

# Socio-cultural analysis and maternal behavior towards the stunting phenomenon in the Samatiga Community Health Center work area

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## ABSTRACT

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Stunting is a growth disorder characterized by toddlers that results in delayed growth that is not in accordance with the standards. Data from the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) of the Ministry of Health shows that out of 34 provinces in Indonesia, Aceh Province ranked 3rd in stunting rates in 2021 and 5th in 2022 at 31.2%. Based on electronic data from the Community-Based Nutrition Reporting and Recording (e-PPGBM) obtained from 2023, West Aceh Regency with a target of 14,848 toddlers with stunting cases amounted to 352 toddlers with stunting, with Samatiga District dominating stunting cases reaching 44 toddlers (31.8%). The purpose of this study was to analyze the socio-cultural and maternal behavior towards stunting in the Samatiga Community Health Center Working Area. The study was conducted from April to July 2025. Descriptive Analysis Research with a sample of 44 toddlers experiencing stunting, data collection was carried out using questionnaires and interviews. Based on the results of socio-cultural research in the good category (pregnancy 63.6% and postpartum 88.7%) and maternal behavior (there is drinking coffee/tea 11.3%; good parenting patterns 68.2%; exclusive breastfeeding 11.3%; appropriate complementary feeding 72.7% and complete immunization 22.7%). The need for awareness of mothers and health workers to provide education on factors that cause stunting in children.

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## INTRODUCTION

Stunting is a growth disorder characterized by toddlers which results in delayed growth of the child that is not in accordance with standards, resulting in both short-term and long-term impacts (Sakti, 2020),(Harjanti, Hakim, & Salim, 2023)Data from the Indonesian Nutritional Status Survey (SSGI) conducted by the Ministry of Health shows that the prevalence of stunting at the national level has decreased year after year, although not significantly. Of Indonesia's 34 provinces, Aceh

ranked third in terms of stunting rates in 2021, and in 2022, it ranked fifth at 31.2% (Ilmi, 2023),(Hanif, 2023).

Based on the results of the 2021 Nutritional Status Monitoring (PSG), West Aceh Regency had a stunting prevalence of 27.4% and in 2022 experienced an increase in stunting prevalence of 30.4% (Maysura, Arham, & Safitri, 2024),(Yuliana, Sinaga, Surbakti, Sinaga, & Aulia, 2024). Based on electronic data from Community-Based Nutrition Reporting Recording (e-PPGBM) obtained from 2023, West Aceh Regency with a target of 14,848 toddlers with a number of stunting of 352 toddlers with Samatiga District dominating stunting cases reaching 44 toddlers (31.8%) 2 (Rustam & Riestiyowati, 2023),(Science, 2024).

Toddlers aged 0-59 months are included in the nutritionally vulnerable group (the group of people most likely to suffer from nutritional disorders), while at that time they are experiencing a relatively rapid growth process (Nurlaeli, 2019),(Kahar, 2023)Linear growth disorders or stunting occur mainly in the first 2 to 3 years of life and are a reflection of the interactive effects between insufficient energy intake, nutritional intake and infection (Aprihatin et al., nd),(Normansyah, Setyorini, Budirahardjo, Prihatiningrum, & Dwiatmoko, 2022).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the causes of stunting can be divided into three factors, namely direct causes (food intake, exclusive breastfeeding, infectious diseases), indirect causes (parenting patterns, socio-cultural factors), and fundamental causes (maternal education, family income) (Neherta, 2023),(Nirmalasari, 2020). The causes of stunting can be indirectly influenced by culture, which can also indirectly influence the incidence of stunting. In line with research conducted by Laurent in 2021, there was a significant influence between the Appasilli culture of the Makassar Tribe and the incidence of stunting (Suprapto, 2024),(Air, 2021). The underlying causal factors can also influence the incidence of stunting in toddlers, such as maternal education can influence the level of knowledge in fulfilling nutritional needs in her family, especially children, this is in line with research conducted by Husnaniyah in 2020, there was a relationship between maternal education level and the incidence of stunting with a P value = 0.005 (<0.05) (Aziza, Safariyah, & Makiyah, 2023),(Rahmayanti, Dewi, & Fitriani, 2020).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is Descriptive Analysis of data in the form of statistical figures and in-depth interviews so that the research can maximally obtain assessment results according to the incidence of stunting cases in recent years. The sampling technique is total sampling in the Samatiga work area of 44 respondents (2023-2025) which will be carried out in activities at integrated health posts (posyandu) in their respective areas. The data collection method in the first stage is quantitatively carried out by research members and assisted by enumerators using questionnaires to provide an overview of socio-cultural factors (culture during pregnancy, postpartum, breastfeeding and coffee drinking habits) and maternal behavior (maternal age, parenting patterns, history of exclusive breastfeeding, provision of complementary foods and immunization history) that cause toddlers to experience stunting, then the second stage is qualitatively carried out by the head researcher, members and enumerators to analyze why socio-cultural factors and maternal behavior cause toddlers to experience stunting, using in-depth interview methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Results

