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# The Role of Posyandu Cadres in Reducing Malnutrition Rates (Stunting) in Toddlers in Belawan Sicanang Village, Medan Belawan District

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of Posyandu cadres in reducing malnutrition (stunting) among toddlers in Belawan Sicanang Village, Medan Belawan District. Thus, the research method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were generated and obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study illustrate that Posyandu cadres are central actors in mobilizing the community to be aware and care about health, especially in the implementation of Posyandu. They are not only implementers of activities, but also motivators, educators, and role models in the community. The success of the Posyandu program depends heavily on the consistency, communication skills, and dedication of the cadres in establishing good relationships with residents. There are several factors supporting the role of cadres in community empowerment, including: social closeness of cadres with the community, collaboration with community health centers and community leaders, and the availability of communication media. There are several factors inhibiting the role of cadres in community empowerment, such as: low health literacy, limited access and geographical conditions, and limited roles due to social relationships.

Keywords: Student perceptions, entrepreneurial motivation, entrepreneurial interest, P2MW

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Stunting remains a serious global problem that directly impacts the quality of future human resources. Data from the United Nations (UN) in 2020 recorded that more than 149 million children under five worldwide suffer from stunting, with Indonesia ranking fifth highest in the world. Nationally, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia reached 21.6%, which remains above the WHO threshold of <20%. In fact, in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, Indonesia has set a target of reducing stunting to 14% by 2024. Stunting not only impacts children's physical and intellectual aspects but also has long-term consequences for the country's economic growth and social inequality. Data from the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) showed that approximately 805,000 children suffer from malnutrition (wasting), demonstrating the urgency of early intervention to address this nutritional issue. Meanwhile, national interventions such as the National Strategy for Accelerating Stunting Prevention have been intensified, emphasizing the importance of sensitive nutrition, community involvement, and empowering integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres as the spearhead of basic health services.

According to the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey (SKI), the prevalence of stunting in North Sumatra (Sumut) has decreased from 21.1% (2022) to 18.9%. According to the 2023 SKI data, North Sumatra ranks ninth in Indonesia for the lowest stunting prevalence. This prevalence rate is also below the national rate of 21.5%. Nevertheless, efforts to reduce stunting must continue to prevent future increases. However, data from the Medan Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Community Empowerment, Population Control, and Family Planning Service (P3APMPPKB) Team, which conducted a Stunting Case Audit in Medan Belawan District, revealed that there were 60 stunted toddlers and a relatively high number of families at risk of stunting, amounting to 6,305. The two-day Stunting Case Audit sampled 30 individuals: 6 prospective brides, 6 pregnant

women, 6 breastfeeding mothers, and 12 toddlers. This audit focused on six sub-districts: Belawan I, Belawan II, Belawan Bahari, Belawan Bahagia, Belawan Sicanang, and Bagan Deli.

According to 2022 data on stunting in toddlers from the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bapeda), Sicanang Sub-district in Medan Belawan District had the highest number of affected children, with 67 cases. In February 2022, there were 58 toddlers experiencing stunting. In August of the same year, the number of stunted toddlers decreased to 20. Furthermore, the latest data in February 2024 showed an increase of two toddlers experiencing stunting, bringing the total to 22. One of the measures taken is the establishment of integrated health posts (Posyandu). The Indonesian government has implemented health programs such as Posyandu to improve the quality of public health, particularly for mothers and children. Health cadres play a crucial role in providing health services to the community, as they serve as the spearhead of the Posyandu program. Posyandu cadres are responsible for all activities carried out there. When services are well received by the community, the presence of important and strategic cadres will have a positive impact on community concern and involvement.

Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to determine the extent of the role of Posyandu Cadres in Reducing Malnutrition Rates (Stunting) in Toddlers in Belawan Sicanang Village, Medan Belawan District. This research is expected to provide scientific and practical contributions in strengthening the role of Posyandu cadres, as well as being the basis for more appropriate policies in efforts to accelerate the reduction of stunting sustainably in regions in Indonesia.

