



STUNTING AS A DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE: A COLLECTIVE ACTION ANALYSIS OF THE WEST SULAWESI PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

Andi Ridha Rimbawan¹, Ayu Amalia², Mohammad Thahir Haning³, Gita Susanti⁴, Syahribulan⁵

¹Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

²Department of Government Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

³Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

⁴Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

⁵Department of Administrative Science, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: Andi Ridha Rimbawan, **Email:** AyuArifin.Fisipunhas@gmail.com

Abstract

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2022), East Nusa Tenggara has the highest stunting rate, followed by West Sulawesi, which ranks second with only a 0.3% difference. At the national level, the stunting rate remains high at 21.6%, meaning that two out of every ten children under five are stunted. The prevalence of stunting in West Sulawesi is significantly higher than the national average, making it a serious development challenge for the provincial government to address. The West Sulawesi Provincial Government has faced persistent difficulties in accelerating stunting reduction efforts, particularly due to weak coordination in policy formulation and implementation. This study employs Carlsson's (2000) Collective Action Theory, which outlines six key dimensions: (1) Contextual Factors, (2) Problem Definition, (3) Growth and Spread of Generalized Beliefs, (4) Precipitating Factors, (5) Actor Mobilization, and (6) Coordination and Control. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving government officials, civil servants, and community members. The findings reveal that collective action in addressing stunting in West Sulawesi has not been effective. Major barriers include limited public outreach and awareness of stunting, a high rate of early marriage (one of the main contributing factors), and insufficient stakeholder commitment. These obstacles have hindered progress and highlight the urgent need for stronger collective action in tackling stunting as a critical development issue in the province.

Keywords: Stunting, Collective Action, West Sulawesi, Public Policy, Stakeholder Coordination

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia faces a serious nutritional problem, reflected in the high prevalence of malnutrition among children under five. One of the consequences of sustained nutritional deficiency is stunting, a chronic condition that affects physical growth and brain development. Stunted children tend to be shorter than their peers and may experience cognitive delays. This phenomenon represents a major public health issue with long-term impacts on social and economic quality of life. Additionally, stunting can begin during pregnancy due to inadequate maternal nutrition, especially protein intake, and unfavorable environmental conditions.

Stunting remains a significant problem in Indonesia, with a national prevalence of 21.6%, meaning nearly 2 out of every 10 children under five are stunted. West Sulawesi Province is among the regions with the highest stunting rates, ranking second after East Nusa Tenggara. One of the main contributing



factors in West Sulawesi is early marriage, which is still culturally prevalent. This practice leads to poor maternal and infant nutrition, resulting in high stunting prevalence.

A major challenge faced by the West Sulawesi Provincial Government is preventing stunting through collective action in the formulation of accelerated reduction policies. Addressing stunting requires careful analysis to avoid misinterpretation and to ensure alignment with existing norms and standards. According to Tilly (1981), collective action involves occasions when a group mobilizes its resources, including personal effort, to achieve shared goals. Collective action is crucial for addressing pressing issues within a specific time or region, and stunting represents one such critical problem.

Preliminary observations indicate that, although stunting rates have declined, the number of stunted children in West Sulawesi remains high. The initial steps to address this problem involve mapping and identifying the factors contributing to high stunting rates in the province. These steps are vital for formulating effective policies, focusing on system improvement and targeted interventions for children experiencing nutritional deficiencies.

Mobilization of collective action actors and stakeholder involvement, including networks of government agencies across various sectors, is key to tackling stunting. Strong synergy between central and local governments, along with effective coordination in program implementation, can create concrete, sustainable, and effective solutions. Data on populations at risk of stunting across the districts of West Sulawesi Province further illustrate the scale of the problem.

Figure 1. Data of Families at Risk of Stunting in West Sulawesi Province



Source: SIGA BKKBN (Family Data Collection) 2021–2023

Indonesia faces a serious nutritional problem, as reflected by the high prevalence of malnutrition among children under five. One of the consequences of sustained nutritional deficiency is stunting, a chronic condition that affects both physical growth and brain development. Stunted children tend to be shorter than their peers and may experience cognitive delays. This phenomenon represents a major public health issue with long-term social and economic impacts. Stunting can also begin during pregnancy due to inadequate maternal nutrition especially protein intake and unfavorable environmental conditions.

