

Coordination Between Implementing Organizations In The Implementation Of Stunting Reduction Policies In Bulukumba District

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ABSTRACT

Reducing stunting is a national development priority that requires cross-sectoral policy implementation and inter-organizational coordination. Bulukumba District has achieved a significant reduction in stunting prevalence, but policy implementation still faces coordination challenges among implementing agencies. This study analyzes inter-organizational coordination in the implementation of stunting policies in Bulukumba District. A qualitative approach was used through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving key stakeholders. Data were analyzed thematically using NVivo 12. Matrix coding visualization was generated to identify communication intensity and coordination patterns among implementing organizations. The results show that cross-sector coordination mechanisms have been established through the TPPS and joint planning forums, but challenges remain in the consistency of data communication, differing perceptions of roles among agencies, and limited integration of information systems. These results indicate that effective stunting policy implementation depends not only on the availability of programs, but also on the quality of inter-organizational coordination.

Keywords: *coordination, policy implementation, stunting*

INTRODUCTION

Stunting is one of the human development issues that remains a serious concern in many developing countries. Stunting not only affects children's physical growth, but also has implications for cognitive development, future economic productivity, and overall human resource quality. Various studies show that stunting is closely related to the socioeconomic conditions of the family, the nutritional status of the mother, and an inadequate health environment (Kustanto et

al., 2024) In addition, the double burden of malnutrition experienced by many developing countries places stunting as a complex public health challenge (Kiosia et al., 2024; Yigezu et al., 2024).

Global efforts to reduce stunting require a cross-sectoral approach because the contributing factors are multidimensional. Thow, (2025) emphasize that the success of nutrition improvement programs requires political commitment, cross-sectoral integration, and strong policy implementation governance. Similarly, Paikah et al., (2024) emphasize that investment in stunting reduction provides long-term economic benefits, so this policy must be placed as a development priority.

In Indonesia, the government's commitment to reducing stunting is manifested through Presidential Regulation No. 72 of 2021 concerning the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction. This policy emphasizes that stunting interventions must be carried out in a convergent manner through the involvement of various sectors, ranging from health, development planning, social affairs, education, to community empowerment. However, the main challenge of stunting programs in Indonesia lies not in policy design, but in the process of cross-sectoral implementation at the regional level (Agustiani et al., 2025; Rusliadi & Aina, 2024).

The implementation of public policy is essentially a crucial stage that determines the success of policy objectives (Biesbroek, 2021; Kaipainen & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2022). Asserts that good public policy is not only seen from the formulation of the policy, but also from how the policy is effectively implemented by the implementing actors (Capano & Howlett, 2021; Koch, 2022; Mukherjee et al., 2021). In the context of implementation, place communication and coordination between implementing organizations as important variables that determine the success of policy implementation (Garro-Abarca et al., 2021).

The stunting reduction policy is an example of a multisectoral policy that requires coordination between implementing organizations. This program involves health agencies, development planning, population and family planning, village empowerment, as well as sub-district and village governments. The complexity of these actors makes cross-sector coordination an absolute prerequisite for the program to run convergently and not be fragmented. Refer to this condition as inter-

organizational governance, which is the need for cooperation mechanisms between institutions to achieve common public goals (Aaltonen & Turkulainen, 2022).

Various studies on the implementation of stunting policies in Indonesia show that coordination between organizations remains a major challenge. Simbolon et al. (2024) in research (Sadewo et al., 2024) found that the implementation of the accelerated stunting reduction program faced obstacles in communication between regional government agencies and inconsistencies in target data. Hanifah and Syahrizal (2024) in (Samad et al., 2024) also emphasized that weak cross-sectoral coordination has resulted in the suboptimal implementation of stunting programs in several regions. Similar findings were reported by KONAY et al., (2022), who showed that the implementation of stunting policies at the local level still faces sectoral egoism and differences in perception among implementers.

Bulukumba Regency is one of the regions in South Sulawesi Province that has shown a significant downward trend in stunting prevalence in recent years. The local government has formed a Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS), developed a Regional Action Plan, and developed data integration innovations through the PEDAS 3 program. These initiatives demonstrate the local government's commitment to supporting the national agenda of stunting reduction.

