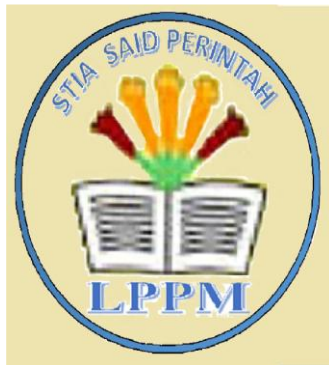

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Policy Innovation in Stunting Reduction: A Case Study of Lamandau Regional Government Strategy

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Abstract

Stunting constitutes a significant public health concern with long-term implications for children's growth and development. This study investigates policy innovations implemented by the regional government of Lamandau Regency to address stunting. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that innovative strategies include the integration of health services, education, and community empowerment. Programs such as nutrition awareness campaigns, health cadre training, and the enhancement of child health monitoring systems have played a crucial role in reducing stunting rates in the region. However, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring access to health services in remote areas. This study underscores the necessity of more inclusive and sustainable policies to enhance the effectiveness of stunting reduction initiatives. Consequently, the findings provide a valuable reference for other regions in developing and implementing similar policy interventions.

Keywords : Policy Innovation, Stunting Management, Government Strategy, Lamandau Regency, Child Health

Introduction

Stunting is a critical public health issue with long-term consequences for the quality of human resources in Indonesia (Anggraini et al., 2024). This condition is characterized by inadequate linear growth in children due to chronic malnutrition, particularly during the first 1,000 days of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies Indonesia as one of the countries with a high prevalence of stunting, especially in rural and remote areas (Siregar et al., 2022). In Lamandau Regency, stunting has emerged as a major concern for the local government due to its far-reaching effects on economic growth and overall community well-being (Diskominfostandi Lamandau, 2024). Consequently, policy innovation in stunting management is essential to ensure that intervention programs are both effective and adapted to local conditions.

Addressing stunting at the local level is not solely the responsibility of the health sector; it requires cross-sectoral coordination involving education, social services, and infrastructure development. Regional government strategies are crucial, particularly in formulating innovative policies that align with local community conditions (Meher et al., 2023). The Lamandau Regency Government has implemented various programs to combat stunting through a collaborative approach that engages the government, private sector, and community. These policy innovations aim to accelerate stunting reduction by adopting a more integrated and sustainable strategy.

This study emphasizes the importance of supporting previous research findings to strengthen the argument that reducing stunting rates in Indonesia requires effective and efficient government strategies or policies. Recent studies indicate that implementing multisectoral policies involving the health, education, and sanitation sectors significantly contributes to lowering stunting prevalence. For instance, research by Kementerian Kesehatan RI, (2023) reports that Indonesia's stunting reduction acceleration program, utilizing a cross-sectoral approach, successfully decreased the national stunting rate to 21.6% in 2022. These findings are further supported by Fristiwi et al., (2023) who highlight the effectiveness of nutrition intervention programs and public health education campaigns in reducing stunting prevalence across various regions.

Furthermore, local-level research underscores the significance of government policy innovation in addressing stunting. For instance, a study by Fazila et al., (2022) in Nagan

Raya Regency, Aceh, found that the provision of locally sourced supplementary food and the enhancement of Posyandu services successfully reduced the stunting rate by 18.5% over the past two years. In Gorontalo, research by Bakari et al., (2023) highlights that strengthening the role of village health cadres through intensive training has effectively increased public awareness of the importance of nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life. Therefore, the findings of this study serve as a valuable reference for policymakers in designing more adaptive and sustainable stunting intervention programs across various regions in Indonesia.

This research is essential due to the far-reaching implications of stunting on national development. The diminished quality of human resources resulting from stunting negatively affects long-term economic productivity and the potential of future generations. Therefore, local government initiatives to combat stunting must be continuously examined and evaluated to identify the most effective and efficient strategies (Kustanto, 2021). This study explores the innovative strategies implemented by the Lamandau Regional Government to address stunting, aiming to assess policy effectiveness and provide recommendations for future policy enhancements.

In public administration, policy innovation is a crucial process for improving the quality of public services, especially in addressing complex issues such as stunting. It entails not only technical modifications in program implementation but also a fundamental shift in governmental approaches to social challenges (Iashvili Genadi et al., 2022; Saputra et al., 2023). This study examines how the Lamandau Regional Government applies policy innovation in stunting management, focusing on the strategic measures undertaken, challenges faced, and the outcomes of these policies.