## The Role of Posyandu Cadres

Posyandu cadres play a crucial role in promotive and preventive efforts to address stunting. They are at the forefront of monitoring toddler growth and development, providing nutrition education to mothers, and recording and reporting children's nutritional status. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2019), "Posyandu cadres are members of the community trained to help provide basic health information and services, especially for mothers and children." Posyandu cadres act as intermediaries between health workers and the community, thereby increasing access to health services. They actively participate in toddler weighing, supplementary feeding, health education, and monitoring pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Haris Abdul (2023) state that, "Stunting not only impacts a child's physical growth but also brain development, resulting in low intelligence and productivity in the future." Therefore, the presence of active cadres is a vital strategy in preventing and reducing stunting rates.

## Posyandu Cadres

According to WHO (2015), community health cadres are selected and trained community members who collaborate closely with health care facilities to address individual and community health issues. Ida et al. (2017:11) explain that Posyandu is an integrated service communication forum that provides various types of health services, such as immunizations, toddler weighing, family planning services, and nutrition counseling, organized by community cadres in collaboration with health workers. The National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN) (2013:5) details the roles of cadres as:

- 1. Mentor: Helping identify obstacles and solutions in community life.
- 2. Motivator: Providing encouragement and building positive attitudes in the community.
- 3. Facilitator: Making it easier for the community to access health services.
- 4. Catalyst: Encouraging changes in community behavior.
- 5. Planner: Developing and formulating the goals and needs of health activities.

According to Supriyanto (2016:32), "A change agent is an individual who acts as a catalyst and manages the changes that occur. They influence target groups to make decisions in the desired direction." In this context, Posyandu cadres act as change agents in raising public awareness, especially pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, about the importance of nutrition and healthy lifestyles. They also play an educational role through counseling and household visits.

## **Definition of Stunting**

According to the WHO (2021), "Stunting is impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infections, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation." Meanwhile, according to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2016), stunting is defined as a toddler with a height-for-age (H/A) z-score of less than -2 SD based on the WHO-MGRS standard. Haris Abdul (2024) emphasized that "Stunting reflects chronic malnutrition that impacts physical growth, bone health, and long-term brain development." Stunting has serious impacts in both the short and long term. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2016), the short-term impacts include impaired brain development, physical growth, and metabolic function. Long-

term impacts include: High risk of chronic disease, Impaired reproductive function, Low productivity, Impaired cognitive and academic achievement. WHO (2021) adds that stunting contributes to increased child mortality and morbidity globally, as well as worsening quality of life in adulthood. Addressing stunting requires a holistic approach from pregnancy to the age of two (the first 1,000 days of life). Prevention strategies include: Routine growth and development monitoring, Exclusive breastfeeding and nutritious complementary foods, Complete immunization, Nutritional health education by Posyandu cadres, Improved sanitation and the environment. By implementing various ways to prevent or overcome stunting in toddlers above, it is hoped that it can minimize the potential for stunting in children in Indonesia. Continue to implement clean and healthy lifestyle behaviors and immediately seek examination at a health facility if any symptoms of the disease occur.

#### **METHODS**

The type of research used by the author in this study is qualitative research with the type of field research. Qualitative methods are methods that reveal facts and realities of existing social phenomena and social realities (Hariyanto, 2023). The author took the research location in Neighborhood XII, Belawan Sicanang Village, Medan Belawan District, Medan City. The research implementation time was carried out in October 2024 - December 2024. The subjects in this study consisted of 4 Posyandu cadres and 1 parent of a toddler. Data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, documentation and combination/triangulation (observation, interviews and documentation). to conduct qualitative data analysis, according to Miles, et al. (2014): namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Therefore, this study aims to explain "The Role of Posyandu Cadres in Reducing Malnutrition (Stunting) in Toddlers in Belawan Sicanang Village, Medan Belawan District".

