programs such as supplementary feeding (PMT) and complete immunization. The community plays a role in supporting the implementation of the program by ensuring the presence of children at the posyandu and following the recommendations of health workers. Meanwhile, health workers in charge of organizing and supervising the implementation of programs so that they run effectively and on target (Sugiyatmi, 2024).

The importance of continuous education is also the main focus in stunting prevention. Health workers need to develop counseling methods that are easy to understand and in accordance with the local culture so that health messages can be well received by the community. The use of local media, such as customary gatherings and mothers' groups, can be an effective means of disseminating information about child nutrition and health.

Through strong synergy between the community and health workers, it is hoped that stunting prevention efforts in Tuapeijat Village can run more optimally, so that future generations can grow healthily and have maximum potential for a better future.

METHOD

This study uses a type of descriptive qualitative research with a case study approach to examine in depth the collaborative role of communities and health workers in stunting prevention. The location of the research was specifically determined in Tuapeijat Village, Mentawai Islands Regency. The selection of this location is based on the unique case of the region facing dual challenges: high stunting rates and geographical accessibility barriers as well as limited health infrastructure, which makes the role of local synergy crucial.



The interview process was conducted using a list of open-ended questions designed to explore the understanding, experience, and role of each party in stunting prevention efforts. The questions were focused on aspects such as child parenting, nutrition, implementation of health programs, and challenges faced in the implementation of stunting prevention activities.

The data obtained from the interviews were then analyzed qualitatively with descriptive techniques to identify the main themes and patterns that emerged related to the role of the community and health workers. Pendekatan This allows researchers to comprehensively understand the social and health dynamics that occur in Tuapeijat Village and provide a clear picture of the contribution of both parties in preventing stunting. By using the interview method, this study is expected to provide rich and contextual insights into effective stunting prevention strategies in accordance with local conditions in the Mentawai Islands.

Data is collected through three main techniques:

In-depth Interview: Conducted directly using an open-ended question guide to explore each party's understanding, experience, and role in stunting prevention (Rivaldi et al., 2023).

Observation: Direct observation of Posyandu activities, interaction patterns between health workers and the community, and environmental sanitation conditions in Tuapeijat Village.

Documentation: Secondary data collection in the form of records of the Puskesmas program, reports on Posyandu activities, and local stunting prevalence data.

The qualitative data collected was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman Interactive Model which involved three interrelated activity streams: Data Reduction (sorting of relevant data), Data Presentation (matrices, tables), and Drawing of Conclusions/Verification. To ensure the validity and validity of the data, the Source Triangulation technique is used, which is comparing information obtained from different informants (community, health workers) on the same topic, to reach tested and contextual conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of interviews with the people of Tuapeijat Village, it can be seen that awareness of the importance of stunting prevention is starting to increase, although there are still several obstacles faced. Parents, especially mothers, recognize the importance of nutritious food and good parenting, but limited knowledge and access to nutritional resources are major challenges. This shows the need for more intensive and sustainable education so that the public can comprehensively understand the impact of stunting and how to prevent it.

Interviews with posyandu cadres and health workers such as midwives revealed that they are actively monitoring child growth and providing nutritional counseling to families. However, the limited manpower and health facilities in Tuapeijat Village are obstacles in the optimal implementation of the program. Health workers also said that community support is very important in the success of stunting prevention programs, especially in terms of active participation in posyandu activities and other government programs.

Interaction between the community and health workers established through posyandu activities and counseling is one of the key factors in increasing the effectiveness of stunting prevention. Communities that are actively involved in health programs show increased understanding and behavior changes in child parenting and nutrition. This emphasizes the importance of a participatory approach that involves both parties synergically.

In addition, the interview also revealed that the communication methods used by health workers need to be adjusted to local culture and customs so that health messages can be well received. The use of easy-to-understand language and relevant counseling media are factors that support the success of nutrition education in the community.

The Role of the Community in Preventing Stunting

Based on the results of interviews with the people of Tuapeijat Village, the role of the community is very important in efforts to prevent stunting. Parents, especially mothers, play a direct role in providing adequate nutritional intake and good parenting for their children. The community also actively participates in posyandu activities and mothers' groups which are a means of education and monitoring of children's growth. However, the interview revealed that there are still obstacles in the form of limited knowledge about balanced nutrition and access to nutritious food resources. Therefore, continuous awareness and education are needed so that the community can carry out this role optimally.

The Role of Health Workers in Preventing Stunting

Health workers in Tuapeijat Village, such as midwives and posyandu cadres, have a strategic role in providing counseling, monitoring, and nutrition interventions to the community. From the results of the interviews, health workers actively conduct regular child growth checks, provide nutritional supplementation, and provide counseling to families regarding diet and child care. However, the limited number of health workers and facilities is a challenge in the implementation of the stunting prevention program to the maximum. Health workers also emphasized the importance of effective communication and the use of counseling methods that are in accordance with the local culture so that health messages can be well received by the community. Synergy between health workers and the community is the key to success in reducing stunting rates in the region.

Overall, the results of the interviews confirmed that the roles of the community and health workers complement each other in efforts to prevent stunting in Tuapeijat Village. The community as the main actor in parenting and nutritional fulfillment, as well as health workers as extension workers and companions, must continue to work together to overcome existing obstacles and improve the quality of life of children in the region. An approach that focuses on community empowerment and capacity building of health workers is the right strategy to achieve this goal.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research conducted through interviews with the community and health workers in Tuapeijat Village, it can be concluded that the roles of both parties are

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very important and complementary in stunting prevention efforts. The community, especially parents and posyandu cadres, play an active role in providing adequate nutritional intake and implementing good parenting, although they still face obstacles in the form of limited knowledge and access to nutritional resources. Meanwhile, health workers play the role of facilitators, educators, and implementers of health programs that provide counseling, child growth monitoring, and nutrition interventions on a regular basis. Geographical constraints and limitations of health facilities in Tuapeijat Village are the main challenges that require strong synergy and collaboration between the community and health workers. A participatory and culturally based approach to the local, including the use of appropriate communication methods, is indispensable to improve the effectiveness of stunting prevention education and programs. With community empowerment and capacity building for health workers, it is hoped that stunting prevention efforts can run more optimally so that children in Tuapeijat Village can grow up healthy and have maximum potential for the future.

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