- a. Respondent Characteristics, based on the data obtained from the results of research conducted in the work area of the Samatiga Health Center, the characteristics of the research subjects are as shown in Table 1:

**Table 1.** Subject characteristics data

No	Characteristics Respondents	Frequency	Distribution
		f	%
1	Mother's Umut		
	20-35 Years	39	88.6
	>35 Years	5	11.4
	Total 44 100		
2	Education		
	Elementary-Middle School	1	0.23
	SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL	36	81.8
	College	7	15.9
	Total 44 100		
3	Work		
	Housewife	41	93.2
	Work	3	6.8
	Total 44 100		

## b. Socio-Cultural and Maternal Behavior

## a) Socio-cultural

**Table 2.** Socio-cultural

No	Category	Frequency	Distribution
		f	%
1	Culture During Pregnancy		
	Good	28	63.6
	Not good	16	36.3
		44	100
2	Culture During Postpartum		
	Good	39	88.7
	Not good	5	11.3

36.3% (16 respondents) still believe in unhealthy habits during pregnancy, such as not eating fishy foods. Interviewed with respondent 04, she stated, "The mother of the village police (Responde) forbade eating shrimp and crabs during pregnancy because these animals will affect the child's character."

The culture during postpartum is not good at 11.3%, where during postpartum, people are not allowed to leave the house for 40 days. This is supported by the results of the interview with respondent no. 38 who said that during postpartum, people are strictly prohibited from leaving the house because it is impure and drinking water is very limited, namely only 1 glass a day because if they drink a lot of water, the mother's body will swell or widen.

## b) Mother's Behavior

**Table 3.** Mother's behavior

No	Category	Frequency	Distribution
		f	%
1	Drinking Coffee/Tea		
	Often	7	15.9
	There is	5	11.3
	Never	32	72.8
		44	100
2	Parenting		
	Good	30	68.2
	Not good	14	31.8
		44	100
3	History of Exclusive Breastfeeding		
	Exclusive breastfeeding	5	11.3

No	Category	Frequency Distribution	
		f	%
4	Not Exclusive	39	88.7
		44	100
	complementary feeding		
5	In accordance	32	72.7
	It is not in accordance with	12	27.3
		44	100
	Immunization History		
	Complete	10	22.7
	Incomplete	34	77.3
		44	100

The behavior of mothers during pregnancy and postpartum in consuming coffee or tea was found to often drink more than 2 times a day, namely 15.9% and 11.3% drank it only if there was a desire, this was supported by the results of interviews with respondents 25 that "Mothers must drink coffee in the morning if they don't drink coffee then the mother's body will be dizzy and weak" and this result was also supported by interviews with respondents no. 13 who said: coffee is an Acehnese culture if drinking coffee during pregnancy makes the child born will be protected from step disease or seizures.

