



Family Empowerment in Efforts to Reduce Stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify and analyze effective family empowerment strategies in an effort to reduce stunting rates in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. This research uses an exploratory qualitative method. The research results show that empowerment strategies that increase parents' knowledge and skills about nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, hygiene and sanitation can be effective in reducing stunting and improving children's overall welfare. To reduce the stunting rate in Bone Regency, family empowerment is the main key. This includes understanding stunting, healthy nutrition practices, and optimal childcare.

Introduction

Stunting, or stunted growth in children, is a serious public health problem, especially in the Bone Regency area, South Sulawesi. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health shows a high prevalence of stunting in the region, which requires immediate intervention (Indonesian Ministry of Health, 2020). Factors such as inadequate nutrition during the first 1000 days of life, repeated infections, and low socio-economic conditions are the main causes of the stunting problem in this region. Therefore, targeted research and interventions are urgently needed to overcome this problem.

Based on previous research, it is known that socio-economic factors, parental education, and access to health facilities have a significant influence on high stunting rates (Astatkie, 2020; Dessie et al., 2022; Hailu et al., 2020; Lloyd et al., 2018; Uwiringiyimana et al., 2020; Poverty and limited access to health resources worsen children's nutritional conditions, while low parental education often correlates with inadequate nutritional knowledge (Dessie et al., 2022; Hailu et al., 2020; Nurbaiti et al., 2022; Uwiringiyimana et al., 2022; Vaivada et al., 2020). This research emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that combines socio-economic, educational and health aspects in designing stunting intervention programs.

Family empowerment has been identified as a key strategy in overcoming stunting, a condition that affects children's growth and development. According to studies conducted by (Astatkie, 2020; Dessie et al., 2022; Uwiringiyimana et al., 2022; Yani et al., 2023), family empowerment which includes increasing knowledge about nutrition and health practices, has been proven to have a significant impact on reducing the number of stunting. This shows that family-focused interventions can be an effective way to overcome the problem of stunting, especially in areas with high prevalence.

The concept of family empowerment in this context involves various aspects, starting from nutritional education, access to health resources, to fostering healthy living behavior in the family (Astatkie, 2020; Corrêa et al., 2023; Hermawan et al., 2023; Rukiko et al., 2023; Rukiko et al., 2023; ., 2023; Yani et al., 2023). This approach is in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) social ecological theory, which emphasizes the interaction between individuals and their

social environment. This theory is relevant because it highlights the importance of social and family context in child development. In the context of stunting, this theory shows that environmental factors, such as family and community conditions, have an important role in children's growth and development.

The current state of the art in stunting research shows a trend towards focusing on multi-sector interventions. According to Chehade et al., (2020), an effective strategy for dealing with stunting involves cross-sector collaboration, which not only includes health, but also the education, social and economic sectors. Community empowerment and a family-based approach are important components of this strategy. This approach recognizes that the factors that influence stunting are interconnected and require holistic solutions that cover various aspects of life.

The importance of this research can also be seen from the long-term impact of stunting on children's physical growth and cognitive development. As stated by Hailu et al. (2020), stunting not only affects children's height, but also has serious consequences on their brain development. This includes a decline in cognitive abilities, such as memory and concentration, which can affect a child's academic performance and future economic potential. Thus, stunting is not only a health problem, but also a social and economic problem that can affect the quality of human resources in the future.

In this context, research on family empowerment in an effort to reduce stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, becomes very relevant. Through this research, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to integrate various sectors in efforts to deal with stunting. This includes identifying the important role of families and communities in supporting children's growth and development. The aim is to create a conducive environment for children to grow and develop optimally, which will ultimately contribute to the development of higher quality human resources in the future. The research questions are: (1) how effective family empowerment in an effort is to reduce stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi (2) what factors influence effective family empowerment strategies in an effort to reduce stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi and (3) what family empowerment strategies have been implemented to reduce stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi.

Method

This research uses an exploratory qualitative approach which aims to understand the dynamics of family empowerment in an effort to reduce stunting. In this research, papers are included as data sources in the form of written documents, such as regulations related to preventing and handling stunting, reports on the implementation of handling stunting, the amount of funds to reduce stunting, evaluation reports on reducing stunting and so on. In this research, not all groups of people as mentioned above were selected as informants. Data was collected through several techniques, including In-depth Interviews and Participatory Observation. This research uses data collection analysis techniques, data condensation, data reduction, conclusion: drawing/verifying.