This research introduces a novel approach by integrating digital technology-based policy innovation with community participation in stunting management, an aspect that has not been widely explored in previous studies. Unlike prior research, which primarily focused on conventional health interventions such as supplemental feeding and the strengthening of Posyandu services (Fazila et al., 2022; Bakari et al., 2023), this study examines the use of digital applications, including e-PPGBM and Elsimil, for real-time nutritional monitoring, alongside community-based education initiatives like DASHAT to enhance public engagement. By combining technological solutions with community empowerment

strategies, this research contributes to the effectiveness of multisectoral policies tailored to local needs while offering replicable models for other regions to accelerate stunting reduction efforts more efficiently and sustainably.

This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of policy innovation in stunting management, with a specific focus on Lamandau Regency. It seeks to identify the factors that facilitate and hinder policy implementation while evaluating the impact of the strategies adopted by the local government. Through a case study approach, the findings are expected to offer valuable insights for policymakers in other regions, enabling the development of more effective and adaptive strategies for stunting management.

Theoretical Framework

In public administration studies, policy innovation is often regarded as a key solution for addressing complex social issues, including public health challenges such as stunting. The diffusion of innovation theory suggests that the adoption of new policies within government follows a process of idea development, implementation, and outcome evaluation. In the context of stunting mitigation, policy innovation may involve redesigning nutrition programs, improving access to maternal and child health services, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration to establish a more comprehensive approach. Therefore, understanding how these policy innovations are effectively implemented at the local government level is crucial (Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022; Meher et al., 2023)..

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines stunting as impaired physical growth in children under five caused by chronic malnutrition. Research by [Victora et al. \(2008\)](#) highlights its long-term consequences on cognitive development, overall health, and future productivity. Given these impacts, swift and effective policy interventions are essential, particularly in developing countries. Studies indicate that programs aimed at improving nutrition, sanitation, and maternal and child education play a crucial role in significantly reducing stunting prevalence (Suryawan et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, stunting mitigation has been a national priority, with various government programs introduced to substantially reduce prevalence rates. According to Kementerian Kesehatan RI, (2023), the National Program for Accelerating Stunting Reduction aims to lower stunting prevalence to 14% by 2024. This initiative employs a

multisectoral approach that integrates health, education, and infrastructure sectors to create a more supportive environment for child growth. Moreover, it fosters collaboration between central and local governments as well as community stakeholders (Fristiwi et al., 2023).

Lamandau Regency, located in Central Kalimantan, faces significant stunting challenges. According to Dinas Kesehatan Kabupaten Lamandau, (2023), the stunting prevalence in the region remains above 20% despite recent improvements. Several innovative programs, including the strengthening of *Posyandu* services, the provision of supplementary food for pregnant women and toddlers, and public health education initiatives, have contributed to reducing stunting rates. However, further innovative and sustainable policies are needed to meet national targets.

Policy innovation in regional stunting mitigation efforts often encounters obstacles related to resource constraints, infrastructure limitations, and varying levels of community participation. Public policy theories proposed by Howlett and Ramesh, (2003) emphasize that local policy implementation heavily depends on the availability of human and financial resources, as well as political support from key stakeholders (Essa et al., 2021). Therefore, flexible and adaptive strategies are essential to ensure that policies are effectively tailored to local contexts, particularly in remote areas such as Lamandau Regency.

Moreover, research on local government strategies for stunting mitigation underscores the significance of community participation at all stages of policymaking. Arnstein, (1969) categorizes public participation in policy into various levels, ranging from mere consultation to full collaboration (Siregar et al., 2022). In Lamandau, efforts to enhance community involvement have been pursued through public health outreach programs and nutrition education. However, there is a need to elevate participation to more engaged levels, ensuring that local communities take greater ownership of and responsibility for the success of stunting mitigation initiatives.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore policy innovation strategies in addressing stunting in Lamandau Regency (Creswell, 2018). The case study method was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of real-life policy

implementation by the local government. Data collection involved in-depth interviews with government officials, healthcare workers, and community members involved in stunting mitigation programs. Additionally, field observations and policy document analysis were conducted to provide a comprehensive view of the strategies implemented (Bakari et al., 2023).

Semi-structured interview guides were used to explore various aspects of policy implementation, including challenges and opportunities faced by the local government. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes emerging from the data. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing information from different respondents and documents to maintain consistency and accuracy. The findings are expected to provide insights into the effectiveness of policy innovation strategies in addressing stunting in Lamandau Regency (Sugiyono, 2020).

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 key informants, including local government officials, health workers, Posyandu cadres, and community representatives directly involved in stunting programs. Thematic analysis was conducted through transcription, coding, theme identification, and interpretation to uncover patterns related to policy innovations and challenges in stunting mitigation. Data validity was reinforced through triangulation of sources, ensuring a comprehensive and reliable analysis.

