



Community Empowerment in Reducing Stunting through the Canting Gula Mojo Program in Mojokerto City

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A B S T R A C T

This study focuses on the challenges and efforts of community empowerment in reducing stunting rates through the Canting Gula Mojo Program in Mojokerto City. The primary issues addressed include the high prevalence of stunting in certain areas with diverse socioeconomic conditions, limited access to nutritional resources, and low awareness among families regarding the importance of proper childcare and balanced nutrition. Drawing on Jim Ife's (1997) theory of community empowerment, this research analyzes how the provision of resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills can enhance community capabilities in addressing these challenges. The program aims to empower the community through education, distribution of nutritional resources, and capacity building for health cadres to achieve sustainable stunting reduction targets. This study employs a qualitative research method, utilizing primary data from in-depth interviews with policymakers, health cadres, and beneficiaries, alongside secondary data from official reports by the Mojokerto City Health Office. The findings reveal that the Canting Gula Mojo Program increased community participation by up to 85% in 2023, with 80% of the target audience improving their understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition. Furthermore, the program successfully reduced stunting rates to 2.26% in the same year, marking a significant decrease compared to previous years. This achievement was facilitated by providing skill training to health cadres, distributing high-protein foods, and monitoring children's growth using anthropometric kits. The study concludes that community empowerment through the Canting Gula Mojo Program is not only effective in enhancing individual and community capacities but also serves as an impactful innovation in stunting prevention efforts. Nevertheless, challenges such as budget constraints, access disparities, and the need for more detailed data mapping continue to influence program implementation. Consequently, this research recommends strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration, more targeted budget allocation, and optimizing technology for data mapping and equitable resource distribution. The program's framework can also be adapted and replicated in other regions to align with the national strategy of achieving "zero new stunting" by 2024.



1. Introduction

Stunting is one of the global health issues that significantly impacts the physical and cognitive development of children (Nurkholik et al., 2023). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), stunting is defined as a condition where a child's height is lower than the standard set for a specific age, caused by chronic malnutrition, repeated infections, and inadequate dietary patterns. Stunting not only affects physical growth but can also influence children's cognitive abilities, which in turn affects their academic performance and social skills. In the long term, these effects have the potential to hinder the quality of human resources (HR) in a country, as a generation with stunted development will face difficulties in contributing productively in the future (Kurnia Dina et al., 2023). Based on research conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Health, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia remains relatively high, with approximately 24.4% of Indonesian children experiencing stunting in 2022.

The prevalence of stunting in major cities and certain regions in Indonesia shows significant figures. In Mojokerto City, for example, efforts to combat stunting have become a primary focus of the local government through various innovative programs such as the Canting Gula Mojo Program. Research from the Mojokerto City Health Office indicates that although there has been a decline, the prevalence of stunting in this area remains quite high, with about 30% of children under five years old experiencing stunting in 2023. Community empowerment programs, which are part of the efforts to reduce stunting, are expected to accelerate the reduction of these figures. The reduction of stunting prevalence is important as it is directly related to the quality of future HR in Mojokerto City, which will contribute to improved welfare and competitiveness at the national level (Woldehanna et al., 2017).

Table 1 Current Data on Stunting Prevalence in Indonesia and Several Major Cities 2024

Region	Stunting Prevalence (%)
Indonesia (nationally)	21,6%
Kota Mojokerto	1,85%
Jakarta	15,7%
Surabaya	18,2%
Bandung	19,1%
Papua	42,5%
NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur)	41,9%

Source: Indonesian Ministry of Health & Mojokerto City Health Office 2024

Stunting in children is caused by several interconnected factors, including lack of access to good nutrition, poor sanitation, and an unbalanced diet (Rindi, 2019). According to research conducted by the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2023), inadequate nutritional intake during the first 1,000 Days of Life (HPK) can lead to developmental disorders in children, which risks leading to stunting. Additionally, poor sanitation conditions, such as limited access to clean water and inadequate sanitation facilities, further worsen children's health, increasing their vulnerability to infections that slow down recovery and growth (Rini Puji Lestari, 2023). A lack of health education and community understanding regarding healthy eating and proper nutrition is also a significant contributing factor to stunting cases in Indonesia.