Stunting remains a significant problem in Indonesia, with a national prevalence of 21.6%, meaning nearly 2 out of every 10 children under five are stunted. West Sulawesi Province is among the regions with the highest stunting rates, ranking second after East Nusa Tenggara. In 2023, Polman Regency had the highest number of families at risk of stunting, totaling 28,590, followed by Mamuju Regency



with 19,660 families, Majene Regency with 12,614 families, Mamasa Regency with 12,596 families, Pasangkayu Regency with 9,872 families, and Central Mamuju with 8,552 families. Although there was a significant decrease from 32,532 families in 2022 to 28,590 families in 2023, Polman Regency still requires focused efforts to further reduce stunting risks.

Addressing stunting in West Sulawesi requires the mobilization of actors through collective action. Engagement from all relevant stakeholders including local government, non-governmental organizations, private sectors, and local communities is essential. Comprehensive evaluation is needed to identify the root causes and triggers of high stunting rates in each regency. Appropriate intervention programs must be formulated and implemented with the participation of all stakeholders to ensure strategies are tailored to local conditions, enabling significant reductions in stunting prevalence and moving closer to or even surpassing the national average.

The high stunting rates across almost all regencies in West Sulawesi indicate that cross-sectoral coordination in stunting prevention remains suboptimal. Public awareness and participation are also critical for successful prevention efforts, yet many community members still lack knowledge regarding the definition, causes, impacts, and mitigation strategies for stunting.

Stunting is a health issue of high urgency, closely related to overall community welfare. Its prevention aligns with Indonesia's Law No. 17 of 2023, which emphasizes that public health development requires health resources, management, and services to improve population health to the highest level. This should be achieved through equitable, non-discriminatory, participatory, and sustainable approaches to develop quality human resources, reduce disparities, strengthen quality health services, enhance health resilience, ensure healthy lives, and advance citizens' welfare while supporting national development goals.

Preventing stunting requires a comprehensive approach that involves government, community, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. The role of governance networks is critical, as reducing stunting cannot be achieved by individual efforts alone but requires coordinated collective action among all actors involved. Collective action refers to joint efforts to solve problems that cannot be addressed by a single actor, requiring collaboration among stakeholders with shared interests.

Carlsson's (2000) Collective Action Theory suggests that the effectiveness of collective action depends on several dimensions: contextual factors, problem definition, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, actor mobilization, and coordination and control. In the context of stunting in West Sulawesi, contextual factors such as the cultural practice of early marriage must be understood as a major barrier to reducing stunting rates. Therefore, a detailed analysis is needed to determine how collective action can be realized through policy implementation networks at the provincial and district levels.

Collaboration among actors in formulating accelerated stunting reduction policies has been recognized in previous studies; however, its implementation still faces challenges. The main issues for the West Sulawesi Provincial Government include limited cross-sectoral coordination, low commitment among stakeholders, and insufficient capacity of village administrations to manage nutritional intervention programs. Therefore, research is needed to evaluate and analyze the factors contributing to high stunting rates in West Sulawesi, as well as the obstacles to effective policy implementation.

Through a networked and collective action approach, this study aims to identify the roles and contributions of actors involved in stunting reduction in West Sulawesi, and to explore how coordination and control within the governmental hierarchy can be enhanced to accelerate stunting reduction. Based on this background, the research is entitled: "Collective Action in the Implementation Network for Accelerated Stunting Reduction in West Sulawesi Province." The study is expected to provide insights into how collective action within governance networks can contribute



to faster stunting reduction, and to identify factors that hinder or support the implementation of existing policies.

2. METHODS

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of stunting prevention in West Sulawesi Province and how it is addressed through the application of Collective Action theory within implementation networks. In this research on Collective Action in the Implementation Network for Accelerated Stunting Reduction in West Sulawesi Province, a qualitative method was employed. The study was conducted at the Office of Social Affairs of the West Sulawesi Provincial Government.

Qualitative methods consist of a set of approaches used to analyze and gain a deeper understanding of the meanings that individuals or groups attach to human or social issues (Cresswell, 2015). Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, with ten (10) individuals designated as key informants. Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and document analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods, and the findings were presented narratively based on the empirical data obtained. The purpose of the data analysis was to ensure the validity and relevance of the information in addressing the research problem. The primary focus of this study is on efforts to accelerate the reduction of stunting rates in West Sulawesi Province.

