

Optimal Growth and Development: Integration of Islamic Education in Preventing Child Stunting

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Abstract:

In Indonesia, the challenge of stunting among children under five years of age continues to pose a critical threat to national development, as this condition severely hampers both physical growth and cognitive development. Through the lens of Islamic educational principles, researchers have undertaken a comprehensive examination of how stunting prevention and child welfare protection can be addressed more effectively. Using phenomenological research methods, this investigation employed qualitative techniques including comprehensive interviews and documentary analysis, with particular focus on academic perspectives from lecturers at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. The research methodology was designed to capture and analyze the complex social dynamics surrounding stunting issues within Indonesia's cultural and religious context. The research findings paint a concerning picture: Indonesia's stunting rates continue to exceed those of comparable middle-income nations, creating cascading effects that include compromised intellectual development, elevated health vulnerabilities, and reduced potential for future economic contribution. These outcomes underscore the urgent need for comprehensive intervention strategies. The study's conclusions emphasize that combating stunting and protecting children's welfare must be treated as interconnected national priorities requiring coordinated implementation approaches. This integration is essential for safeguarding children's futures and upholding their fundamental right to quality education. From an Islamic educational standpoint, the research demonstrates that these prevention efforts align naturally with Islamic teachings, which stress the fundamental importance of providing appropriate care and ensuring access to halal, nutritious food sources. This religious framework recognizes that such provisions directly support both physical health and psychological development in children. The research ultimately advocates for incorporating Islamic educational principles into national stunting prevention policies, arguing that this integration would promote more comprehensive child development outcomes.

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INTRODUCTION

Impaired growth and development in children under five years of age—a condition known as stunting—has become a major global health challenge. This developmental impairment, resulting from insufficient nutritional intake, adverse economic conditions, and poor sanitation practices, affects millions of young children across the world, with Indonesia experiencing particularly high rates (Danaei et al., 2016; Beal et al., 2018; Budiastutik & Nugraheni, 2018; Schlatter et al., 2023). Global statistics from 2017 revealed that 22.2% of children under five experienced stunting, with Asia and Africa showing the most severe rates of occurrence. Within Southeast Asia, Indonesia stands out as having among the most concerning stunting statistics, recording an average rate of 36.4% in children under five years old between 2005 and 2017 (Campisi, 2017; Yazid, 2023; Ayuanda, 2024).

Across Indonesia, the challenge of stunted growth in children persists as a widespread concern, deeply rooted in inadequate nutritional intake during critical developmental periods. The ramifications of this condition extend far beyond mere physical limitations, creating a cascade of developmental disruptions that encompass intellectual capabilities, motor function development, elevated susceptibility to illness, and reduced economic potential in adulthood (Tee et al., 2023; Rahut et al., 2023; Ruaida, 2018; Rahmawati et al., 2020). Despite government initiatives aimed at addressing this public health crisis, stunting continues to affect large populations, with certain provinces like West Java, East Java, and North Sumatra experiencing particularly concerning rates (Ardana et al, 2023). Traditional beliefs and practices, including food restrictions and insufficient maternal and infant nutrition during the crucial first 1,000 days from conception, compound Indonesia's ongoing struggle with childhood stunting (Ardana et al, 2023).

Previous studies examining stunting in Indonesia have largely concentrated on documenting its occurrence, underlying causes, and impacts on health outcomes. Research has identified key factors including economic hardship, traditional customs, and inadequate healthcare access as major drivers of elevated stunting prevalence (Ardiansyah et al, 2023; Akbar & Mursal, 2023; Ramadhan et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these investigations have generally failed to explore the connection between stunting and child welfare from the lens of Islamic educational philosophy, which emphasizes comprehensive child development (Azra, 1999; Mishra & Bera 2024).

This research seeks to fill this void by investigating how stunting prevention, child welfare, and Islamic education intersect. The study's emphasis lies in merging Islamic pedagogical concepts with child protection approaches to combat stunting. Through analyzing stunting within an Islamic educational framework, this research endeavors to offer perspectives on how Islamic doctrine can guide and reinforce national initiatives against stunting, thus improving children's welfare and future opportunities in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative framework grounded in phenomenological inquiry, seeking to explore and make sense of particular occurrences and social contexts within the research environment (Creswell, 2003; Aspers & Corte, 2021; Sugiyono, 2010). The

investigation employs a descriptive-analytical approach to present a comprehensive picture of the examined phenomena through empirical evidence, which subsequently enables the formation of diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks within educational and social spheres (Darmadi, 2013).