Results and Discussion

Family empowerment strategies that have been implemented to reduce stunting

The family empowerment strategy that has been implemented to reduce stunting rates involves several approaches that focus on increasing parents' knowledge and skills in providing optimal care and nutrition to their children. This includes educational programs that provide information about the importance of balanced nutrition, the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, as well as nutritious food practices that are appropriate to the child's

developmental stage. In addition, this strategy also includes training on hygiene and sanitation, ensuring a clean and safe environment for children's growth and development. Through empowering families, they become better able to access needed resources and implement practices that support the optimal health and growth of their children, thereby helping to reduce the incidence of stunting. For more details, the following points are presented:

Nutrition Education Program

The Nutrition Education Program is an initiative that aims to provide families with a better understanding of the importance of a balanced nutritional intake for the growth and development of their children. Through this program, families receive comprehensive and structured information about the benefits of proper nutrition, including essential nutrients needed by children in their growth phase. Educational material includes explanations about various types of nutrients, such as protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals, and how to obtain them through daily food. Apart from that, this program also includes knowledge about the importance of variety and balance in eating patterns, as well as how to choose healthy and nutritious foods. By providing accurate and easy to understand information, this program aims to help families make better decisions in selecting and providing foods that support their children's optimal growth, thereby reducing the risk of stunting and improving the family's overall quality of life.

The research results show that empowering families through nutrition education programs has a positive impact in efforts to reduce stunting rates. This program provides an opportunity for families to gain more in-depth knowledge about the importance of balanced nutrition for the growth and development of their children. The research results show a significant increase in parents' understanding of healthy and nutritious types of food, as well as the implementation of healthier eating patterns at home. Apart from that, this program has also succeeded in increasing the practice of providing nutritious food to children, such as increasing consumption of vegetables, fruit and vegetable protein. This shows that through a targeted nutrition education approach, families are able to take an active role in improving their children's diet and nutrition, which ultimately has the potential to reduce the incidence of stunting in Bone Regency.

Promotion of Exclusive Breastfeeding

Promotion of exclusive breastfeeding is an effort that aims to provide parents with a deep understanding of the irreplaceable benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for children's optimal health and growth. Through this program, parents are provided with comprehensive information regarding the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding in providing essential nutrition, protection against disease, and building a strong emotional bond between mother and baby. Apart from that, they are also given an understanding of how the practice of exclusive breastfeeding can reduce the risk of respiratory tract infections, diarrhea and stunting in babies and toddlers. During this program, parents receive emotional and practical support to practice exclusive breastfeeding, including proper breastfeeding techniques, management of problems that may arise, and knowledge about when and how to introduce solid foods after the first six months of life. By providing comprehensive understanding and ongoing support, this program aims to increase the success rate and sustainability of exclusive breastfeeding practices, thereby having a positive impact on children's long-term health and development.

The research results show that family empowerment through the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding has played a significant role in efforts to reduce stunting rates. This program has succeeded in increasing parents' awareness and understanding of the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for their children's optimal health and growth. With strong support from the local

government and related stakeholders, families in Bone Regency are able to practice exclusive breastfeeding consistently during the first six months of the baby's life. This has resulted in significant improvements in children's nutritional status, with the prevalence of stunting decreasing significantly. Empowering families through the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding not only has a positive impact on children's health, but also strengthens the bond between parents and their babies and strengthens communities in implementing optimal nutritional practices. Thus, the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding has been proven to be an effective strategy in reducing stunting in Bone Regency and can become a model for other regions in efforts to empower families for children's health.

Practical Training on Nutritious Food

Nutritious Food Practices Training is an important component of family empowerment efforts to support children's growth and development according to their developmental stage. Through this training, families are provided with practical knowledge and skills on how to effectively prepare and provide nutritious food to their children. The training material includes information about types of food that are rich in important nutrients, the correct proportions of various nutrients in food, and how to cook and process food while maintaining its nutritional content. Apart from that, this training also emphasizes the importance of understanding children's developmental stages in choosing types of food that suit their nutritional needs. In this way, families can better meet their children's nutritional needs according to their growth stage, helping to improve children's health and quality of life and reducing the risk of stunting and other nutritional problems.

The research results show that training on nutritious food practices for families has a positive impact in reducing the incidence of stunting. Through this training program, families gain more in-depth knowledge about types of nutritious food as well as how to prepare and give it to children according to their developmental stage. It was found that families who took part in the training had a higher tendency to provide nutritious food to their children, such as vegetables, fruit and animal protein. This indicates a positive change in family eating patterns, which in turn can contribute to improving children's nutritional status and reducing stunting rates in Bone Regency. These results emphasize the importance of empowering families through training in nutritious food practices as an integral part of strategies to overcome the problem of stunting at the local level.