3. RESULTS

A. Result

Stunting as a Chronic Nutritional Problem and Its Collective Action Analysis in West Sulawesi Province

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem caused by prolonged inadequate nutrient intake, often resulting from feeding practices that do not meet nutritional needs. This condition can begin during fetal development and usually becomes visible when a child reaches two years of age. According to Laili & Andriyani (2019), stunting arises from chronic undernutrition, which impairs child growth, resulting in height that is significantly below age-standardized norms. Children are classified as stunted when their height-for-age falls below the national standard. Maternal undernutrition during pregnancy is a primary contributor to stunting in children (Rahman, Adhani & Triawati, 2016).

Stunting represents a form of growth failure, with long-term implications, including reduced economic productivity and higher healthcare costs. Its causes stem from both internal and external factors, including demographic characteristics such as parental education, place of residence, employment status, lifestyle behaviors, and other household factors (Ibrahim & Faramita, 2015). This study applies Collective Action Theory, as proposed by Carlsson (2000), to examine stunting reduction in West Sulawesi. Collective action is broadly defined as “actions taken by members of a group to advance shared interests” (Bogdanor, 1987). However, the phenomenon can occur even without fully aligned interests, as individuals may engage in joint efforts outside formal organizations. Carlsson (2000) emphasizes the relationship between coordination among actors and the degree of shared interest in achieving collective goals.

Stunting is a growth and developmental disorder caused by chronic undernutrition and repeated infections, characterized by a height-for-age below the standard set by the Ministry of Health. The focus of this study is limited to understanding stunting reduction efforts in West Sulawesi through the lens of Collective Action, specifically analyzing six dimensions:

a. Contextual Factors

Contextual factors form the foundation for all types of collective action. In West Sulawesi, these include social, economic, political, organizational, and cultural conditions affecting stunting, such as



unequal access to healthcare and nutrition. These factors inform policy formulation and community participation in decision-making processes aimed at addressing stunting.

b. Problem Definition

Networks are formed around problems that require solutions. Stakeholders must recognize the existence of a problem to generate collective action. In the context of West Sulawesi, this dimension focuses on the network's collaborative efforts to address stunting, including problem assessment, solution generation, and identification of underlying causes.

c. Growth and Spread of Generalized Beliefs

Collective action relies on shared understanding among network actors regarding which actions are considered acceptable or unacceptable. In West Sulawesi, this dimension pertains to public trust in information and interventions related to child growth. Low community trust in nutritional information, early marriage prevention, and child-care guidance can hinder behavior change and the adoption of healthier practices.

d. Precipitating Factors

Certain events or conditions trigger policy activities, such as program launches or political decisions. In West Sulawesi, precipitating factors include economic instability, conflicts, and natural disasters that exacerbate stunting risks. Addressing these factors is essential for effective intervention.

e. Actor Mobilization

Actor mobilization involves organizing and engaging stakeholders in collective efforts. In West Sulawesi, this includes government agencies, civil society, the private sector, and international organizations. Effective mobilization requires empowerment, participation, and coordination among all actors involved in stunting reduction.

f. Coordination and Control

Coordination and control mechanisms emerge from individual interactions or organizational structures. In West Sulawesi, inadequate coordination in resource allocation, decision-making, and program management has limited the effectiveness and impact of stunting reduction efforts.

Despite the provincial government's involvement of multiple sectors in planning and implementing stunting reduction programs, cross-sectoral coordination remains suboptimal. Key challenges include misalignment of data across agencies, inconsistent field-level program execution, and insufficient communication between institutions. Early marriage is a major factor influencing stunting in West Sulawesi. The practice remains prevalent, particularly in rural areas, leading to pregnancies among young mothers who are often physically and mentally unprepared. This contributes to poor maternal nutrition and increases the risk of stunting. Early marriage is also closely linked to low education and poverty, further constraining families' ability to provide adequate nutrition and care.

Poverty exacerbates the stunting problem, as many affected families live below the poverty line with limited access to healthcare, nutritious food, and education. Social assistance programs often fail to reach the intended beneficiaries due to coordination and monitoring challenges at the local level. Community participation, a key element of Collective Action, remains insufficient, particularly in remote areas where residents lack adequate access to information and educational resources on stunting prevention. Programs involving local communities have not fully empowered residents to actively contribute to stunting reduction in their regions. The suboptimal reduction of stunting in West Sulawesi, analyzed through the six dimensions of Carlsson's (2000) Collective Action Theory, highlights the persistent challenges in mobilizing actors, fostering trust, coordinating efforts, and implementing interventions effectively across the province.