However, initial observations and preliminary interviews indicate that data synchronization between agencies, the division of roles between OPDs, and the consistency of coordination forums at the sub-district and village levels still face obstacles. This condition shows a gap between policy design that demands cross-sector convergence and the reality of implementation in the field. Urbaniec & Žur, (2021) refer to this phenomenon as the implementation gap, which is the distance between policy objectives and their implementation practices. In addition, coordination challenges are also related to the technical capacity of field implementers. Emphasize that the success of nutrition interventions is largely determined by the capacity of local actors to translate policies into tangible services for the community. When technical capacity and communication systems are uneven, the quality of policy implementation will vary between regions (Siekman et al., 2025).

Based on these conditions, it can be said that although Bulukumba District has shown positive achievements in reducing stunting, the dynamics of coordination between implementing organizations are still a determining factor in the sustainability of policy success. However, empirical studies that specifically analyze coordination between implementing organizations in the implementation of stunting policies at the regional level are still relatively limited.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how coordination between implementing organizations takes place in the implementation of stunting reduction policies in Bulukumba Regency, identify cross-sector communication patterns, and examine the obstacles encountered in the coordination process. The results of this study are expected to contribute academically to the development of public policy implementation literature, as well as contribute practically to strengthening the governance of accelerating stunting reduction at the regional level.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a case study approach to comprehensively examine the dynamics of stunting reduction policy implementation in Bulukumba District, South Sulawesi Province. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture in depth the processes, interactions, and contextual factors that shape coordination and communication among implementing organizations. Bulukumba District was selected as the research location due to its status as one of the priority areas for stunting intervention at the provincial level, as well as its implementation of various cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms aimed at accelerating stunting reduction. The case study design allowed the researcher to explore real-life policy implementation within its institutional and social context, thereby generating a nuanced understanding of governance practices and inter-organizational relationships (Thorne, 2025).

Research informants consisted of key stakeholders directly involved in the planning, coordination, and implementation of stunting reduction programs. These informants included officials from the District Health Office, representatives of the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Innovation Agency

(Bappelitbangda), members of the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team, health workers from Community Health Centers. Integrated Health Post cadres at the village level, and families targeted by the stunting intervention programs. The selection of informants was conducted using purposive sampling to ensure that individuals with relevant knowledge, experience, and authority in stunting-related policies were included. In addition, snowball sampling was applied to identify additional informants recommended by initial participants, particularly at the community level, to enrich the data and capture diverse perspectives on program implementation.

Data collection was carried out through multiple qualitative techniques to ensure data richness and depth. In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides to allow flexibility in exploring informants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations regarding coordination mechanisms, communication patterns, and implementation challenges. Field observations were undertaken to document actual practices during coordination meetings, service delivery activities at health facilities, and community-level interventions. These observations enabled the researcher to identify discrepancies or alignments between formal policy arrangements and practical implementation. In addition, documentation studies were conducted by reviewing relevant policy documents, official regulations, program guidelines, monitoring and evaluation reports, and other administrative records related to stunting reduction in Bulukumba District.

To ensure data validity and credibility, this study applied triangulation of sources and methods by cross-checking information obtained from different informants and data collection techniques (Maxwell et al., 2025). The triangulation process helped minimize bias and strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings. Data analysis was conducted thematically by organizing and interpreting qualitative data to identify recurring patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to coordination and communication among implementing organizations. NVivo 12 software was utilized to assist in coding, data management, and systematic analysis. Through matrix coding visualization, the study identified the intensity of communication and the structure of coordination networks across institutions,

providing an analytical basis for understanding how inter-organizational interactions influence the effectiveness of stunting reduction policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section presents empirical findings on the dynamics of inter-organizational coordination in the implementation of stunting reduction policies in Bulukumba District. The analysis focuses on how cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms are implemented, the communication patterns formed among policy implementers, and the structural and technical barriers that affect policy effectiveness. Given that stunting reduction is a multisectoral policy requiring the involvement of various government organizations and community actors, understanding coordination practices at the local level is essential to explain both policy achievements and persistent implementation challenges (Hamka & Ibrahim, 2025).