The gathering of information was accomplished through comprehensive interviews and document analysis, with interviews particularly focusing on faculty members from UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh. Upon completion of data gathering, a systematic analytical procedure was implemented, starting with the editing phase that constituted the preliminary step prior to formal analysis. This was followed by data reduction processes that involved selecting, streamlining, classifying, and converting the collected information. The final stage encompassed data presentation, which required structuring the findings in a logical and coherent format (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Moleong, 1997). The information concerning stunting and child protection, obtained through interviews, documentary sources, and scholarly literature, was subsequently examined through the lens of Islamic educational theory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Prevalence of Stunting and Its Impact in the Indonesian Context

Despite being endowed with abundant natural wealth, Indonesia continues to face significant challenges with undernourishment, frequently resulting in stunted growth among children—a serious condition that carries both health and economic consequences. This stunted development not only poses immediate and long-term risks to children's wellbeing but also undermines the country's overall economic potential and workforce productivity. The combined initiatives by governmental bodies, parents, families, and communities to address this stunting crisis have proven inadequate, with Indonesia's stunting prevalence still exceeding WHO-established benchmarks, indicating a failure to fulfill fundamental citizen entitlements including access to health services and proper child development opportunities (Rizka, et al., 2021).

Indonesia has elevated stunting prevention to a top national priority, a move that aligns with global recognition of this issue by organizations such as the WHO. Through Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021, the Indonesian government has established a comprehensive framework addressing what it defines as a growth disorder where children's height falls short of health ministry benchmarks. The regulation introduces a National Strategy designed to combat stunting through multiple approaches: decreasing overall stunting rates, strengthening family readiness, securing proper nutrition, improving child-rearing methods, and expanding access to high-quality healthcare services, clean water, and sanitation facilities.

The issue of childhood stunting extends beyond mere nutritional deficiency, encompassing the complex dynamics of family relationships and daily living conditions. Indonesia's National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) has identified a comprehensive framework for tackling stunting that encompasses both immediate triggers—including illness, maternal nutritional status, and dietary consumption—alongside

underlying influences such as educational access, availability of potable water, and sanitation infrastructure. The consequences of stunting manifest across multiple timeframes: immediate effects compromise neural development and physical maturation, while prolonged impacts result in diminished intellectual capacity and compromised immune function (Ardana et al, 2023).

The health status and vaccination coverage of young children serve as pivotal determinants in stunting prevalence (Hafsah et al., 2023). When children experience compromised health, especially vulnerability to communicable diseases such as diarrheal illnesses and respiratory tract infections, their bodies' capacity to absorb essential nutrients becomes impaired, thereby intensifying stunting conditions. Additionally, gaps in immunization schedules or delayed vaccination administration compound these risks, leaving young children exposed to infectious agents that compromise both their physical development and mental growth processes (Yadika, et al., 2019). Consequently, enhancing pediatric health outcomes and maintaining consistent immunization protocols represent fundamental approaches to mitigating stunting susceptibility (Aridiyah, et al., 2015; Suyami, 2023).

To combat childhood malnutrition challenges, Indonesian authorities have implemented multiple policy initiatives, with a key focus on supplementary nutrition programs. These initiatives operate through the Ministry of Health's network of community health facilities (Puskesmas) and integrated service delivery points (Posyandu), encompassing Posyandu capacity building, health awareness campaigns, and provision of nutritionally enhanced foods targeting children between 6-59 months who depend on locally available food sources. Additionally, financial support through Health Operational Assistance (BOK) and Special Allocation Funds (DAK) has been designated to strengthen anti-stunting interventions.

Indonesia's abundance of natural wealth contrasts sharply with ongoing malnutrition challenges that continue to drive elevated stunting prevalence, negatively impacting both child welfare and national economic performance. While government initiatives represent substantial commitments, they have not yet completely resolved the stunting crisis, as current prevalence rates remain above WHO benchmarks, revealing shortcomings in securing citizens' fundamental rights to health and proper development. The comprehensive approach outlined in Presidential Regulation Number 72 of 2021's National Strategy seeks to address these concerns through improvements across family conditions, nutritional support, and healthcare delivery systems.

