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The Role Of Local Wisdom In Efforts To Prevent Stunting In Toddlers In Coastal Areas

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a chronic nutritional problem that remains a serious concern in Indonesia, particularly in coastal areas, which generally suffer from low levels of well-being, limited food access, and vulnerable environmental conditions. Stunting impacts not only a child's physical growth but also their cognitive development and future productivity. Furthermore, coastal communities possess a rich culture and local wisdom that can play a crucial role in maintaining food security and family nutritional status. This study aims to analyze in depth the role of local wisdom in preventing stunting in toddlers in coastal areas.

This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, through in-depth interviews with community leaders, mothers of toddlers, and health workers in coastal villages. Participatory observation and documentation studies were also conducted to obtain comprehensive data regarding local wisdom practices still practiced by the community. The results showed that forms of local wisdom such as the tradition of consuming fresh fish, the use of local plants (moringa leaves, sweet potatoes, bananas), and social values such as mutual cooperation and food arisan (social gatherings) have a significant contribution to preventing stunting. This local wisdom supports the fulfillment of balanced nutrition, strengthens social solidarity, and raises awareness of the importance of a healthy diet for toddlers.

Modernization, changing consumption patterns, and coastal environmental degradation threaten the sustainability of these practices. Therefore, integrating local wisdom into government programs such as Posyandu (Integrated Health Posts), PKK (Family Welfare Movement), and nutrition education is necessary to strengthen culturally based stunting prevention strategies. Therefore, preserving and revitalizing local wisdom can be a sustainable solution to reducing stunting prevalence in Indonesia's coastal areas.

Keywords: Local Wisdom, Stunting, Toddler Nutrition, Coastal Areas, Food Security

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1. Introduction

Stunting remains a complex and multidimensional public health problem in Indonesia. According to data from *the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2023)*, the national stunting prevalence remains around 21.5%, with rates tending to be higher in coastal areas than in inland areas. This condition is caused by various factors, including limited access to nutritious food, poor environmental sanitation, poverty, and low public nutrition knowledge. Stunting not only impedes children's physical growth but also has long-term impacts on cognitive development, intelligence, and future human resource productivity. Therefore, efforts to prevent stunting require a comprehensive, contextual, and sustainable approach.

Indonesian coastal communities possess a rich cultural heritage and local wisdom passed down through generations. This local wisdom encompasses various traditional values, knowledge, and practices proven to maintain a balance between human life and nature. In the context of food and nutrition security, local wisdom is often reflected in traditional food consumption patterns, the mutual cooperation system, and the utilization of local natural resources such as seafood and coastal plants. For example, the tradition of consuming fresh fish, local vegetables, and other seafood has become part of the coastal community's food culture. Furthermore, social values such as mutual cooperation, food arisan (a social gathering), and mutual assistance among residents strengthen the social system that supports food security for low-income families.

Modernization and socioeconomic changes have impacted the sustainability of local wisdom practices. People's consumption patterns have shifted from nutritious local foods to low-nutrient instant foods. Coastal environmental degradation due to pollution and overexploitation has also led to reduced fish catches and other natural food sources. On the other hand, some communities have begun to ignore traditional values, deeming them out of step with current developments. Consequently, the significant potential of local wisdom to support children's nutrition and health is being marginalized.

Local wisdom plays a strategic role in supporting the national stunting reduction program. Local culture-based approaches are believed to be more readily accepted by communities because they align with established values and customs. Integrating local wisdom into public health programs can strengthen the sustainability of interventions, increase community participation, and expand the reach of nutrition education down to the household level.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the role of local wisdom in stunting prevention efforts in toddlers in coastal areas. Through a qualitative approach, this research is expected to gain a deeper understanding of persisting cultural practices, the factors influencing them, and their potential for development as local strategies to support stunting reduction programs. The results of this study are expected to provide input for





local governments, health workers, and communities in designing local wisdom-based policies to strengthen child nutritional security in coastal areas of Indonesia.

2. Research methodology

a. Types and Approaches of Research

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on deeply understanding the meaning, values, and practices of local wisdom that play a role in stunting prevention in coastal communities. A qualitative approach allows researchers to explore social realities contextually and comprehensively based on the experiences, perspectives, and customs of local communities.

b. Location and Time of Research

The research was conducted in Pesisir Village X, a coastal area with a relatively high stunting prevalence rate, according to data from the local Health Office. This location was chosen purposively *because* the community still maintains traditional practices and strong local wisdom.