Contextual Factors Dimension

The contextual factors dimension indicates that poverty, which contributes to early marriage, is one of the primary factors exacerbating stunting in West Sulawesi. Early marriage is defined as marriage involving individuals under the age of 18. According to data from the West Sulawesi Population and Civil Registration Office, child marriages remain high, with 1,347 cases recorded among individuals aged 15–19 from January to May 2023. Larasati et al. (2018) state that early pregnancies significantly increase the risk of delivering stunted children. Stunting is defined as a condition where a child's height is too short for their age (Anjani, 2022). Restiana (2020) further argues that stunting is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including complementary feeding (MP-ASI), exclusive breastfeeding, maternal height, education, basic child immunization completeness, and maternal age at marriage. Early marriage leads to early pregnancy, which affects maternal readiness to care for children and results in poor reproductive health. Consequently, children born under these circumstances face a higher risk of malnutrition, including stunting, wasting, and chronic undernutrition. The younger the mother at the time of pregnancy, the higher the risk of stunting in her child. The impacts of stunting persist throughout life, potentially affecting future generations, cognitive-motor-verbal development, intelligence, productivity, adult stature, and increasing susceptibility to obesity, insulin resistance, gestational diabetes, and reproductive health problems (Permatasari, 2022).

Problem Definition Dimension

According to Carlsson (2000), the problem definition dimension relates to issues faced by stakeholders and encompasses both the challenges and needs of these actors. Research findings indicate that stakeholders in West Sulawesi face problems such as limited budgets and uneven resource distribution, which are significant obstacles, particularly in cross-sectoral coordination. Strong commitment from local officials is essential to maintain consistency in the implementation of regional development plans (Abbas, 2020). In Collective Action theory, stakeholders must agree on the existence of a problem to trigger collective efforts to solve it (Carlsson, 2000). Similarly, Smelser (1962) explains that collective action emerges from social tension, inequality, or injustice, which creates the impetus for collective responses. In stunting reduction programs in West Sulawesi, stakeholders share a common perception of the issues; however, limited budgets and weak cross-sectoral coordination hinder effective action. Complex public problems require the involvement of multiple stakeholders or actors to achieve solutions.

Growth and Spread of Generalized Beliefs Dimension

Carlsson (2000) explains that this dimension concerns how stakeholders collectively perceive the urgency of stunting reduction and the goals of joint action. Research findings show that stakeholders in West Sulawesi understand the importance of reducing stunting and engage in collective actions toward agreed-upon targets. This is evident through integrated cross-sectoral programs and activities involving all relevant stakeholders. The results illustrate a clear alignment between Carlsson's Collective Action theory and the reality of stunting reduction efforts in West Sulawesi. Alignment of beliefs, goals, and joint actions among stakeholders is crucial, as Taufik (2015) highlights in the context of policy networks.

Precipitating Factors Dimension

Carlsson (2000) notes that collective action does not emerge automatically. Political decisions, such as program launches or policy initiatives, often trigger collective activities. Findings in West Sulawesi indicate the presence of strong, coordinated political decisions to address stunting through cross-sectoral collective action. Stakeholder involvement, including the community, demonstrates that political decisions can stimulate joint action to solve public health problems.



Actor Mobilization Dimension

Carlsson (2000) defines actor mobilization as the efforts and methods used by leading sectors to engage other stakeholders. In West Sulawesi, the Provincial Health Office coordinates with other agencies, such as the Food Security Office, Social Affairs Office, and Women's Empowerment Office, each with specific roles in stunting prevention. Under the leadership of the acting governor and the Regional Development Planning Board (Bappeda), a Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS) has been established to coordinate programs. Community participation is also critical, especially through posyandu cadres, PKK groups, and local communities, who serve as frontline educators and service providers for affected families. Each agency complements the others, and stakeholders perform their roles collectively. Mobilizing stakeholders is essential in tackling stunting as a critical public issue and represents a manifestation of policy networks (Smelser, 1962).