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### Cadres as Motivators

The role of cadres as motivators is central to the success of integrated health service posts (Posyandu). They are responsible for providing encouragement, enthusiasm, and inspiration to the community to encourage change and actively participate in various health activities. Based on interviews and observations, Ms. AA explained that a good motivational strategy is to "invite" the community, namely by persuasively engaging them and explaining the benefits of Posyandu. She also emphasized the importance of revisiting parents of toddlers to evaluate whether the education provided has been understood and implemented. This demonstrates that motivation is not simply about providing information, but also ensuring that the information is meaningful and encourages action. Ms. YR emphasized the importance of communicative, contextual, and practice-based education as the primary approach. She explained the functional benefits of immunization and Posyandu, even using the positive experiences of toddlers who regularly attend Posyandu as inspirational examples. Ms. WH also emphasized the importance of "mobilizing" the community with a personal and communicative approach to encourage residents to attend Posyandu. This demonstrates that active and consistent personal communication is key to community motivation. Ms. HS (a community member) confirmed that the cadres actively involved the community in planning and provided space for their ideas, demonstrating a two-way relationship that motivated participation.

Conclusion: The motivating cadres used a personal approach, relevant education, and concrete examples to raise community awareness and willingness to participate in Posyandu activities for the health of their toddlers.

#### Cadres as Facilitators

The role of cadres as facilitators involves the ability to design, organize, and implement activities, as well as providing facilities to support program sustainability. They ensure information is conveyed clearly and activities run smoothly. Based on interviews and observations, Ms. AA highlighted the challenge of conveying clear and accurate information, especially given the varying knowledge backgrounds of the community. She addressed this by simplifying the information without changing the meaning, demonstrating her ability to adapt her communication style. Ms. YR revealed the biggest challenge was dealing with toddlers who refused injections or whose fathers forbade them for fear of fever. This demonstrates the role of facilitators in overcoming obstacles in the field, both in terms of resistance and community concerns. Ms. WH emphasized that many communities are unfamiliar with the concept of a community health post (Posyandu), so the role of facilitators is to provide repeated education and conduct door-to-door outreach to increase understanding and participation. Ms. HS (a community member) directly experienced positive changes, such as more attention

and tailoring of nutritious food for toddlers, demonstrating that cadres have successfully addressed the community's specific needs.

Conclusion: The facilitator cadre ensures that Posyandu activities are accessible and understandable to all levels of society, by overcoming communication and logistical barriers, and adapting the approach to the needs of the audience.

#### Cadres as Catalysts

The role of cadres as catalysts is to act as liaisons, guides, and supporters of the activities or programs being implemented. They spark and accelerate positive change in the community without doing all the work themselves. Based on interviews and observations, Ms. AA faced challenges as a community motivator and mobilizer, primarily due to misconceptions about immunization (fear of fever). Her role was to provide clarification and practical solutions (such as fever-reducing medication) to address these concerns. Ms. YR also faced community skepticism about immunization, particularly from fathers of toddlers. Her catalytic role was to provide reassuring explanations and provide solutions for minor post-immunization side effects. Ms. WH mentioned that nurturing and engaging the community are crucial catalysts. Cadres serve as the initial spark that ignites the fire of change, triggering and accelerating important processes leading to improved community health. Ms. HS (community leader) saw increased participation thanks to cadre communication strategies, such as home visits, the use of WhatsApp groups, and posting schedules, which effectively accelerated information dissemination and engagement.

Conclusion: Catalyst cadres function as proactive agents of change, bridging information gaps, overcoming resistance, and triggering community participation through persuasive communication and the provision of practical solutions.