Discussion

Research Results

This study applies the Diffusion of Innovations Theory by Everett M. Rogers to examine policy innovations in stunting mitigation in Lamandau Regency. This theory explains how new ideas, practices, or technologies spread within a social system (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Rogers, 2003). In this context, digital applications such as e-PPGBM and Elsimil represent innovations requiring effective dissemination and adoption to reduce stunting rates. Rogers' five-stage adoption process knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation provides a framework for analyzing how these innovations are accepted by stakeholders, including government officials, healthcare workers, and the community.

This theory is highly relevant to this study as it highlights the effective implementation of innovations within complex social systems, such as stunting management, which involves multiple sectors and stakeholders. The research identifies strategic steps taken by local governments to facilitate the adoption of policy innovations, including the digitization of nutrition monitoring and increased community participation. Additionally, the theory underscores key factors influencing innovation adoption relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, testability, and visibility. In this context, digital applications like e-PPGBM and Elsimil demonstrate clear advantages in efficiency and usability, making them suitable for analysis using this framework. Therefore, the Diffusion of Innovations theory serves as a strong foundation for assessing both the successes and challenges of implementing innovative policies in Lamandau.

The findings of this study indicate that the Lamandau Regency government has introduced several key policy innovations to combat stunting. One of the most significant is the strengthening of cross-sectoral coordination among the health office, education office, and social affairs office. This initiative aims to align programs focused on improving child and maternal nutrition, promoting health education, and enhancing healthcare infrastructure. As a health office official stated, "We are trying to ensure that all sectors work together, because without collaboration, the results will not be optimal." This integrated approach has enhanced program effectiveness and targeting, leading to a measurable reduction in stunting rates across the region.

Another significant innovation is the adoption of digital technology to monitor the nutritional status of children and pregnant women through the Community-Based Nutrition Recording and Reporting Application (e-PPGBM). This application records individual data and weighing results, primarily at integrated health service posts (Posyandu), and processes the input data to assess nutritional status. As one field officer noted, "With the e-PPGBM application, we can monitor the nutritional development of children in real-time, so that interventions can be carried out faster." This real-time monitoring enables prompt action across Lamandau Regency. Additionally, the Electronic Ready-to-Marry and Ready-to-Pregnant Application (Elsimil), an innovation by the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), supports stunting prevention by targeting engaged couples, reproductive-age couples, pregnant women, postpartum mothers, and toddlers. This early intervention

tool helps identify and address potential health issues before they contribute to stunting. The integration of digital applications has significantly improved decision-making processes and the effectiveness of field interventions.

Furthermore, the local government has implemented a targeted supplementary feeding (PMT) program for pregnant women and toddlers at risk of stunting. This program is designed to meet specific nutritional needs based on age and health conditions. Community participation plays a crucial role, with Posyandu and community health centers (Puskesmas) facilitating regular check-ups alongside PMT distribution. A Posyandu cadre highlighted, "Through the PMT program, we not only provide additional food, but also educate pregnant women and their families about the importance of balanced nutrition." According to the 2023 Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI), this initiative contributed to a significant reduction in stunting prevalence in Lamandau Regency, from 25.5% in 2022 to 13.2% in 2023 (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2022, 2023).

Community participation in stunting prevention has been strengthened through educational campaigns and village-level socialization efforts, involving women's organizations and children's forums. One key initiative is the "Healthy Kitchens to Combat Stunting" (DASHAT) program, which engages the Lamandau PKK (Family Welfare Movement) Team and Puskesmas nutritionists to educate communities about balanced nutrition, proper sanitation, and supportive parenting. A PKK team member noted, "The DASHAT program really helps people understand the importance of nutritious food with local ingredients that are easy to reach." These campaigns, which leverage local food resources, have proven effective in increasing awareness and encouraging active community participation in stunting prevention.

Beyond community-level interventions, the Lamandau Regency government has enhanced healthcare facilities by improving service quality at Puskesmas and Posyandu. Efforts include upgrading medical equipment, training healthcare workers, and increasing staff in underserved areas. These improvements have expanded community access to quality healthcare, contributing to a decline in stunting rates.

On the policy front, the Lamandau government launched the "Nutrition Action Movement" (Gerakan Aksi Bergizi), engaging teachers and teenage students. This national initiative encourages students to take iron tablets, maintain a balanced diet, and stay

physically active. The program aims to enhance students' knowledge of nutrition, promote healthy lifestyles, and prevent nutritional issues such as anemia, stunting, and obesity.

Additionally, the local government has prioritized improving sanitation and access to clean water in rural areas, recognizing their crucial role in stunting prevention. Community-based sanitation programs have been implemented in several villages, actively involving residents in constructing and maintaining sanitation facilities. These initiatives have significantly enhanced access to clean water and proper sanitation, reducing the prevalence of diseases like diarrhea and gastrointestinal infections, which contribute to stunting.