The parenting pattern carried out by mothers who have stunted children was found to be poor at 31.8%, this is supported by the results of interviews with 33 respondents that "the integrated health service post (posyandu) which is carried out in their area every Monday, where mothers work in the morning so that children are never taken to the posyandu and children often have tantrums when eating so that mothers only give fast food and children also have to look at their cellphones to be fed.

Incomplete exclusive breastfeeding was 88.7%. Interviewee 44 stated: The baby was born small, weighing 2.3 kg, so he had to use formula milk for his nutritional intake. This was also confirmed by the pediatrician when the child was hospitalized. Interviewee 26 stated, "The baby is not satisfied with just breast milk, so his grandmother gave him bananas when he was 3 months old.

Inappropriate complementary feeding was 27.3, where the researcher's observation results to respondent 12 showed that children were not given vegetables, only rice and animal protein, and this was supported by the interview results that children did not like vegetables and only wanted to eat chicken. An interview was also conducted with respondent no. 3 who said: to make children eat by giving snacks after meals, and the food given was food that contained a lot of preservatives and food coloring which made children's appetite decrease. Incomplete immunization was obtained in stunted toddlers by 77.3 & where the interview results of respondent 29 said "Immunization is not allowed by the husband because it contains pork, so the child did not get immunization, this was supported by respondent no. 7 who is the child of a community leader that all his children did not get immunization because the legality of immunization was still questioned by his grandfather so he was strictly prohibited from getting immunization".

## Discussion

- Socio-cultural, many factors influence a child's nutritional status, both directly and indirectly. Culture is one of the indirect factors that influence a mother's attitude during pregnancy, childbirth, and toddler care.(Rahmawati, Putra, Lestari, & Saripudin, 2020),(Azmi et al., 2023). Culture, traditions, or habits that exist in society, such as food taboos and incorrect eating patterns, can result in nutritional problems, especially for toddlers. This can have an impact on the growth and development of toddlers.(Yasir et al., 2024),(Sudargo et al., 2022).

The socio-cultural aspect of poor pregnancy care, 36.3% of which is still believed and carried out from generation to generation by the Aneuk Jamee tribe, is that pregnant women are still prohibited from eating sea fish such as shrimp and crab because if they consume these foods, the child will be born with a fishy or rancid smell, even though we know that fish is rich in protein, omega-3 and mineral nutrients.(Sudargo et al., 2022),(Ashriady, Mariana, Tiyas, & Supriadi, 2022). Pregnant women are expected to avoid spicy foods, pineapple, durian, and fermented cassava. Instead, they are encouraged to drink young coconut water, coconut oil, and honey, as local people believe these can provide positive benefits for the fetus and increase amniotic fluid production during pregnancy. Pregnant women's nutritional needs are approximately 15% higher than those of normal women, which is needed to support the growth of the mother and fetus, with the remaining 40% of food consumed being used for the mother's growth.(Abeng & Fitriani Kasim, 2021),(Aliffia, 2023).

Misunderstandings and dietary restrictions can negatively impact the nutritional health of pregnant women and the growth of their children after birth. Education has a significant impact, with 81.8% of high school graduates having a high school diploma. The higher a person's education, the easier it is to absorb information.(Loihala, 2024),(Rizqi P, 2020).

Postpartum care for mothers who are still prohibited from drinking more than 1 glass, because many drinks will make the body swell and there are still postpartum mothers who are not allowed to leave the house for 44 days because they are still unclean. There are several respondents who revealed in in-depth interviews during postpartum only eat dried fish for 40 days of postpartum and avoid fish with a fishy smell, the nutritional content of dried fish is considered insufficient to meet the needs of postpartum mothers so postpartum mothers and breastfeeding mothers must get adequate food and nutrition intake to restore strength and ensure sufficient breast milk production. Fish with a fishy smell is believed to be avoided because it can make breast milk and urine smell bad, however there are some opinions from respondents through interview results that it is permissible to consume fish because it contains a lot of omega-3 for optimal brain development and accelerates wound healing(Sundari, RS, Krisnadi, Basuki, & Rasni, 2024),(YUNIZA, 2023).