Future analysis will concentrate on assessing how effectively stunting prevention approaches perform, with particular attention to supplementary feeding initiatives and additional interventions designed to address underlying stunting causes while promoting comprehensive child health and developmental outcomes.

Strategies for Integrating Stunting Prevention in the Perspective of Islamic Education

In response to childhood malnutrition challenges, Indonesian authorities have established comprehensive intervention strategies through their health infrastructure network. The Ministry of Health operates supplementary nutrition initiatives via Puskesmas (community health centers) and Posyandu (integrated service posts), focusing on enhanced service delivery, community health education, and provision of locally-sourced nutritious meals for children between 6-59 months of age. These anti-stunting efforts receive financial backing from BOK (Health Operational Assistance funding) and DAK (Special Allocation Funds), with local governments also contributing to addressing stunting concerns (Saputri, 2019).

The authorities have expanded their approach through strategic planning frameworks, notably the 2015-2019 RPJM (Medium Term Development Plan), which established a target of reducing stunting rates to 28% by 2019. The PMT (supplementary feeding) initiative specifically addresses undernourished children under five years old through monthly distributions at Posyandu locations, utilizing both community-sourced ingredients and commercial products such as specialized toddler biscuits. However, limited community engagement in Posyandu programs continues to pose implementation challenges. To strengthen stunting prevention efforts, the government has also implemented the 2005-2025 RPJPN (National Long-Term Development Plan), emphasizing enhanced access to clean water and sanitation infrastructure, food fortification programs, healthcare services, KB (Family Planning programs), and nutritional education initiatives (Sugiarti et al, 2023).

Government Regulation Number 72 of 2021 establishes a multi-faceted framework designed to expedite the decline of stunting prevalence through five fundamental components. These components encompass strengthening leadership dedication and strategic vision throughout different governmental tiers, enhancing messaging strategies to promote behavioral transformation and community mobilization, and guaranteeing improved synchronization of targeted and nuanced interventions across all administrative levels. Furthermore, the regulation highlights the importance of reinforcing food and nutritional stability for individuals, households, and communities while building robust frameworks for data management, information systems, research initiatives, and innovative solutions. Through addressing these critical domains, the regulation seeks to establish a unified and impactful methodology for combating stunting, ultimately leading to enhanced health outcomes and developmental progress.

Indonesia's approach to combating stunting involves supplementary food distribution combined with nutritional education initiatives. Nevertheless, significant obstacles remain, including poor coordination among nutrition intervention programs across different administrative levels and limited community engagement in Posyandu (integrated health post) activities. These coordination gaps and participation deficits undermine the effectiveness of supplementary feeding initiatives targeting young children. To strengthen these programs' impact, better inter-institutional coordination, increased community engagement, and broader nutritional education efforts are crucial (Waroh, 2019; Yazid, 2023). The fight against stunting also encompasses safeguarding children's fundamental

rights through legal frameworks, educational policies, and social interventions. Government authorities have implemented various regulations including child protection legislation, marriage registration requirements, and birth registration systems to protect these rights (Hanapi and Yuhermansyah, 2020; April, 2022; Kasim, et al., 2022). Protecting children's rights is fundamental to supporting their physical and psychological development, which subsequently influences their cognitive abilities and overall intellectual capacity.

From an Islamic legal standpoint, MD, a Professor of Islamic Law at UIN Ar-Raniry, observes that while governmental bodies and specialized agencies—including the Ministry of Women and Child Protection and the Women's and Children's Empowerment Service—have established comprehensive frameworks for stunting prevention as detailed in the RPJPN 2005–2025, the true challenge lies beyond policy creation. The cultural dimensions, particularly nutritional habits and ensuring adequate nutrition for expectant mothers and young children, represent the critical factors that determine whether these well-intentioned structural and regulatory frameworks will translate into meaningful outcomes. MD proposes that the Ministry of Religion's pre-marital education initiatives could serve as a powerful catalyst for enhancing stunting prevention efforts by fostering greater community awareness and engagement (MD, personal communication, May 27, 2024). This approach represents a faith-based contribution to combating stunting (Husain, H., & Mubarak, S, 2023).