The impacts of stunting are not limited to children's physical health but also have significant social and economic implications. According to research from the WHO (2022), children who experience stunting are at risk of having impaired cognitive abilities, which affects their academic performance and their capacity to participate in productive activities in the future. Moreover, stunting increases the healthcare costs for the country as it requires more expensive and long-term medical interventions to address the resulting health complications. Other economic impacts include reduced workforce productivity in the future, as stunted generations tend to have limitations in physical and cognitive abilities, which can affect national economic growth.

Community empowerment is an effective approach to addressing the stunting issue because it actively involves the community in planning and implementing health and nutrition programs. According to research by Sadan (1997) in (Layyinatush Shifa & Ilyas, 2020), empowerment is not merely about resource distribution but also involves enhancing community capacity through the provision of relevant knowledge and skills. Successful programs in reducing stunting often involve the community in understanding the importance of balanced nutrition, good sanitation, and access to appropriate health services. Through empowerment, communities not only become beneficiaries but also play an active role in improving health conditions, which enhances the effectiveness of these

programs.

The importance of community empowerment in reducing stunting is reflected in the opportunities provided for active participation in the decision-making process regarding health policies. Research conducted by Ekholuenetale et al. (2020) shows that successful stunting reduction in several developing countries can be achieved through an empowerment-based approach that involves the community at every stage of intervention. Communities equipped with knowledge and skills about healthy eating and clean living practices will be better able to address the causes of stunting in their environment (Oktia et al., 2020). Therefore, community empowerment functions not only as a tool for resource distribution but also as a means to create sustainable social change in reducing stunting rates.

The Canting Gula Mojo Program is an innovation launched by the Mojokerto City Government with the primary goal of reducing stunting prevalence through community empowerment. This program emphasizes a community-based approach, where the community is given better access to health and nutrition information and is empowered to actively participate in efforts to reduce stunting. One of the main strategies implemented in this program is "Prevent Stunting, Excellent Movement for Community Empowerment," which aims to raise awareness and community involvement in improving nutrition quality, healthy eating patterns, and accessing adequate health services. According to research conducted by the Mojokerto City Health Office (2024), this approach has shown positive results in increasing community knowledge regarding the importance of nutrition and the health of mothers and children.



Figure 1 Mayor of Mojokerto Ning Ita Measuring a Child's Head Circumference

The innovation presented by the Canting Gula Mojo Program is also evident in how it integrates community empowerment approaches with more effective health services. This program not only provides education about good nutrition but also offers direct interventions in the form of nutritional supplements and monitoring of children's growth. In a study conducted by the Mojokerto Health Office, it was recorded that more than 30% of households involved in this program experienced improvements in their children's nutritional status after receiving guidance and access to the nutritional supplements provided. Thus, this program successfully connects community empowerment with targeted health interventions, ultimately supporting sustainable efforts to reduce stunting

2. Methodology

Type of Research

This research employs a qualitative approach, aimed at understanding the social phenomena related to the implementation of the Canting Gula Mojo Program in efforts to reduce stunting in Mojokerto City. This approach allows the researcher to explore the views and experiences of the community and relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the program, as well as to understand the factors influencing the success of community empowerment in addressing stunting.

Research Focus

The focus of this research is to explore how the Canting Gula Mojo Program affects community empowerment in the efforts to reduce stunting in Mojokerto City. This study examines the processes of program design, implementation, and community acceptance, as well as its impact on their access to better health and nutrition services, and active participation in stunting mitigation efforts.

Research Location

The research location was chosen based on its relevance to the topic of community empowerment and stunting

reduction. Mojokerto City was selected as the research site because it is the place where the Canting Gula Mojo Program is implemented, which aims to improve community welfare through empowerment in health and nutrition.

