



Optimizing the Role of Public Administration in Policy and Stunting Reduction Program

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Abstract. *Stunting remains a chronic nutritional issue affecting human resource quality in Indonesia, particularly children under five years old. High prevalence of stunting impacts long-term cognitive development, physical growth, and productivity of the young generation (Ministry of Health, 2023). This community service aims to optimize the role of public administration in disseminating policies and programs to reduce stunting through education, training, and direct community assistance. Activities were carried out through coordination with government officials, community health cadres, and local leaders, using local communication media to raise awareness about nutrition. The results indicate an increase in community knowledge on stunting, balanced nutrition practices, and active involvement of both officials and residents in stunting reduction programs. Optimizing public administration through capacity building, cross-sector coordination, and information technology utilization supports program targets. This service recommends strategies for sustainable, participatory, and data-driven program implementation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a condition of growth failure in children due to chronic malnutrition that occurs in the first 1,000 days of life, from pregnancy to age two (World Health Organization, 2020). This condition not only impacts physical growth but also cognitive development, learning ability, and endurance. Children who experience stunting tend to have lower IQs, poor academic performance, and a higher risk of chronic diseases in adulthood. These long-term impacts make stunting a strategic public health issue, as it is directly linked to the quality of human resources and national productivity (National Population and Family Planning Agency, 2023).

In Indonesia, stunting remains a serious issue despite numerous nutritional and health interventions. Based on the 2023 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas), the national stunting prevalence was recorded at 21.6% in children under five (Ministry of Health, 2023). This figure shows a decrease compared to previous years, but remains far from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target, which emphasizes the elimination of stunting by 2030. The high stunting rate in various regions of Indonesia, particularly in rural areas and areas with high poverty rates, demonstrates that the problem of stunting is multidimensional, involving health, socioeconomic, educational, environmental, and public service capacity factors (Sari &

Nugroho, 2021).

Health and nutritional factors, such as inadequate protein, vitamin, and mineral intake, coupled with suboptimal feeding practices for mothers and children, are the direct causes of stunting. However, other determinants, such as low parental education, limited access to clean water and sanitation, and family economic conditions, also influence the incidence of stunting (Indrawati & Wahyuni, 2022). Therefore, addressing stunting cannot be achieved solely through a health approach but requires systematic cross-sectoral involvement, from local government, education, community empowerment, and the environmental sector.

Public administration plays a highly strategic role in this context. Its functions include planning, organizing, directing, and controlling government programs (Mulyadi & Prasetyo, 2022). In the context of stunting reduction, public administration is responsible for formulating evidence-based policies, organizing human resources and budgets, facilitating intersectoral coordination, and ensuring program monitoring and evaluation meet standards. This role is crucial because the effectiveness of stunting interventions depends not only on health programs but also on the public administration's ability to formulate strategies, manage implementation, and follow up on field findings quickly and accurately.

Furthermore, national policies related to stunting reduction in Indonesia have undergone significant development in recent years. The Stunting Reduction Acceleration Program (P2S) and the Balanced Nutrition Program are part of the government's efforts to systematically reduce stunting prevalence (Ministry of Health, 2023). However, the implementation of these programs faces obstacles, such as suboptimal cross-sectoral coordination, limited human resource capacity at the district and village levels, and minimal use of information technology for child growth monitoring. This situation indicates a gap between policies formulated at the central level and implementation on the ground, which can impact the achievement of stunting reduction targets.

The urgency of this research arises from the need to identify strategies for optimizing the role of public administration in stunting reduction programs. By understanding the role, challenges, and opportunities of public administration, policies and programs can be developed more effectively, efficiently, and responsive to community needs. This research aims to analyze the role of public administration in stunting reduction policies and programs and provide recommendations for data-driven, participatory, and sustainable implementation. Optimizing the role of public administration is expected to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination, improve the quality of program planning and implementation, and accelerate the achievement of national stunting reduction targets, thereby making a significant contribution to the