Building upon this perspective, YS, a Lecturer at the Tarbiyah Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry, presents a compelling argument that positions child protection as fundamental to stunting prevention. YS contends that when parents provide adequate care and safeguard their children's physical and mental rights, they create the necessary conditions for preventing stunting. The interconnected nature of a child's nutritional well-being, health status, and cognitive development forms the basis of YS's argument that stunting prevention extends far beyond immediate health concerns. By recognizing that a child's intellectual capacity and future educational prospects are directly influenced by their nutritional foundation, YS advocates for embedding child protection measures within stunting prevention frameworks as an essential component of national development priorities (YS, personal communication, May 30, 2024).

Indonesia faces a critical challenge in child malnutrition that demands urgent attention as both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for the nation's global competitiveness. The government has positioned the fight against childhood stunting as a cornerstone of its comprehensive child protection framework, recognizing that this issue extends beyond legal compliance to fundamental national development concerns. The scope of the problem is alarming, as revealed by 2022 data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. Nearly one in four Indonesian children (24.4%) experience stunting, while malnutrition affects 7.1% of toddlers and 17% of children are classified as underweight. These statistics paint a troubling picture of widespread nutritional deficits across the archipelago.

Geographic inequalities compound the crisis, with certain provinces bearing disproportionate burdens. East Nusa Tenggara emerges as a particularly concerning case, recording the nation's highest malnutrition rate at 29.3% and stunting prevalence at 37.8%. Meanwhile, Maluku Province leads in wasting rates at 12% (Paikah et al., 2024). Even in

Aceh, where interventions have shown some progress, the reduction from 34.18% in 2019 to 21.2% in 2022 represents only modest improvement, with rates still trailing the national average of 21.6% (Ramadhan et al., 2018; Mulyani et al., 2022).

Current government interventions, while comprehensive in scope, have yet to achieve the desired impact. These efforts encompass a range of Posyandu-centered initiatives including nutritional assistance for expectant mothers, parental education programs, and infrastructure improvements in sanitation and clean water access. Additional measures promote supplementary feeding programs, exclusive breastfeeding campaigns, and enhanced sanitation practices (Anggraini & Yusnadi, 2023). The persistence of these challenges despite existing interventions highlights the need for more intensive and coordinated approaches. Moving forward, successful resolution will require enhanced collaboration between government agencies and Islamic educational institutions such as Dayah in Aceh, leveraging community-based resources to create more effective solutions (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024).

An academic researcher from UIN Ar-Raniry's Faculty of Economics, identified as IH, highlighted the critical link between malnutrition-related growth stunting and child welfare protection. This expert pointed out that delivering nutritionally balanced meals serves as a fundamental strategy for stunting prevention, while simultaneously stressing the importance of ensuring children have access to halal-compliant food sources. IH's perspective suggests that halal dietary practices contribute not only to physical well-being but also enhance cognitive development and learning capacity, arguing that non-halal sustenance risks rejection by both the physical body and spiritual essence (IH, personal communication, May 31, 2024). Research indicates that breast milk represents one form of halal nutrition for children and serves as an effective intervention against stunting (Normadiah, et al., 2019). This demonstrates that maternal breast milk provides essential nourishment for children because it is.

In the realm of Islamic educational frameworks, attention must be given not only to parental guidance and childcare practices but also to the nutritional quality being delivered. The consumption of halal food serves as a fundamental factor in influencing a child's behavioral patterns and ethical development. Consequently, within Islamic educational approaches, addressing stunting prevention extends beyond adequate nutrition and care provision; it necessitates ensuring that children's dietary intake adheres to halal requirements, harmonizing both health considerations and ethical principles (Purwoko, 2011; Rozana & Harahap, 2019; Suleman, et al., 2021).

Addressing stunting prevention in Indonesia represents a vital component of the government's comprehensive child welfare approach, demonstrating both statutory obligations and the country's strategic positioning on the international stage. Although multiple policies and initiatives targeting stunting reduction have been implemented, including supplemental feeding programs and maternal-child nutrition improvements, obstacles persist. Notable regional variations and continuing elevated stunting prevalence highlight the necessity for more robust execution of these interventions. Furthermore, incorporating cultural and educational dimensions, including the provision of halal nutrition and strengthening parental knowledge, remains essential for achieving successful stunting

prevention outcomes. Through tackling these complex challenges, Indonesia can more effectively protect children's health and developmental progress, maintaining consistency with both domestic and global child protection and welfare benchmarks.