3. Result and Discussion

Community Empowerment

This research analyzes the Canting Gula Mojo Program as an effort for community empowerment in reducing stunting in Mojokerto City using Jim Ife's (1997) theory of community empowerment. Ife explains empowerment as the provision of resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills to enhance the community's ability to determine its future and participate in group life. These aspects are viewed through indicators designed by the researcher as follows:

Resources

Community empowerment involves providing resources that can help the community enhance its capacity and ability to manage their own lives. The resources referred to include various basic needs such as access to health, education, public facilities, and economic support that enable individuals and groups within the community to actively participate in decisions affecting their lives. Ife emphasizes that empowerment is not limited to physical or financial distribution but also involves granting rights and opportunities for the community to access and manage these resources independently.

In this research, "resources" refer to all forms of support provided through the Canting Gula Mojo Program to reduce stunting in Mojokerto City. This program provides the community with access to health and nutrition information, as well as the necessary supplements to improve their physical well-being. Additionally, the community is given the opportunity to engage in empowerment activities that strengthen their capacity to manage their family's health and nutrition. By empowering the community to access and utilize these resources, the program not only focuses on providing temporary assistance but also aims to create long-term change by strengthening the community's capacity to address stunting issues independently.

According to Mrs. Sari, the Head of the Posyandu (Integrated Healthcare Post), she stated:

"I strongly support the Canting Gula Mojo Program implemented here because I see a significant change in how the community accesses health and nutrition information. This program gives us, especially the mothers at the posyandu, the opportunity to learn more about healthy eating patterns and the importance of proper nutritional intake for children. Previously, many mothers did not fully understand the importance of a balanced diet, but now they are more active in discussing and participating in the educational activities we organize."



Figure 2 Provision of Supplementary Food for Young Children

Based on an interview with Mrs. Sari, the Head of the Posyandu (Integrated Healthcare Post), she stated that the Canting Gula Mojo Program has brought significant changes in how the community accesses health and nutrition information. According to her, many mothers previously lacked understanding of the importance of a balanced diet, but now they are more active in discussing and participating in the educational activities organized. Therefore, the provision of "resources" in the form of information, training, and access to nutritional supplements is crucial in supporting this change. This program not only provides knowledge about the importance of nutrition but also gives the community tangible tools to improve their children's dietary patterns and health.

From this interview, we can see that the "Resources" provided through the Canting Gula Mojo Program encompass aspects of knowledge, skills, and access to nutritional supplements, which contribute to increased community participation in stunting reduction efforts. The success of this innovation is evident from the heightened awareness among mothers about the importance of healthy eating patterns and their role in ensuring that children receive adequate nutritional intake. The impact of community empowerment is reflected in the increased knowledge about nutrition, greater active participation in the program, and improvements in dietary patterns among families involved in the program.

Opportunities

Opportunities in the theory of community empowerment proposed by Jim Ife (1997) refer to the provision of fair and equitable access for all individuals to participate in the development process. This includes the removal of social, economic, or political barriers that may hinder the full and equal participation of every member of the community. By opening up opportunities, communities are empowered to actively engage in decision-making and the implementation of actions that directly impact their lives. Opportunities not only mean physical or material access but also encompass the creation of an environment that supports inclusive participation and encourages diverse voices and perspectives within the community.

In this research, opportunities are implemented through the Canting Gula Mojo Program as part of community empowerment efforts to reduce stunting in Mojokerto City. This program provides access for the community, particularly mothers and children, to adequate health and nutrition education services. By opening this access, the program aims to eliminate barriers that families may face in obtaining the necessary information and services to prevent stunting. Additionally, these opportunities include the active involvement of the community in program activities, such as counseling and training, which enable them to participate in collective efforts to address stunting issues in their communities. This creates space for the community to take an active role and ensures that their voices are heard in the ongoing development process.