Coordination and Control Dimension

Carlsson (2000) emphasizes that coordination and control involve mechanisms designed to manage interactions among actors and oversee program implementation. Interviews with stakeholders indicate that, despite the provincial government prioritizing stunting reduction, challenges remain, especially in inter-agency coordination and control. Current coordination mainly occurs through formal planning and cross-sector meetings initiated by local authorities. Although task forces exist, field-level implementation faces obstacles due to limited resources, weak communication, and lack of integrated monitoring systems. Control mechanisms rely heavily on administrative reporting and partial oversight by individual agencies. Integrated monitoring across sectors is still limited, and accurate data-based supervision is suboptimal, complicating program evaluation. The research findings highlight that insufficient coordination and control among stakeholders diverge from Carlsson's (2000) ideal Collective Action perspective, where effective coordination is essential. Effective control and coordination should function as core elements of inter-organizational network systems to formulate and implement strategies successfully (Alwi, 2007; Susanti, 2012).

4. CONCLUSION

Carlsson's (2000) Collective Action theory reveals that stunting reduction efforts in West Sulawesi are not fully aligned with ideal network-based practices. Low stakeholder commitment complicates cross-sector collaboration, creating a gap between policy formulation and field implementation. Therefore, an evidence-based, holistic approach is necessary to address the root causes of stunting. Collective Action should emphasize resource sharing among all stakeholders, as leading sectors often face resource constraints and require collaborative mechanisms to enhance intervention effectiveness. Future research may focus on developing specific cross-sector collaboration models, evaluating digital coordination tools for real-time resource sharing, and exploring the role of non-governmental actors in strengthening stunting reduction networks. Behavioral insights could also be applied to improve stakeholder commitment and community engagement in policy implementation.

REFERENCES

1. Alwi. 2007. Analysis of Inter-Organizational Networks in Determining Regional Economic Growth Strategy (A Case Study of the Integrated Development Area Management Agency (BP-KAPET) Parepare, South Sulawesi Province).
2. Anjani, S. (2022). The Relationship Between Early Age Marriage of Mothers and Protein Intake with the Incidence of Stunting in Toddlers Aged 0-59 Months (A Study in the Working Area of the Maesan Community Health Center, Bondowoso Regency).
3. Abbas, A. (2020). Functional Food Potential and Its Role in Improving the Health of an Increasingly Vulnerable Population: A Mini Review. *Teknosains: Media Informasi Sains Dan Teknologi*, 14(2), 176–186. <https://doi.org/10.24252/teknosains.v14i2.14319>.



4. Bogdanor, V. (Ed.). 1987. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia Ofpolitical Institutions*. New York, NY: Blackwell Reference.
5. Carlsson. L. 2000. Policy Network as Collective Action. *Policies Study Journal*. 28(3), 502-520.
6. Cresswell, J. W. (2015). *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
7. Ibrahim, I. A. dan R. Faramita. 2015. The Relationship Between Family Socioeconomic Factors and the Incidence of Stunting in Children Aged 24-59 Months in the Working Area of the Barombong Community Health Center, Makassar City, 2014. *Public Health Science Journal*, 7(1), 63-75.
8. Laili, U., & Andriani, R. A. D. 2019. Community Empowerment in Stunting Prevention. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat IPTEKS*, 5(1), 8. https://doi.org/10.32528/pengabdian_iptek.v5i1.2154
9. Larasati, D. A., Nindya, T. S., & Arief, Y. S. (2018). Hubungan antara Kehamilan Remaja dan Riwayat.
10. Permatasari, C. (2022). Early Marriage and the Risk of Stunting in Children Under Two Years Old at the Kertek 2 Community Health Center, Wonosobo Regency. *HIGEIA (Journal of Public Health Research And Development)*, 6(1).
11. Rahman T, Adhani R, Triawanti (2016). The Relationship Between Short Nutritional Status (Stunting) and Dental Caries Levels. *Dentino Jurnal Kedokteran Gigi*, 1(1), 89.
12. Restiana, R. P. (2020). The Relationship Between Early Marriage and the Incidence of Stunting in Toddlers Aged 24-59 Months* [Undergraduate thesis-2020].
13. Smelser, Neil. 1962. *Theory of Collective Behavior*, Third.
14. Susanti, Gita, 2012. *Democratic Public Service Networks: A Case Study of Determining Network-Based Education Service Strategies in Makassar City* [Doctoral dissertation, Hasanuddin University].
15. Taufik, 2015. *Public Policy Networks: A Case Study of the Implementation of Islamic Sharia Policy in Bireuen Regency, Aceh Province* [Master's thesis, Hasanuddin University].
16. Tilly, L.A., C. Tilly, en *Social Science History Association*. (1981). *Class conflict and collective action. New Approaches to Social Science History*. Beverly Hills; London: Published in cooperation with the Social Science History Association [by] Sage Publications.