Child Protection and Islamic Education

Within the framework of Islamic scholarly tradition, the nurturing of children represents a holistic approach that spans from the moment of conception through the achievement of self-sufficiency, specifically within the bounds of lawful matrimony (Amberi, 2023). The duties incumbent upon mothers and fathers, known in Islamic legal scholarship as *haḍānah*, encompass fundamental ceremonial observances including the recitation of the *adhān* following delivery, the *‘aqīqah* celebration, the *taḥnīk* ritual, male circumcision, and the prescribed period for nursing. Nevertheless, modern understandings frequently emphasize the pedagogical dimensions of child-rearing, potentially neglecting the comprehensive range of parental obligations as delineated within Islamic jurisprudence (Samad, 2015; Husain & Mubarak, 2023).

The foundation of preventing childhood stunting lies in the implementation of sound parenting approaches and nutritional strategies. Key protective factors include maintaining exclusive breastfeeding practices, timely and appropriate introduction of complementary foods (MP-ASI), and ensuring sufficient consumption of essential proteins and minerals to support healthy development. However, when parents lack awareness about proper hygiene practices for children, possess limited understanding of nutritional balance, or employ inadequate breastfeeding techniques, these deficiencies can become significant contributors to stunting. Therefore, promoting educated parenting methods and evidence-based nutrition practices represents a fundamental approach to reducing stunting risks and supporting optimal child development.

The consequences of childhood stunting extend far beyond physical growth, creating lasting effects on mental development and academic success. Evidence demonstrates that children who experience growth retardation in their early years typically exhibit reduced cognitive functioning and weaker school performance, though this relationship tends to weaken over time. The impact of stunted growth reaches beyond immediate educational challenges, ultimately limiting future income-earning capacity through its detrimental effects on both cognitive abilities and educational achievement. These research findings underscore how Indonesia's recent developmental advances have not yet succeeded in establishing conditions that enable children to fully realize their educational capabilities (Lestari, 2021).

A child's comprehensive development is fundamentally shaped by breast milk, which extends its influence beyond mere physical nourishment to encompass moral, behavioral, and ethical dimensions. This optimal nutritional source is uniquely adapted to support developmental requirements and originates from maternal blood, thereby fostering enhanced growth and maturation. The psychological and intellectual implications of breastfeeding are particularly noteworthy, as they affect children's emotional stability and cognitive patterns more extensively than physical health considerations alone (Daud et al., 2019; Bensaid, 2021; Jauhari et al., 2023).

The development of stunting in children can be attributed to critical issues surrounding suboptimal parenting approaches and nutritional inadequacies, which result in protein and mineral deficits. These essential nutrients serve as fundamental building blocks for proper growth and development, and their absence can significantly hinder both height progression and overall developmental outcomes. The situation becomes further complicated when infectious diseases interfere with the body's ability to absorb these vital nutrients, thereby worsening stunting conditions. Consequently, comprehensive interventions targeting both parenting methodologies and nutritional provision are essential to guarantee that children obtain the required nutrients for optimal growth and development (Yadika et al., 2019; Yazid, 2023). The significance of Islamic marriage guidance in cultivating effective parenting deserves particular consideration (Saleh et al., 2022).

Looking at the complex challenge of childhood stunting, it becomes clear that the educational background and financial circumstances of parents serve as critical determinants in addressing this public health concern. When parents possess higher levels of education and enjoy better economic stability, their children typically experience improved health and nutritional outcomes. This connection emphasizes the vital importance of implementing foundational education initiatives alongside specialized health literacy programs designed specifically for mothers, as these interventions can significantly enhance future child welfare. Research demonstrates that educational interventions focused on nutrition have achieved remarkable success in expanding the knowledge base of women during their reproductive years, ultimately contributing to decreased rates of childhood stunting (Handayani, 2023; Martineta, 2021).

Addressing stunting effectively demands a comprehensive strategy that brings together multiple stakeholders and employs various intervention methods. No single approach can adequately tackle this complex issue; instead, success requires the integration of numerous initiatives, including policy development, capacity building for healthcare professionals, pre-marital guidance programs, and comprehensive support systems for expectant mothers. A coordinated, cross-sector methodology incorporating family planning services (Endang & Daulay, 2021), pre-marital education initiatives (Djawas et al., 2022), and early prenatal care represents the most promising path toward comprehensive and effective stunting prevention (Hanifah & Syahrizal, 2024). Within the context of Islamic education, educators are called upon to play their part in addressing this national challenge while simultaneously advancing their own professional development and expertise (Samad et al., 2023).