#### Cadres as Mentors

The role of cadres as mentors is realized through a warm and supportive interpersonal approach. They provide mentoring, guidance, and moral and practical support to the community. Based on interviews and observations, Mrs. AA actively assists parents of toddlers who experience obstacles, such as embarrassment or anxiety due to their child's nutritional status. She does not judge, but rather provides understanding and solutions, refers them to the community health center if necessary, and listens to their concerns. Mrs. YR also provides mentoring and coaching in a persuasive and solution-oriented manner. She strives to understand the psychological, social, and economic barriers faced by mothers and chooses a supportive rather than judgmental approach. Mrs. WH demonstrates a strong concern for the community's psychological well-being. Through direct, non-judgmental dialogue, she creates a supportive atmosphere and encourages a shift in mindset regarding the importance of monitoring child growth and development. Mrs. HS (a community member) directly experiences the role of cadres as mentors, providing emotional, social, and practical support. Cadres not only provide information but also build personal relationships, motivate, and provide direct examples of how to prepare nutritious food. Conclusion: The mentoring cadres build strong relationships with the community, provide empathetic support, and guide them to overcome obstacles and take positive steps for toddler health.

## Cadres as Planners

The role of cadres as planners involves active involvement in developing service steps, assigning tasks, and setting activity targets. They ensure that integrated health post (Posyandu) activities are systematic and effective. Based on interviews and observations, Mrs. AA indicated that cadres routinely hold coordination meetings before Posyandu activities to set targets, assign tasks, prepare equipment, and determine strategic approaches for special cases such as malnourished toddlers. Mrs. YR is actively and systematically involved in planning, from assigning tasks, compiling toddler attendance lists, preparing measuring instruments, to planning home visits for absent toddlers. She also proposed creative ideas such as PMT cooking demonstrations. Mrs. WH also plays a planning role by identifying absent toddlers, compiling home visit lists, assigning tasks in a structured manner, and devising alternative PMT menus that align with local resources. Mrs. HS (community leader) stated that cadres involve the community in every planning process, demonstrating a participatory approach that makes planning more relevant to community needs.

Conclusion: The planning cadre ensures that every Posyandu activity is well-structured, from logistical preparation to outreach strategies, so that services can run effectively and efficiently, and be on target in efforts to reduce stunting.

#### **DISCUSSION**

This study, through in-depth interviews and observations with three Posyandu (Integrated Service Post) cadres (Mrs. AA, Mrs. YR, and Mrs. WH), one health worker (Mrs. Midwife), and one community representative (Mrs. HS), identified five strategic roles of cadres in stunting prevention efforts. These five roles include motivator, facilitator, catalyst, coach, and planner, which collectively shape community awareness and participation in health programs.

## The Role of Cadres as Motivators

The role of motivators is central to the success of Posyandu cadres in mobilizing the community. Cadres are fully responsible for providing encouragement and support so that the community, especially mothers of toddlers and pregnant women, actively participate in Posyandu activities. As explained by Sari (2024), the role of motivators is to provide "encouragement, stimulation, influence, or stimulus" to trigger responsible participation. Based on the findings, Mrs. AA, Mrs. YR, and Mrs. WH consistently emphasized the importance of mobilizing the community through direct visits to residents' homes, announcements via mosque loudspeakers, and WhatsApp groups to ensure all toddlers receive services. The midwife also emphasized that cadres are the central link and the primary driving force in the community. This perseverance and personal approach are crucial, especially in areas with low health literacy, to explain the benefits of integrated health posts (Posyandu), immunizations, and child growth and development monitoring in simple language. The biggest challenge is changing the mindset of communities who underestimate Posyandus or fear the side effects of immunizations. Therefore, cadres are required to be patient, communicative, and role models. This example, such as cadres bringing their own children to Posyandus or demonstrating healthy behaviors, has proven more effective in building community trust than mere verbal advice. This aligns with research by Rahim (2023) and Nugroho (2022), which emphasizes the importance of increasing cadre capacity through training, education, and the use of media to enhance knowledge and skills in stunting prevention and nutrition education. Thus, Posyandu cadres are central actors, not only implementing them but also motivators, educators, and dedicated role models in moving the community towards health awareness.