The community considers culture to be sacred, therefore every ancestral legacy that is still strongly adhered to by the people of West Aceh, applies to daily life including the process of pregnancy, childbirth and the growth and development of the community.

The impact of these behaviors and culture significantly impacts nutrition, significantly contributing to stunting. Recent research shows that providing proper nutrition during the first 1,000 days of life can determine a child's quality of life, both in the short and long term.

- b. Mother's Behavior, a mother's lack of knowledge about nutrition before, during, and after pregnancy has a significant impact. Teenage pregnancy can disrupt a child's growth due to competition for nutrients between the mother and fetus. Early pregnancy is also often associated with a lack of maternal information, potentially affecting the mother's preparation and the health of the unborn child.

Some information and facts show that 88% of infants aged 0-6 months do not receive exclusive breastfeeding. Breastfeeding for 6 months of a child's life is an important factor in preventing stunting. Government Regulation No. 33 of 2012, Exclusive Breastfeeding provides breast milk to infants until they are 6 months old, without the addition of other foods and drinks (except medicines and vitamins). Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is often hampered by

certain community beliefs. Breast milk plays a key role as the main source of nutrition for infant growth and development. Breastfed babies tend to develop optimally compared to those who receive formula milk. During the first 2-3 months of life, breastfed babies show an increase in weight, length and Body Mass Index (BMI). It is important to consider a socio-cultural approach, because this is an integral and dynamic of the general community. Research shows that reluctance to provide breast milk regularly can be a factor causing stunting in children, limited nutritional intake during critical periods of child development can trigger stunted growth. This phenomenon requires special attention in efforts to prevent stunting with a community approach that takes into account their cultural values, while providing appropriate information about regular breastfeeding for optimal child development.

Complementary Foods for Breast Milk (MP-ASI) at the age of less than 6 months have been carried out, the introduction of MP-ASI is carried out after the age of 6 months to introduce a variety of new foods, fulfill nutritional needs after breast milk and build the child's resistance and immune system against various types of food and drinks.

Parenting is a behavior practiced by caregivers (mothers, fathers, grandmothers or parents), the results of the study found 31.8% of poor parenting patterns, which are parenting patterns in providing food to children. Poor parenting patterns are caused by respondents often being unable to provide nutritional intake according to balanced nutrition messages, this is supported by the results of interviews that respondents refused to eat according to the planned portion by providing foods that contain a lot of monosodium glutamate (MSG) so that the taste of the food given is less attractive to children. Parenting patterns in providing food for toddlers refer to balanced nutrition messages for children divided into two, namely 6-24 months and 2-5 years according to PMK no. 41 of 2024 concerning balanced nutrition guidelines where the message is to eat 3 times a day, consume lots of fruits and vegetables, drink water as needed. The role of the family, especially a mother in caring for and caring for children can have an impact on the growth and development of children.

The results of the study showed that 11.3% of mothers consumed coffee or tea daily. Interviews revealed that if they did not drink coffee daily, they would feel weak and have headaches. Coffee contains tannins, a compound called proferol, which can inhibit iron absorption. It should be remembered that iron plays an important role in the production of red blood cells. Therefore, coffee or tea can affect iron absorption. Pregnant and breastfeeding mothers should be advised not to consume too much to support optimal health and growth development for their unborn child.

## CONCLUSION

The existence of socio-cultural factors in pregnancy and postpartum as well as maternal behavior that have a direct impact on children who experience stunting, thus instructing the Samatiga Community Health Center to be more proactive in approaches to religious leaders, community leaders about the dangers of socio-cultural factors that are detrimental to health and health workers are also expected to motivate prospective mothers, pregnant women related to socio-cultural factors and behavior that can cause children to become stunted.

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