The findings of this study are derived from a thematic analysis of data collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and reviews of policy documents and program reports, which were analyzed using NVivo 12 software. Matrix coding visualization was employed to identify the intensity of communication and coordination relationships among implementing organizations at the district, sub-district, and village levels. This analytical approach allows the study to capture not only the existence of formal coordination structures but also the quality of interactions, information flows, and consistency of policy implementation across different administrative levels.

The discussion of the findings integrates empirical evidence with theoretical perspectives on policy implementation and inter-organizational coordination. Concepts of communication and coordination proposed by Van Meter and Van Horn, along with the inter-organizational governance framework of Agranoff and McGuire, are used to interpret the extent to which existing coordination mechanisms are able to bridge policy objectives with implementation practices in the field. Through this theoretical lens, the study explains the factors that strengthen

or constrain coordination performance in the context of stunting reduction policy implementation at the local level.

The results and discussion demonstrate that the success of stunting reduction efforts in Bulukumba District is not determined solely by the availability of programs and regulatory frameworks, but is strongly influenced by the quality of coordination among implementing organizations (Nyawira et al., 2023). The findings provide a comprehensive picture of cross-sectoral coordination practices at the local level and offer a reflective basis for improving the governance of stunting reduction policies toward a more integrated and sustainable implementation.

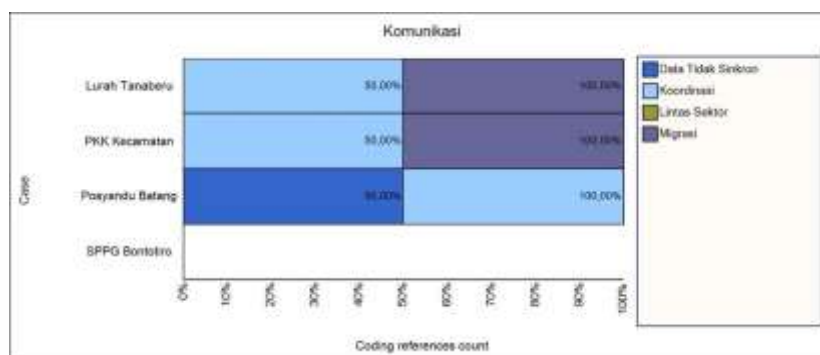


Figure 1. Coding Hierarchy of Coordination Themes

Figure 1 presents the NVivo matrix coding visualization of communication patterns among implementing actors in the stunting reduction program in Bulukumba Regency. The visualization indicates that coordination communication is most prominent at the village and sub-district levels, particularly involving the village head and PKK at the kecamatan level, which show high references related to cross-sector coordination. Meanwhile, community-based service units such as Integrated Health Post display significant references to data inconsistency issues, reflecting challenges in synchronizing health and family data across agencies. These findings suggest that although formal communication channels have been established, the integration of inter-agency information systems remains limited, thereby constraining effective inter-organizational coordination (Khan et al., 2022).

Coordination Mechanism Between Implementing Organizations

The results of the study show that the Bulukumba District Government has formed a Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS) as a formal cross-sector coordination forum. The TPPS serves as an institutional platform for planning, monitoring, and evaluating stunting reduction programs involving key regional institutions, including the Health Office, Bappelitbangda, DP2KB, the Community and Village Empowerment Office, as well as stakeholders at the sub-district and village levels. Formal coordination is carried out through regular cross-sector meetings, joint preparation of the Regional Action Plan for Stunting Reduction, and integration of stunting programs into official regional development planning documents. This coordination mechanism facilitates the alignment of program priorities, synchronization of budget allocations, and harmonization of intervention strategies across sectors. The existence of the TPPS has strengthened communication channels between institutions and created a common understanding of policy objectives among implementing organizations. Who emphasize that the existence of formal inter-organizational communication structures increases the likelihood of successful policy implementation (Nezami et al., 2023; Valiyeva & Thomas, 2022). In the context of Bulukumba District, the TPPS acts as a bridge between policy formulation and implementation in the field by ensuring that each agency operates within the framework of integrated stunting reduction objectives. However, despite the existence of a formal coordination structure, the effectiveness of the TPPS in promoting substantial collaboration still depends on consistent participation, data sharing practices, and clear division of roles among agencies. This shows that coordination is not only about establishing institutions, but also about maintaining continuous communication and shared commitment among implementing actors.