The Role of Islamic Education in Encouraging Children's Development in a Holistic Manner

From an Islamic educational standpoint, utilizing teaching approaches like lectures and demonstrations plays a crucial role in expanding understanding and strengthening initiatives aimed at combating stunting. Within Islamic teachings, children are regarded as precious divine blessings and sacred responsibilities entrusted to parents, emphasizing the critical importance of their proper care and development. The Quranic guidance provides clear directives regarding parental duties, including the instruction for mothers to nurse their

infants for a full two-year period and the obligation for fathers to ensure adequate provision for their families' welfare, demonstrating the essential nature of parental involvement in healthy child development (QS. Al-Baqarah/2:233; QS. an-Nisâ'/4:9). Consequently, Islamic doctrine not only emphasizes the comprehensive spiritual and physical care necessary for children's wellbeing but also positions stunting prevention efforts within a broader framework of moral responsibility and collective community duty.

The Islamic faith places significant emphasis on the joint obligation of mothers and fathers to secure their children's welfare. As noted by M. Quraish Shihab (2015), the Quran provides specific guidance through verses such as QS. al-Baqarah/2:233, which directs mothers to nurse their infants for a full two-year period, addressing both the physical nourishment and psychological development of the child. Concurrently, fathers bear the responsibility of supplying wholesome and permissible food to support the mother in fulfilling this role. Furthermore, QS. an-Nisâ'/4:9, while initially focused on orphan care, extends its principles to encompass all children, emphasizing the critical need to protect their development and prevent the formation of vulnerable generations. HI, a faculty member at the Tarbiyah Faculty of UIN Ar-Raniry, argues that these Islamic principles highlight the Muslim community's duty to cultivate a generation that is physically robust, intellectually capable, and morally sound. He contends that combating stunting represents a fundamental obligation for ensuring the nation's future prosperity, requiring parents to conscientiously address their children's comprehensive development across physical, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dimensions (HI, personal communication, May 29, 2024).

The fight against child stunting finds its strongest foundation in grassroots community participation through comprehensive health and nutrition education programs. When local communities embrace educational programs designed to identify, comprehend, and tackle region-specific health obstacles, the impact on children's overall wellness becomes substantially more pronounced. Through cultivating enhanced understanding of their essential function in protecting children's health, community participants become powerful agents in both preventing stunting before it occurs and mitigating its effects when present. Additionally, when communities actively engage in these efforts, they create momentum for broader social transformation, emphasizing the shared obligation to protect children's health and combat stunting with maximum effectiveness (Sari et al., 2024).

A psychologist from UIN Ar-Raniry, identified as MJ, emphasized the significant consequences that stunting has on both physical development and overall health. According to MJ's explanation, malnutrition occurring during pregnancy or in the early years of a child's life frequently results in stunting, a condition that becomes more severe due to economic hardship and inadequate parental attention to developmental needs. MJ stressed the critical importance of parents taking proactive measures to prevent stunting in their children through accessing appropriate medical care and maintaining adequate nutritional standards. MJ warned that without such preventive actions, children affected by stunting face not only various physical health complications but also reduced cognitive function, since the physical problems linked to stunting can negatively affect their intellectual capacity and overall developmental progress (MJ, personal communication, May 4, 2024).

A faculty member at UIN Ar-Raniry's Tarbiyah Faculty, identified as HI, emphasized the strong connection between stunting prevention and child welfare protection. HI explained that parents bear significant responsibility for shielding their children from elements that could harm their physical and mental development. This responsibility encompasses ensuring proper nutritional intake from pregnancy through the critical first 1,000 days of a child's life, as well as creating hygienic and secure living conditions. HI highlighted that poor sanitation and inadequate hygiene infrastructure elevate the likelihood of illnesses that can lead to stunting. Consequently, comprehensive protection measures and supportive interventions are vital for promoting healthy child development and preventing stunting outcomes (HI, personal communication, May 29, 2024).