## The Role of Cadres as Facilitators

As facilitators, Posyandu cadres play a crucial role in creating a conducive, collaborative, and solutionoriented atmosphere and environment so that the community is more actively involved in improving their health, as outlined by Profita (2018). Cadres are tasked with assisting community health center (Puskesmas) health workers in early detection of stunting cases through the five-table system at the Posyandu, from registration to supplementary feeding. They accurately record toddler weighing results on the Child Identity Card (KIA) and the Posyandu master book, and report new stunting cases to health workers for further referral. The three cadres (Mrs. AA, Mrs. YR, and Mrs. WH) actively provided education on the importance of immunization and toddler nutrition using a persuasive approach and easy-to-understand language. This finding is supported by research by Muntafiah (2024), which demonstrated an increase in cadre knowledge after immunization counseling communication training. The midwife also emphasized the importance of careful education to avoid conflict within the community. Health education and outreach strategies implemented by cadres include group discussions, leaflet distribution, the use of WhatsApp groups, announcements at mosques, and door-to-door visits. Informal approaches during community gatherings are also effective. The effectiveness of these strategies depends heavily on cadres' ability to understand the social and cultural characteristics of the community and provide concrete examples that immunization side effects are normal and manageable. Consistent with research by Razak (2023), disseminating policies based on local wisdom is crucial for effective community acceptance. All of these education and outreach strategies aim to build understanding, raise awareness, and shape healthier community behaviors, and have been shown to increase participation in integrated health posts (Posyandu).

#### The Role of Cadres as Catalysts

The role of cadres as catalysts for integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres is to bridge individuals or community groups towards positive change, such as improved health and empowerment. As health educators, cadres maximize the use of various social media to convey information about the importance of health, in line with Sumiyati (2017). They also educate on the importance of the Child Identity Card (KIA) because this book contains crucial information for monitoring toddler weight, as supported by research by Nurbaya (2022) which states that the KIA book is an important counseling material. The success of growth and development monitoring depends on the knowledge, behavior, and attitudes of cadres regarding accurate weighing.

However, the main challenge faced by cadres, based on interviews with Mrs. AA, Mrs. YR, Mrs. WH, and Mrs. Midwife, is changing community mindsets. Mrs. YR highlighted the concerns of parents, particularly fathers, who refuse immunizations due to fear of side effects. Cadres addressed this with persuasive explanations and prepared fever medication as a precaution, demonstrating that changing mindsets requires a practical approach and cadre readiness to address concerns. This aligns with Dewiyuliana (2025), who found that simulation training improved cadres' preparedness in dealing with community resistance. Ms. WH added that many people don't even know what a Posyandu (Integrated Health Post) is, so a polite and understanding "helping" approach is essential. From the midwife's perspective, changing mindsets is a "major challenge" due to the diverse backgrounds of the community and the limitations of cadres' ability to act decisively as they are part of the community. Therefore, change must be gradual and collective, involving collaboration between cadres, health workers, community leaders, and village officials, in line with research by Rahmadi (2022). In conclusion, changing community mindsets is not just about information, but also about building trust, demonstrating concrete evidence, and creating harmonious relationships through consistent education, good communication, and role modeling.

#### **Cadres as Mentors**

The role of cadres as mentors is crucial because it focuses not only on health information but also includes in-depth psychosocial support. As explained by Atiah (2024), Posyandu cadres not only provide nutrition education but also strengthen parents' belief systems, build supportive communication, and provide emotional support to increase resilience. The three cadres (Mrs. AA, Mrs. YR, and Mrs. WH) demonstrated strong interpersonal skills in fostering community development through an empathetic, persuasive, and solutionoriented approach. They encountered many parents who felt embarrassed or reluctant to come to the Posyandu due to nutritional issues or incomplete immunizations. Rather than judging, the cadres provided moral support, built self-confidence, and offered concrete solutions such as guidance on healthy eating patterns or referrals to community health centers (Novianti, 2021). Mrs. HS, a member of the community, confirmed that the cadres were partners willing to listen, encourage, and offer practical advice. This aligns with research by Khairat (2023) which showed that mental health counseling training for cadres can provide emotional support to young mothers. These findings reinforce the theory that cadres are effective not only as technical staff but also as partners and facilitators of change who build trust through their personal presence and emotional support. The midwife also highlighted the cadre's initiative to provide direct guidance to families experiencing economic or psychological challenges, including training in making simple complementary foods at home. This is supported by Sumardilah (2023) who found that training cadres in making locally sourced complementary foods increased their awareness and technical skills. Therefore, the cadre's role as mentors reflects an essential social empowerment function, bridging health services and the community, and addressing psychosocial barriers that often hinder participation in stunting management.