Communication Patterns and Data Exchange

Coordination between organizations also takes place through a stunting data reporting system from community health centers (Puskesmas) and integrated health service posts to the Health Agency, which is then submitted to Bappelitbangda as the basis for program planning. The PEDAS 3 program is an important innovation

in improving the integration of stunting data down to the village level. However, the study found that data inconsistencies between agencies still occur, particularly differences between health system data and DP2KB data on families at risk of stunting. This situation leads to differences in intervention targets and complicates program synchronization. This obstacle shows that even though communication channels are available, cross-sector information system integration is not yet optimal, thereby affecting the effectiveness of policy coordination. Coordination between implementing organizations is also carried out through a stunting data reporting system that flows from Community Health Centers and Integrated Health Service Posts to the Health Office, which then submits consolidated data to Bappelitbangda as the basis for regional program planning. This reporting mechanism aims to ensure that policy interventions are designed based on accurate and up-to-date field conditions. An important innovation supporting this process is the PEDAS 3 program, which was developed to improve stunting data integration down to the village level. This program facilitates cross-sector data consolidation and strengthens evidence-based planning for stunting reduction interventions. This initiative reflects the local government's commitment to building an integrated information system that supports cross-sector decision-making. However, this study reveals that data inconsistencies between agencies still occur, particularly differences between health sector data and DP2KB records on families at risk of stunting. These differences cause variations in intervention targets and create difficulties in synchronizing cross-sectoral programs. As a result, some households may receive overlapping assistance, while others remain unreachable by appropriate interventions. These findings indicate that although communication channels and reporting structures are formally available, cross-sectoral information system integration has not been fully optimized. In line with Agranoff and view of interorganizational coordination, effective collaboration requires not only communication forums but also shared data systems that enable consistent interpretation of policy issues (Chen & Lee, 2021; Riebe et al., 2021). Therefore, incomplete data integration in Bulukumba District continues to limit the overall effectiveness of policy coordination in reducing stunting.

Clarity of Roles Among OPDs

Interview results show that some OPDs still view stunting programs as the domain of the health sector. As a result, several non-health agencies have not fully integrated stunting programs into their work plans. This indicates a difference in understanding of roles among implementing organizations. In fact, national policy emphasizes that stunting is a multisectoral issue that requires contributions from the education, sanitation, social, and economic sectors. This finding reinforces Hoffjann, (2022) argument that policies with a high degree of ambiguity require intensive communication to prevent differences in interpretation among implementing actors.

Field Coordination Barriers

At the field level, Integrated Health Post cadres and Family Assistance Teams reported that coordination with village officials was already underway, but was still hampered by limited technical capacity and inconsistent reporting procedures. In addition, coordination forums were not always held regularly in all subdistricts, so communication between implementation levels (district–subdistrict–village) was not yet fully consistent. These obstacles indicate that vertical coordination between implementing structures still needs to be strengthened so that policies can be uniformly translated to the grassroots level.

Implications for Policy Implementation

In general, coordination between implementing organizations in Bulukumba District has been established through the TPPS structure and cross-sector forums. However, its effectiveness is still influenced by: (1) Cross-agency data integration that is not yet fully synchronized. (2) Differences in understanding of roles between OPDs. (3) Uneven intensity of coordination forums. (4) Variable technical capacity of field implementers. These conditions indicate that the success of stunting reduction in Bulukumba is not only the result of program availability, but also the quality of coordination between implementing organizations.