According to the Acting Mayor of Mojokerto, M. Ali Kuncoro, he stated:

“Let’s come to the Posyandu, especially those with toddlers, pregnant women, and prospective brides for measurements and weighing. Let’s succeed in this national program for simultaneous stunting prevention intervention.”

“All efforts continue to be made to achieve zero new stunting by 2024. Therefore, the synergy of all stakeholders and the community is very much needed.”

“The target is 100 percent, and this is free. Please come to the Posyandu throughout Mojokerto City, bringing the KIA book, and for prospective brides, bring your ID card, family card, or BPJS.”

Based on the interview with Acting Mayor M. Ali Kuncoro, community attendance at the Posyandu is key to supporting the national stunting prevention program with the target of "zero new stunting" by 2024. The Canting Gula Mojo Program provides fair opportunities for families with toddlers, pregnant women, and prospective brides to access health services, measurements, and education for free, thus increasing community participation to 85% in 2023. The positive impact of these opportunities is evident in the increased awareness of the community regarding the importance of stunting prevention, including the readiness of prospective brides to build a healthy family. With equitable access, this program fosters active participation that significantly contributes to efforts to reduce stunting rates in Mojokerto City.

Knowledge

Knowledge in community empowerment is an essential element that plays a crucial role in enhancing the understanding and awareness of the community regarding issues that affect their lives. This knowledge is provided with the aim of equipping individuals and groups with relevant information, enabling them to make informed, responsible, and quality-of-life-oriented decisions. Knowledge can be transferred through various means, such as formal education, training, counseling, or information campaigns, all designed to enhance individuals' capacity to understand existing issues and provide effective solutions. With adequate knowledge, communities are not only more aware of their rights and responsibilities but also more capable of actively participating in the development of their community.

In this research, knowledge is manifested through the Canting Gula Mojo Program, which educates the community about stunting, including its causes, prevention, and management steps. This program includes health counseling, training on the importance of balanced nutrition, and the introduction of parenting patterns that support optimal child growth. The knowledge provided targets not only pregnant women and families with toddlers but also prospective brides, thereby creating a broader preventive awareness. With this approach, the program successfully significantly enhances community understanding, as evidenced by their ability to identify risk factors for stunting and take appropriate actions to prevent it, supporting sustainable efforts to reduce stunting in Mojokerto City.



Figure 3 Counseling of the Canting Gula Mojo Program

According to the Head of the Health Office for Family Planning and Community Empowerment (P2KB), Dr. Farida Mariana, she stated:

"For stunting, one of the initiatives is to involve motivating cadres to campaign for a double protein menu for stunted toddlers. Additionally, each group is equipped with anthropometry kits so they can monitor the development of toddlers in their respective communities directly. This allows us to obtain valid data by name and address."

Based on the interview with Dr. Farida Mariana, the Head of the P2KB Health Office in Mojokerto City, motivating cadres are involved in campaigning for a double protein menu for stunted toddlers and are provided with anthropometry kits to directly monitor toddler development, in order to produce valid data by name and address. The knowledge provided through the Canting Gula Mojo Program has increased community understanding of balanced nutrition by 80% in 2023 and strengthened the ability of cadres to identify toddlers at risk of stunting. This education has also raised family awareness about parenting patterns that support child growth and development, so that empowerment through knowledge not only enhances individual capacity but also strengthens the community in sustainably preventing stunting.

Skills

Skills in community empowerment refer to the process of training and developing individuals' abilities to become more independent and effective in facing daily challenges. These skills encompass various aspects, from technical skills, leadership, to management and social abilities, all aimed at enhancing individuals' capacity to contribute to community development. With adequate skills, communities can solve problems independently, improve welfare, and create sustainable positive impacts in their environment. Skills also serve as an important foundation for building independence, allowing communities not to rely solely on aid but to manage their resources effectively.