#### Cadres as Planners

The role of cadres as planners is crucial in ensuring that integrated health post (Posyandu) activities are carried out systematically, structured, and participatory, rather than spontaneously. According to Wahyuni (2025), early stunting detection training involving preparation, discussion, and evaluation showed significant improvements in cadres' abilities in planning and implementing activities. Ms. AA and Ms. YR explained that planning begins with a coordination meeting between cadres to discuss the list of toddlers, equipment needs, role allocation, and follow-up strategies for toddlers who are absent or have nutritional problems. This aligns with Widarti (2023) who argued that coordination meetings strengthen synergy and the quality of recordkeeping. This approach demonstrates that cadres focus not only on technical aspects but also consider the social conditions of the community in developing effective service strategies. Ms. WH added a local dimension to planning by considering the availability of local food ingredients for supplementary feeding (PMT), demonstrating cadres' sensitivity to the local context. Community participation was also evident in the planning, as expressed by Ms. HS, who felt she was given space to express her ideas. This demonstrates cadres as inclusive and responsive planners to community needs, supported by Yulyuswarni's (2023) research, which states that strengthening cadre capacity through training and social mapping enables them to design activities tailored to local needs. The midwife emphasized the active involvement of cadres in scheduling, information delivery strategies, and task allocation, creating good collaboration and increasing program effectiveness, in line with Efkelin (2024) who highlighted the improvement in communication skills of cadres who design information delivery strategies. Overall, the role of cadres as planners demonstrates their capacity to develop and implement health programs appropriately, not only as field implementers, but also as active partners in the community-based health service system.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that Posyandu cadres play a crucial role in efforts to reduce malnutrition, particularly stunting, in the Belawan Sicanang Village area. This is primarily through their role as technical implementers, but also encompasses broader functions as motivators, facilitators, catalysts, coaches, and planners. As motivators, cadres are able to mobilize the community through direct approaches, the use of social media, and persuasive communication, thereby increasing participation in Posyandu activities. This role is strengthened by their ability to establish emotional closeness and serve as role models for residents. As facilitators, cadres serve as a bridge between the community and health workers. They actively provide education on nutrition, immunization, and the importance of health services, using communication strategies tailored to the socio-cultural characteristics of the local community. As catalysts, cadres play a role in changing the mindset of communities that still lack understanding of the importance of Posyandu. They use a persuasive approach, education based on real experiences, and are able to respond to community resistance in an empathetic and solution-oriented manner. As mentors, cadres not only provide information but also provide psychosocial support that helps build the confidence of parents, especially those with stunted children. Cadres act as partners, listening, encouraging, and offering practical, contextual solutions. As planners, cadres are actively involved in developing schedules, communication strategies, and dividing tasks in a participatory and adaptive manner. They not only consider technical aspects but also consider social conditions and the availability of local resources when designing integrated health service posts (Posyandu) activities.

Overall, the success of a Posyandu program depends heavily on the quality and consistency of the cadres' role. Cadres' humanistic, collaborative, and local wisdom-based approach is key to building community trust and awareness of the importance of basic health services. Therefore, strengthening cadre capacity through ongoing training, technical support, and close collaboration with health workers and the community is essential to reducing stunting rates and creating a healthy, high-quality generation.

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