Stunting prevention efforts in Lamandau also involve collaboration with the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Several companies contribute through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, supporting child nutrition and health initiatives. Their contributions include providing clean water facilities, supplementary food for underprivileged families, and fish seeds for community-managed Posyandu fish farming projects. These collaborations play a vital role in accelerating stunting reduction by supplementing government efforts with additional resources and expertise.

For monitoring and evaluation, the Lamandau government applies a participatory approach by involving the community and healthcare workers in assessing program effectiveness. Regular evaluations help identify challenges in the field and measure progress toward targets. The findings are then used to refine and adjust policies, ensuring that stunting prevention efforts remain effective and sustainable over time.

Discussion

This study affirms that the policy innovations implemented by the regional government of Lamandau Regency in addressing stunting have yielded significant positive outcomes. Strategies emphasizing cross-sector collaboration, digital technology integration, and active community participation have proven effective in reducing stunting rates. These findings reinforce the notion that stunting mitigation requires a multidimensional approach, encompassing not only the health sector but also education, social welfare, and infrastructure development. Consequently, the policies adopted in Lamandau Regency can

serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges (Oktarina et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023).

A particularly noteworthy innovation is the utilization of digital technology for real-time nutritional status monitoring. The implementation of digital applications has enabled local governments to respond more swiftly to emerging health issues that may contribute to stunting. In the digital era, integrating technology into public policy not only expedites decision-making processes but also enhances the accuracy and reliability of data used for policy planning. Therefore, expanding and strengthening this strategy through additional training for field officers is imperative to maximize its effectiveness (Tay et al., 2022).

Beyond technological advancements, active community engagement through educational campaigns has also played a crucial role in the program's success. The involvement of community and religious leaders in health and nutrition outreach initiatives has increased public trust in government programs. This community-centered approach aligns with the concept of community empowerment in health development, wherein active participation is essential for the success of health interventions. The findings of this study indicate that well-informed communities are more likely to engage in government-led health programs, including those focused on stunting prevention (Haldane et al., 2019).

Despite the successes achieved, several challenges persist. One of the primary obstacles is the limited availability of resources in remote areas. Disparities in healthcare access in rural communities remain a significant barrier that demands greater attention from local authorities. Enhancing healthcare facilities, ensuring the availability of qualified medical personnel, and improving access to clean water and sanitation should be prioritized to ensure the long-term sustainability of stunting prevention efforts (Fazila et al., 2022).

Another critical challenge is ensuring the sustainability of ongoing programs. Innovative initiatives require continuous evaluation and adaptation to evolving local conditions to maintain their relevance and effectiveness. To prevent these policies from becoming short-term interventions, robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms must be established. Involving key stakeholders including community members, healthcare professionals, and local government officials will be essential in maintaining program effectiveness over time (Lee et al., 2020).

Overall, the findings of this study underscore the importance of policy innovation in addressing complex public health challenges such as stunting. A holistic approach that integrates multiple sectors and fosters community participation has demonstrated effectiveness in reducing stunting rates in Lamandau Regency. However, to achieve optimal and sustainable outcomes, existing challenges must be addressed through capacity building, infrastructure enhancements, and strengthened cross-sector collaboration. By doing so, stunting prevention policies can deliver broader and more lasting impacts on public health and well-being.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that policy innovations implemented in Lamandau Regency have been effective in reducing stunting rates. Strategic approaches that integrate multiple sectors, including health, education, and digital technology, have played a significant role in the program's success. These efforts highlight the crucial synergy between local governments, communities, and relevant stakeholders in addressing stunting. The innovations introduced in Lamandau Regency have not only improved the efficiency of health monitoring processes but also enhanced public awareness regarding child nutrition and health.

Recommendations

Despite the notable progress, several challenges must be addressed to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives. One major issue is the limited access to healthcare services in rural and remote areas, which remains a significant barrier to equitable program implementation. Additionally, dependence on constrained resources and the need for improved healthcare infrastructure necessitate further government intervention. To enhance the effectiveness of stunting prevention programs, local authorities should continue to introduce innovative solutions and allocate additional resources. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration and increasing investment in healthcare infrastructure will be essential in ensuring that these programs reach all communities equitably.

Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

This study provides valuable insights into the role of policy innovations in reducing stunting; however, it has certain limitations. First, the research primarily focuses on the case of Lamandau Regency, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different socio-economic and geographical conditions. Future research should explore comparative studies across multiple regions to provide a broader perspective on effective stunting prevention strategies. Second, this study primarily relies on policy analysis and stakeholder perspectives, whereas future studies could incorporate longitudinal data and impact evaluations to assess the long-term effectiveness of these policy innovations. Lastly, further research could investigate the role of emerging technologies and community-driven interventions in enhancing the sustainability of stunting prevention efforts.

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