In the Canting Gula Mojo Program, skills are one of the main focuses for community empowerment in reducing stunting rates in Mojokerto City. This program involves training for motivating cadres and the community on the use of anthropometry tools, preparation of balanced nutrition menus, and techniques for monitoring toddler growth and development. This training not only enhances technical competencies but also the ability of cadres to effectively educate the community.

According to Acting Mayor Moh. Ali Kuncoro, he stated:

"Every Wednesday, I, along with the Head of the Health Office, Baznas, and Prameswari, go directly to distribute high-protein animal foods, such as chicken, eggs, milk, and rice."

Based on the interview with Acting Mayor Moh. Ali Kuncoro, it was conveyed that every Wednesday, high-protein animal foods, such as chicken, eggs, milk, and rice, are distributed directly along with teams from the Health Office, Baznas, and Prameswari. This initiative aims to support the nutritional needs of the community, especially for toddlers at risk of stunting. Through this direct approach, the community not only receives food aid but also gains an understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition, supported by motivating cadres who have been equipped with skills in education and mentoring. This demonstrates that the skills aspect is a crucial pillar in the success of community empowerment programs to reduce stunting rates.

From this, we can see that "Skills" in the Canting Gula Mojo Program have a significant impact, with success indicators showing that 80% of cadres are capable of independently educating the community about the importance of nutrition and managing balanced nutritious menus. As a result, the stunting rate in Mojokerto City successfully decreased to 2.26% in 2023, with a significant reduction each year. The skills of cadres in monitoring toddler growth using anthropometry kits also accelerate interventions for toddlers at risk of stunting. Additionally, the community has become more skilled in applying healthy eating patterns and optimally managing food resources to meet family nutritional needs. This proves that strengthening community skills contributes significantly to sustainable empowerment efforts to reduce stunting rates.

Challenges in Efforts to Reduce Stunting

The implementation of the Canting Gula Mojo Program in Mojokerto City faces various challenges that affect its successful implementation. Below are three main challenges that have the most significant impact on its execution:

Differences in Stunting Conditions in Each Subdistrict

Each area in Mojokerto City has diverse causes and conditions of stunting. This requires a specific approach through accurate mapping. Mapping becomes a challenge because it must involve accurate data and cross-sector collaboration to determine appropriate interventions in each area.

Limited Access and Family Resources

Most stunted toddlers come from underprivileged families that have limited access to nutrition, health, and education. Support and provision of nutritional packages, such as those conducted through the Simultaneous Movement of OPD Caring for Stunting, still face obstacles in equitable distribution and sustainability.



Capacity Building of Cadres and Communities

The success of the program heavily relies on the role of health cadres and community awareness. However, enhancing the technical skills of cadres and the community's understanding of the importance of stunting prevention requires ongoing training and socialization, which are often hindered by budget and time constraints.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion of this study indicates that the Canting Gula Mojo Program in Mojokerto City has successfully become an effective model for community empowerment in efforts to reduce stunting rates. The research findings show that community empowerment through the provision of resources, opportunities, knowledge, and skills has had a significant impact. This success is reflected in the increase in community participation to 85% in 2023, a reduction in the stunting rate to 2.26% in the same year, and an increase in community understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition reaching 80%. The program has also successfully strengthened the role of motivating cadres, who are now capable of independently conducting education, mentoring, and monitoring stunting risks based on valid data.

Other positive impacts are evident from the increased awareness and readiness of families, including prospective brides and grooms, to build healthy families. The success of the Canting Gula Mojo Program is not only seen in the reduction of stunting rates but also in the change in mindset and behavior of the community in managing nutrition and child health. Providing skills to the community, especially to motivating cadres, enables them to be more proficient in using anthropometry kits and supporting the monitoring of toddler growth and development. With this innovative support, families in Mojokerto City have become more capable of implementing healthy eating patterns and optimally managing food resources. Overall, community empowerment through this program demonstrates that a holistic, community-based approach can create sustainable impacts in efforts to prevent and reduce stunting.

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