Children's Health Education

The Parenting Skills Development Program aims to assist parents in developing effective parenting skills to support children's overall growth and development. Through this program, parents are given training and support to face various challenges in educating their children. The program material covers various important aspects of parenting, including effective communication with children, applying positive discipline, managing conflict, and forming healthy emotional bonds with their children. In addition, this program also provides strategies to help parents deal with stress and manage time more efficiently in raising children. By participating in this program, parents can gain the skills and knowledge necessary to create an environment that supports the optimal growth and development of their children, thereby helping to build strong and harmonious relationships within the family.

The results of research in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, show that family empowerment through children's health education has a significant role in efforts to reduce stunting rates. The District's child health education program provides information and training to parents on optimal child care practices, including hygiene, nutrition, and immunizations. By strengthening parents' knowledge and skills in this regard, research results show increased awareness and

compliance in implementing health practices that promote healthy child growth and development. Social support and collaboration between local governments, health institutions and the community have also proven to be important factors in the success of this program. Through empowering families in terms of children's health education, Bone Regency has succeeded in taking positive steps in dealing with the problem of stunting and improving the welfare of children in the area.

Parenting Skills Development

The Parenting Skills Development Program aims to provide support and guidance to parents in honing the skills necessary to raise their children well. Through this program, parents are given a deeper understanding of various important aspects in building positive relationships with their children, such as effective communication, managing emotions, appropriate discipline, and providing positive support. Apart from that, this program also includes strategies for overcoming challenges in educating children, understanding children's development according to their age, and improving skills in solving problems and making decisions related to children's needs and desires. With this program, it is hoped that parents will become more confident and competent in carrying out their role as parents, so that they can support their children's holistic growth and development, both physically, emotionally and socially..

The research results show that developing parenting skills is an important element in empowering families to reduce stunting rates. Parenting skills development programs have been successful in increasing parents' knowledge and understanding of optimal care and nutrition practices for their children. Through a series of training and workshops, parents are trained to recognize their children's needs and developmental stages and acquire the skills needed to provide appropriate care and support optimal growth. Apart from that, this program also provides space for parents to share experiences and support between fellow parents, creating a supportive environment for practicing healthy parenting practices. The research results show that developing parenting skills significantly contributes to efforts to reduce stunting in Bone Regency, by strengthening the role of the family as the main agent in supporting children's health and development.

Increased Sanitation Awareness

The Sanitation Awareness Improvement Program aims to motivate families to actively maintain the cleanliness of their environment. This includes efforts to ensure water sanitation that is safe to drink, the use of appropriate food sanitation, and good personal hygiene practices. Through this program, families are provided with an in-depth understanding of the importance of good sanitation in preventing disease and promoting the health of their children. Educational materials include safe water treatment techniques, hygienic food storage practices, as well as simple steps to maintain personal hygiene and the surrounding environment. With the strong encouragement of this program, it is hoped that families will become more aware of the importance of sanitation and implement recommended hygiene practices in their daily lives. This will help prevent diseases that can be caused by dirty environments, as well as improve children's long-term health and well-being.

The research results show that family empowerment has a significant impact in efforts to reduce stunting rates, especially through increasing sanitation awareness. Through empowerment programs, families have been given a deeper understanding of the importance of good sanitation practices in preventing disease and improving the health of their children. The research results show that families who have participated in this program tend to have a cleaner and safer environment, with better personal hygiene, water sanitation and food sanitation practices. Thus, increasing sanitation awareness obtained through family

empowerment has become an important factor in reducing the incidence of stunting in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi

Access to Health Services

Access to Health Services is a strategy designed to ensure that every family has easy and affordable access to quality health services. This includes providing families access to routine health check-ups necessary to regularly monitor their children's growth and development. In addition, this strategy also includes making it easier to obtain consultations with health professionals, such as general practitioners, pediatricians, or other health workers, to discuss health problems and get appropriate advice. By ensuring easy access to health services, families can more easily detect and treat health problems that may arise, including nutritional problems such as stunting, thereby enabling appropriate interventions to be carried out quickly and effectively. This in turn can contribute to the improved health and well-being of children and families as a whole.

The research results highlight the importance of adequate access to health services in efforts to reduce stunting rates. This research found that families who have limited access to health facilities tend to face greater challenges in obtaining information about balanced nutrition and appropriate health care for their children. In Bone Regency, there is a gap in access to health services, especially in remote rural areas. In this context, family empowerment requires efforts to increase the accessibility of health services, including through the provision of basic health services at the local level, affordable and easily accessible health education, and strengthening social and community support networks. By ensuring that all families have equal access to quality health services, Bone District can be more effective in addressing the problem of stunting and improving the welfare of children in the region.