The research was conducted over four months, from June to September 2025, covering the preparation phase, data collection, analysis, and report preparation.

c. Research Subjects and Informants

Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their involvement and knowledge of the research topic. The informants consisted of:

- Community and traditional leaders (3 people), who understand local traditions and wisdom values.
- Mothers of toddlers (5 people), who have direct experience in childcare and the application of daily nutritional practices.
- Health workers (midwives and integrated health post cadres) (2 people), who know the health conditions of children in the area.
- Village officials and PKK administrators (2 people), who play a role in the stunting prevention program at the village level.

A total of 12 key informants were interviewed in depth.

d. Data collection technique

Research data was collected using the following techniques:

1) depth Interview Interview)

Conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the views, knowledge, and experiences of informants regarding local wisdom practices and their relationship to stunting prevention.

2) Participatory Observation





Researchers conducted direct observations of community activities, such as family consumption patterns, integrated health post activities, and social traditions related to health and food.

3) Documentation Study

Includes secondary data searches from village documents, health reports, as well as official data from the Health Service and Integrated Health Posts (Posyandu) regarding the nutritional status of toddlers at the research location.

e. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out interactively using the Miles and Huberman (1994) model which includes three main stages:

- 1) Data Reduction – the process of selecting, focusing, and simplifying data from interviews, observations, and documentation.
- 2) Data Presentation (Data Display) – arranging information in narrative, table, or matrix form so that it is easy to understand.
- 3) Drawing Conclusions and Verification – interpreting the meaning of data, connecting it to theory, and drawing temporary conclusions which are then verified with field data.

f. Data Validity

To ensure the validity of the data, source and method triangulation techniques were used. Triangulation was carried out by comparing information from various informants and using more than one data collection method. In addition, member verification was carried out. check with the main informant to ensure that the researcher's interpretation results are in accordance with the reality they mean.

g. Research Ethics

This research upholds the ethical principles of social research. Each informant was given an explanation of the research objectives and asked for informed consent (consent) before the interview was conducted. The informant's identity was kept confidential to protect their privacy.

3. Results and Discussion

a. Results

1) Forms of Local Wisdom in the Life of Coastal Communities

The research results show that coastal communities in Village X still maintain a number of local wisdom practices that influence the nutritional needs of toddlers. Based on interviews and observations, several main forms of local wisdom were identified, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Forms of Local Wisdom that Support





Stunting Prevention in Coastal Village X

No.	Forms of Local Wisdom	Practice Description	Benefits for Children's Nutrition
1	Fresh sea fish consumption patterns	The community's tradition is to consume fish, shrimp and shellfish from their daily catch.	Source of protein, calcium and omega-3 fatty acids for growing children.
2	Utilization of local plants (moringa leaves, sweet potatoes, bananas)	Complementary food ingredients for breast milk are processed into porridge or vegetables.	Increase your intake of iron and vitamin A.
3	Food gathering/mutual cooperation	Residents share food supplies with each other in social activities.	Ensuring food availability for poor families.
4	Certain food taboos for breastfeeding mothers	Based on traditional beliefs, certain seafood is avoided.	Although traditional, some of the taboos support the digestive health of mother and child.
5	Posyandu activities based on local culture	Posyandu activities are carried out simultaneously with traditional events, so participation is high.	Strengthening child growth monitoring and nutrition education.

The table above shows that local wisdom encompasses not only dietary habits but also social systems and beliefs related to children's health. Seafood-based consumption patterns and social solidarity are dominant factors supporting the nutritional needs of toddlers in coastal areas.

2) Social Change and the Challenges of Preserving Local Wisdom

Interviews with informants indicate that some local wisdom practices are beginning to decline due to the influence of modernization and social change. The factors influencing these changes are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Factors Influencing Changes in Local Wisdom in Coastal Communities





No.	Causative factor	Impact on Local Wisdom	Impact on Children's Nutrition
1	Modernization and globalization	The shift from traditional food to instant food.	Decrease in children's nutritional quality due to the low nutritional content of fast food.
2	Coastal environmental degradation	Declining fish catches and natural food supplies.	Access to animal protein sources is reduced.
3	Changes in family consumption patterns	Mothers prefer practical food due to time constraints.	Nutritional imbalance in toddlers.
4	Lack of regeneration of traditional knowledge	Cultural values are starting to be forgotten by the younger generation.	Reduced local nutritious food practices.
5	Lack of integration of cultural policies in health programs	stunting program is not yet fully based on local culture.	Interventions are less effective because they are not appropriate to the social context.