Combating stunting successfully demands a comprehensive strategy that encompasses both physical and psychological support for mothers. As noted by YS, a Lecturer in Early Childhood Education at UIN Ar-Raniry, ensuring mothers receive adequate physical and psychological comfort while meeting their fundamental needs is paramount. Furthermore, access to halal and thayyib nutrition plays a vital role in stunting prevention (YS, personal communication, May 30, 2024). However, significant obstacles remain, including cultural prohibitions, misunderstandings about stunting causes, and hereditary influences. Addressing these challenges requires robust communication frameworks that emphasize education and knowledge sharing to transform attitudes and tackle stunting more effectively (Siswati, 2022).

For future initiatives, MD underscores the shared accountability between government and parents in combating stunting. Given that children represent the nation's future assets, governments must assist economically vulnerable families through data collection and targeted support for affected children (MD, personal communication, May 4, 2024). From an Islamic educational standpoint, YS stresses how mothers' nutritional knowledge and effective child-rearing practices, rooted in Quranic and Hadith teachings, are fundamental. Maintaining proper nutrition, providing exclusive breastfeeding for a minimum of two years, and practicing attentive parenting are essential elements for children's health and growth, ultimately supporting their complete well-being and success (YS, personal communication, May 30, 2024).

From the lens of Islamic educational philosophy, tackling childhood stunting requires a comprehensive strategy that weaves together spiritual guidance and tangible interventions. The Quranic teachings establish clear parental duties: mothers receive divine instruction to nurse their children for a full two-year period to ensure optimal physical and psychological growth, while fathers bear the responsibility of securing halal and nourishing sustenance (QS. Al-Baqarah/2:233; QS. an-Nisâ'/4:9). These sacred directives highlight how parental stewardship serves as the foundation for stunting prevention and emphasize the collective community duty to cultivate healthy, capable future generations.

Religious scholars like HI emphasize that these divine teachings provide Muslims with a framework for raising robust and intellectually capable offspring, affirming that combating stunting serves as a cornerstone of national prosperity (HI, personal communication, May 29, 2024). Additionally, YS highlights the critical role of community engagement in health

and nutrition awareness for stunting prevention. Through active participation in educational initiatives and addressing regional health obstacles, communities can make substantial strides in reducing stunting rates and catalyzing broader social transformation (YS, personal communication, May 30, 2024). In essence, the integration of Islamic values with hands-on community initiatives forms a robust framework for stunting prevention and advancing children's holistic health and development. Regarding Islamic educational institutions specifically, madrasahs and pesantren are anticipated to address this national challenge while simultaneously evolving into contemporary educational establishments (Sumanti et al., 2024).

This research offers meaningful contributions to understanding how Islamic educational approaches can be integrated with stunting prevention efforts, yet several constraints must be acknowledged. The investigation's dependence on interview-based qualitative methodology and geographically limited data collection may restrict how broadly these conclusions can be applied to other cultural environments or wider populations. Moreover, the work concentrated largely on conceptual models rather than conducting extensive examination of how the proposed approaches would function when actually implemented across varied community environments.

To overcome these constraints, subsequent research endeavors should incorporate expanded and more heterogeneous participant groups while utilizing quantitative analytical approaches to confirm and build upon these qualitative discoveries. Additionally, investigating how well particular intervention programs and educational initiatives perform across different settings would yield more thorough evidence regarding the effective integration of Islamic teachings into actionable stunting prevention approaches. Such research would facilitate the creation of more precisely targeted and culturally appropriate interventions for addressing stunting challenges across diverse demographic groups.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the essential need to combine Islamic educational foundations with community-based approaches in the fight against childhood stunting. The investigation shows that Islamic doctrine provides meaningful direction for child-rearing practices, especially through highlighting parental duties such as maintaining adequate nutrition and care as outlined in Quranic teachings. This faith-based approach not only strengthens the importance of breastfeeding and providing halal, nutritious meals but also positions these actions as ethical and collective responsibilities.

The research further emphasizes how community participation in health and nutrition education plays a crucial role, showing that collaborative initiatives can significantly enhance child health outcomes and prevent stunting. The consequences for Islamic education are substantial: integrating these findings into educational programs can improve comprehension of stunting prevention among prospective educators and parents, thus encouraging a more knowledgeable and proactive stance toward child development. Through highlighting both religious teachings and practical approaches, Islamic education

can serve a central function in tackling stunting and advancing children's welfare, bringing together spiritual principles with concrete health benefits.

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