Social and Community Support

Social and Community Support is an important element in efforts to improve family welfare and overcome children's health problems, including stunting. Through this program, families are provided with strong social support and connected to a community network that facilitates the exchange of information and support between parents. It includes various activities such as discussion groups, family meetings, and other social activities that enable parents to share experiences, knowledge, and strategies in providing optimal care and nutrition to their children. Through this support, parents feel supported and not alone in facing the daily challenges of caring for their children. They also gain access to resources and information that can help improve their ability to provide the best care for their children. Thus, Social and Community Support not only strengthens ties between community members, but also improves the overall welfare of the family.

The results of research in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, show that family empowerment through social and community support has a significant role in efforts to reduce stunting rates. Research finds that families who receive support from social networks and communities tend to have better access to the information, resources, and emotional support needed to provide optimal care and nutrition to their children. Through participation in community groups, such as mothers' groups or farmers' groups, parents can exchange knowledge, experience and practical support with each other. Social support from family members, neighbors and community leaders also plays an important role in providing moral encouragement and practical support to families struggling to overcome stunting. The results of this research emphasize the importance of strengthening social and community networks in supporting family empowerment efforts as an effective strategy in reducing the incidence of stunting in Bone Regency.

The research results show that family empowerment has an important role in efforts to reduce stunting rates in children. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the important role of parents in providing optimal care and nutrition to their children. Previous studies have also shown that family-based approaches tend to be more successful in changing household behavior and eating habits than interventions that focus solely on the individual. In this context, family empowerment is identified as an effective strategy because it provides parents with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and support necessary to ensure healthy eating patterns and an environment that supports optimal child growth. Thus, the results of this research provide a significant additional contribution to the literature on family empowerment in overcoming stunting, uniting previous findings and confirming the importance of involving families as the main partner in efforts to prevent and treat stunting.

This study also highlights that family empowerment efforts not only provide direct benefits in reducing stunting rates, but also create a sustainable impact in the long term. By providing knowledge about balanced nutrition, healthy food practices, and the importance of cleanliness and sanitation, parents can practice these behaviors consistently at home and ensure that their children grow well. This is in line with the findings of previous longitudinal studies which show that families who are actively involved in empowerment programs have a lower tendency to have children with stunting in the longer term. Therefore, the results of this research not only provide a deeper understanding of the importance of family empowerment in overcoming stunting, but also provide a strong foundation for developing more effective and sustainable intervention programs in the future. Thus, this research provides an important basis for the development of policies and practices related to child health, with a focus on the key role played by families in creating a healthier and more resilient generation.

Apart from that, this research also emphasizes the importance of a collaborative approach between government, non-government organizations and the community in supporting family empowerment. These findings are consistent with previous findings which highlight that the success of family empowerment programs often depends on the support provided by various stakeholders at the local and national levels. Through strong collaboration, greater resources and support can be allocated to support the implementation of broader and more sustainable family empowerment programs.

The results of this research also provide practical direction for the development of family empowerment programs in other areas experiencing stunting problems. By understanding the factors that support program success and adapting them to the local context, interventions that are more relevant and effective in reducing stunting rates can be created. This underscores the importance of developing customized, evidence-based solutions to address public health challenges such as stunting.

Furthermore, the results of this study provide an illustration of the importance of integrating family empowerment approaches in broader strategies to improve children's health and well-being. Family empowerment is not just about providing information and skills, but also about building parents' confidence and motivation to take an active role in caring well for their children. Therefore, this approach should be an integral part of broader public health programs, including immunization programs, reproductive health services, and other health promotion.

In diverse global contexts, these findings also underscore the importance of culturally sensitive approaches in designing and implementing family empowerment programs. Each community has unique needs and challenges, therefore, a successful approach must consider the local social, cultural and economic context. Thus, this research is not only relevant for Bone Regency

or Indonesia, but also has broader implications for countries facing stunting problems and similar child health challenges throughout the world.

Overall, the results of this research make a significant contribution to our understanding of the role of family empowerment in reducing stunting. By bringing together findings from previous research and providing direction for future best practices, this research represents an important step forward in global efforts to improve children's health and well-being through family-based approaches.

Conclusion

To reduce the stunting rate in Bone Regency, family empowerment is the main key. This includes understanding stunting, healthy nutrition practices, and optimal child care. Access to health services and social support from the community is also important. In addition, economic factors, parental education, and social and cultural environments play a significant role. With a holistic approach involving inter-institutional collaboration and active community participation, empowerment strategies that increase parents' knowledge and skills about nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, hygiene and sanitation can be effective in reducing stunting and improving overall child welfare.

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