Coordination between implementing organizations in the implementation of stunting reduction policies in Bulukumba District shows that the success of public policy is not only determined by the clarity of regulations, but also by the quality

of interactions between implementing actors. The findings of the study show that the formation of the Stunting Reduction Acceleration Team (TPPS) has provided a formal cross-sectoral coordination structure. The existence of the TPPS strengthens communication channels between organizations, unifies planning, and serves as a forum for program consolidation between OPDs. This condition reflects what refer to as inter-organizational communication, which is a mechanism that bridges policy standards with implementation practices in the field.

However, the existence of a formal coordination structure does not fully guarantee effective coordination. The study found that data synchronization between agencies remains a major issue. Differences in the databases between the Health Office, DP2KB, and Bappelitbangda have led to inconsistencies in intervention targets. This phenomenon shows that information system integration is an important prerequisite for the implementation of multisectoral policies. Emphasize that coordination between organizations will be effective if it is supported by a reliable information exchange system that is accessible to all implementing actors.

Data inconsistency also has an impact on program planning. When OPDs have different data references, the programs designed have the potential to overlap or be off target. This reinforces finding that ambiguity in policy information can lead to differences in interpretation among implementers, which ultimately weakens the consistency of implementation. Thus, the issue of coordination in Bulukumba is not only related to the intensity of cross-sector meetings but also concerns the uniformity of understanding based on the same data.

In addition to data issues, the division of roles between OPDs also still shows a sectoral tendency. Some non-health agencies still view stunting as solely the concern of the Health Office. In fact, national policy emphasizes that stunting is a multidimensional issue that requires simultaneous specific and sensitive nutritional interventions. When this understanding has not been fully internalized, cross-sectoral coordination will be formalistic and not fully substantive. This finding is in line with the views of collaboration between public institutions requires

a shared vision and shared motivation so that cross-sectoral interactions do not stop at the administrative level.

At the field implementation level, the study found that Integrated Health Post cadres and Family Assistance Teams are key actors who bridge policies with the target community. They act as the spearhead for data collection, education, and assistance for families at risk of stunting. However, vertical coordination between the district, sub-district, and village levels is not yet fully consistent. Coordination forums are not yet running regularly in all subdistricts, and reporting procedures still vary between regions. This condition shows that coordination is not only horizontal between OPDs, but also requires strengthening vertical communication between levels of government.

Limitations in the technical capacity of field implementers also affect the quality of coordination. Some cadres still experience difficulties in anthropometric measurements and filling out the digital reporting system. This has an impact on data accuracy and slows down the flow of information to the policy-making level. These findings support argument that policy implementation will face the risk of failure when the implementation chain is too long without being balanced by adequate actor capacity.

Nevertheless, Bulukumba District has demonstrated good practices through the PEDAS 3 Program innovation as an effort to integrate stunting data down to the village level. This innovation demonstrates the local government's commitment to improving cross-sectoral information management. This initiative is in line with the findings of the WHO (2024) that the success of stunting reduction at the local level is largely determined by an integrated monitoring system that enables evidence-based interventions.

Overall, the results of the study show that coordination between implementing organizations in Bulukumba has moved towards collaboration, but still faces structural and technical challenges. These challenges include cross-agency data integration, alignment of perceptions of roles between OPDs, consistency of coordination forums, and the capacity of field implementers. These

four aspects are interrelated and determine the quality of stunting reduction policy implementation.

The implication of these findings is that strengthening coordination is not enough through the establishment of institutional structures alone, but also requires investment in integrated information systems, strengthening human resource capacity, and collaborative leadership that is able to maintain cross-sectoral commitment. Thus, the sustainability of stunting reduction success in Bulukumba will be largely determined by the local government's ability to manage inter-organizational networks in an adaptive manner and with a focus on common goals.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that coordination between implementing organizations is an important factor in the implementation of stunting reduction policies in Bulukumba District. The local government has established formal coordination mechanisms through the TPPS and cross-sector forums, as well as data integration innovations through the PEDAS 3 program. However, the effectiveness of coordination still faces obstacles in the form of inconsistent data across agencies, differences in understanding of roles between OPDs, and uneven communication intensity at the village level. Strengthening the integrated communication system, integrating cross-sectoral databases, and clarifying the division of roles among OPDs are recommended to improve the sustainability of stunting policy implementation in Bulukumba Regency.

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