development of quality human resources in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This community service activity was designed with a participatory and collaborative approach, emphasizing the active involvement of government officials, integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, community leaders, and the target community. The implementation method was divided into several stages. The first stage was activity planning, which was carried out in coordination between the community service team, the Health Office, the Community Empowerment Office, and local village officials. At this stage, priority areas with a high prevalence of stunting were identified based on Riskesdas data and Health Office reports (Ministry of Health, 2023). Planning also included the development of outreach materials, nutrition training modules, activity schedules, and community communication strategies. The second stage was the dissemination of stunting reduction policies and programs. The community service team provided direct counseling to parents, pregnant women, and integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres regarding the importance of balanced nutrition, healthy eating patterns, and exclusive breastfeeding practices for children (WHO, 2020). Outreach was conducted using an interactive approach, group discussions, and local communication media such as posters, leaflets, and educational videos.

The third stage is training and mentoring, where integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres and village officials are trained in recording child growth, using nutrition modules, and conducting household-based nutrition monitoring. This mentoring is conducted directly in the field, including home visits to provide guidance on providing nutritious food to children and pregnant women (Sari & Nugroho, 2021). The fourth stage is monitoring and evaluation of activities, which includes recording community participation, levels of nutritional understanding, and gathering feedback from officials and the community. Evaluations are conducted periodically to assess the effectiveness of outreach, training, and mentoring, while also developing strategies for program sustainability. Through this method, community service is not only educational but also empowers communities to become key actors in stunting prevention, while strengthening public administration coordination with the community.

3. RESULTS

The implementation of community service demonstrated several significant achievements. First, there was an increase in community knowledge regarding stunting, balanced nutrition, and the practice of providing nutritious food to children under five.

Interactive outreach activities enabled mothers and families to understand the relationship between nutritional intake and child growth (Mulyadi & Prasetyo, 2022). Second, training and mentoring activities increased the capacity of integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres and village officials to record child growth, monitor nutritional status, and provide regular education to families. This strengthened the function of public administration at the village level as the spearhead of the stunting reduction program (Indrawati & Wahyuni, 2022).

Third, the community demonstrated positive responses and active involvement. Mothers and families participated in group discussions, practiced providing nutritious food, and adhered to child growth monitoring schedules. Cross-sector coordination between the community service team, the Health Office, and the village government became more structured, resulting in a clearer and more effective program implementation process. The community service results also demonstrated the use of simple technology for nutrition monitoring, such as recording child growth using spreadsheets and photographing nutritious food documentation, which facilitated regular program evaluation. Overall, the community service successfully built community awareness and public administration capacity, key factors in the success of the stunting reduction program in the target areas.

4. DISCUSSION

Reflections on community service activities indicate that optimizing the role of public administration is crucial to the success of stunting reduction programs. First, training human resources at the village level, including integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres and village officials, is highly effective in strengthening local capacity. This allows the program to continue even when the community service team is not always present in the field (Mulyadi & Prasetyo, 2022).

Second, cross-sectoral coordination between the Health Office, Community Empowerment Office, village officials, and the community is a key factor in success. Good coordination ensures targeted information distribution, regular child growth monitoring, and increased family motivation to participate in the program.

Third, challenges identified included limited training time, varying levels of community understanding, and limited access to remote areas. Solutions implemented included conducting home visits in stages, utilizing local communication media, and involving community leaders as key drivers.

This community service experience demonstrates the importance of a community-based, participatory approach. Empowered communities will better understand the importance

of balanced nutrition and be able to independently monitor their children's growth. Furthermore, the use of simple technology accelerates monitoring and facilitates the evaluation of program outcomes. This strategy demonstrates that public administration is not only a policy implementer but also a facilitator and controller of programs that support the success of community service (Indrawati & Wahyuni, 2022).

5. CONCLUSION

This community service project demonstrates the strategic role of public administration in the stunting reduction program. Optimizing this role can be achieved through: increasing human resource capacity, cross-sector coordination, active community participation, and utilizing information technology for nutrition monitoring. The community service activity successfully increased community knowledge, empowered integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, and strengthened public administration at the village level. Sustainability strategies for the activity are recommended, including routine mentoring, periodic outreach, and strengthening networks between relevant agencies to ensure the effective and sustainable stunting reduction program.

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