Table 2 shows that social change has a direct impact on the decline of local wisdom practices and an indirect impact on the increased risk of stunting. Therefore, efforts are needed to preserve cultural values to ensure they remain relevant amidst changing times.

3) The Role of Local Wisdom in Stunting Prevention

The results of an in-depth analysis show that local wisdom has three strategic roles in efforts to prevent stunting:

a) Nutritional Aspects and Food Security

The tradition of eating fresh fish and utilizing local plants plays an important role in providing sources of macro and micro nutrients for children.

b) Social and Cultural Aspects

The values of mutual cooperation, social concern, and the *food arisan system* strengthen community solidarity in meeting food needs.

c) Aspects of Education and Childcare

Local wisdom instills parenting values based on compassion, patience, and parental responsibility, which contribute to child development.





Thus, it can be concluded that local wisdom is not only a cultural heritage, but also an adaptive social system that plays a role in maintaining children's health in coastal areas.

4) Discussion and Research Implications

This finding aligns with Rahmawati's (2022) research, which asserts that local wisdom can serve as social capital in maintaining food security in coastal communities. Furthermore, the *Social The Ecological Model* supports that health behavior is not only influenced by individual factors, but also by the social and cultural environment.

The implications of this research include:

- Local governments need to integrate local cultural values into stunting intervention programs, such as local food-based nutrition education.
- Community leaders and integrated health post cadres need to be involved as agents for preserving local wisdom.
- It is necessary to develop economic innovations based on local food, so that cultural preservation also has an impact on increasing welfare.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

a. Conclusion

Based on the results of research on *"The Role of Local Wisdom in Efforts to Prevent Stunting in Toddlers in Coastal Areas"*, several things can be concluded as follows:

- 1) Local wisdom plays a strategic role in supporting stunting prevention

Cultural values and traditions of coastal communities, such as the habit of consuming fresh fish, utilizing local plants (moringa leaves, sweet potatoes, bananas), and the mutual cooperation system and food arisan (social gatherings), have been shown to contribute positively to meeting the nutritional needs of toddlers.

- 2) Local wisdom functions as social and cultural capital that strengthens family food security

The tradition of food sharing and social solidarity helps underprivileged communities maintain access to nutritious food, especially for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and toddlers.

- 3) Social change, modernization, and environmental degradation are the main challenges in preserving local wisdom

The shift in consumption patterns from nutritious local foods to instant foods has led to a decline in children's nutritional quality. Furthermore, the decline in seafood due to pollution and extreme weather conditions has reduced the availability of natural protein sources.

- 4) Integration of local wisdom with government programs is necessary for the effectiveness of stunting prevention





A local culture-based approach is considered more easily accepted by the community and can increase community participation in health and nutrition programs.

In general, the local wisdom of coastal communities offers significant potential that can be optimized to support the national strategy to reduce stunting prevalence. An approach that combines modern nutritional science with local culture will result in more contextual, sustainable, and community-acceptable interventions.

b. Suggestion

Based on the research results and conclusions above, the following suggestions are presented:

- 1) For Local Government
 - It is necessary to integrate local wisdom values into stunting prevention policies and programs, such as local food-based nutrition education.
 - Enhancing the role of village institutions, PKK, and integrated health posts (posyandu) in preserving traditional practices that support balanced nutrition.
- 2) For Health Workers and Posyandu Cadres
 - Conduct contextual nutrition counseling, using local food examples such as fish, moringa leaves, and tubers.
 - Developing culture-based educational materials to make health messages more easily accepted by the public.
- 3) For Communities and Traditional Leaders
 - Maintaining and passing on local knowledge related to food, health and childcare.
 - Adapting local wisdom practices with modern technology without abandoning core cultural values.
- 4) For Further Researchers
 - It is recommended to conduct quantitative or *mixed research methods* to statistically measure the effect of the application of local wisdom on children's nutritional status.
 - Comparative studies between coastal areas can also be conducted to see variations in cultural practices and their impact on reducing stunting.

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