

Public Service Management in Stunting Prevention: Evaluation of Service Quality, Responsiveness, and Effectiveness in Jeneponto Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes public service management in stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency, Indonesia, focusing on service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness. A qualitative case study approach was employed involving 15 informants, including local government officials, health workers, community leaders, and program beneficiaries. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, then analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that service quality remains uneven due to limited health infrastructure, shortages of nutritionists, and inconsistent service delivery across villages. Responsiveness is constrained by delayed complaint handling, limited adaptation to local socio-cultural conditions, and low community participation. Although stunting prevalence declined from 37.4% in 2021 to 30.3% in 2023, program effectiveness remains suboptimal because coordination, monitoring, and targeting mechanisms are not fully optimized. This study highlights the interconnection between service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness in evaluating local public service management for sustainable stunting reduction.

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1. Introduction

Stunting is a global health issue that is multidimensional and has a long-term impact on the quality of human resources. This condition not only reflects chronic malnutrition but is also related to socio-economic factors and the quality of public services received by the community. The *World Health Organization* emphasizes that stunting is an important indicator in assessing the success of human development because it has implications for cognitive ability, productivity, and future health risks, (WHO, 2014). In line with that, UNICEF places stunting reduction as a strategic part of the sustainable development agenda, (Bang, 2023; Citaristi, 2022; Keeley, 2021; Maharani et al., 2025). However, studies show that developing countries still face significant obstacles due to weak policy integration and suboptimal quality of basic services, (Headey et al., 2018; Prendergast & Humphrey, 2014).

Stunting control in Indonesia has become a national priority through a cross-sectoral approach that integrates specific and sensitive interventions and although implementation at the regional level shows considerable variation in achievement, this indicates a gap between policy formulation at the central level and its implementation at the regional level, where it is identified that the effectiveness of programs is greatly influenced by institutional capacity and quality of service management Public, (Haq & Yopan, 2025; Khasanah et al., 2023; Ruliyandari et al., 2025; Tage & Febriyanti, 2024), Meanwhile, weak coordination and implementation are the main inhibiting factors, (Fristiwi et al., 2023; Siswati et al., 2022; Sufri et al., 2024).

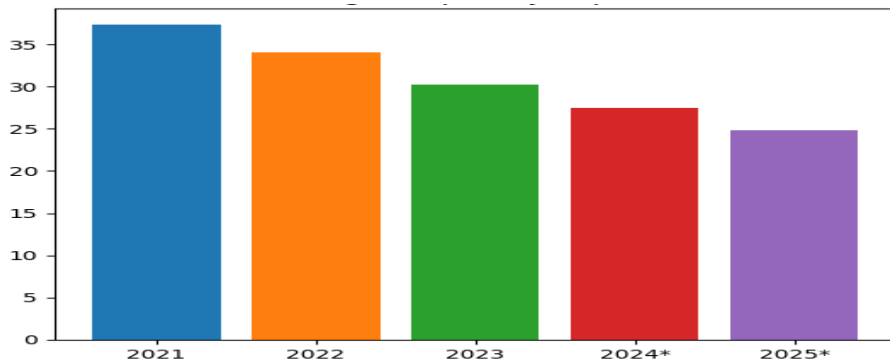
This condition is also seen in Jeneponto Regency which still faces challenges in reducing the prevalence of stunting. Limited health infrastructure, uneven distribution of medical personnel, and low public access to nutrition services are factors that affect this condition. In addition, managerial aspects such as coordination between organizations, service quality, and responsiveness to community needs are still not optimal. Research shows that the success of health programs at the local level is highly dependent on the effectiveness of public service governance and the ability of institutions to provide adaptive services, (Arieffiani & Ekowanti, 2024; Syafrawati et al., 2023; Yusnita et al., 2024). From the perspective of public service

management, the success of a policy is determined not only by planning, but also by the quality-of-service implementation. Osborne & Gaebler (1993) emphasizing the importance of a *user-oriented service approach* to improve the quality of public services. In this perspective, the quality of service reflects the ability of institutions to provide services that are easily accessible, equitable, and in accordance with the needs of the community. Responsiveness shows the ability of public organizations to recognize, understand, and respond to community needs and complaints quickly and appropriately. Meanwhile, effectiveness refers to the level of success of the program in achieving the goals that have been set and producing a real impact on society.

These three dimensions have interrelated relationships. Good service quality is the basis for the creation of organizational responsiveness, while responsiveness allows the services provided to remain relevant to the needs of the community. Furthermore, optimal service quality and responsiveness will affect the effectiveness of the program being run. Therefore, an integrated analysis of service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness is important to understand the success of public service management in stunting prevention more comprehensively.

In addition, responsiveness is an important factor in ensuring that services can adapt to the needs of the community, especially vulnerable groups. Research (Arieffiani & Ekowanti, 2024; Hamka & Ibrahim, 2025; Rusdianti et al., 2025; Taofik et al., 2024; Yusnita et al., 2024) demonstrate that high responsiveness contributes to program effectiveness and increased public trust.

Figure 1. Stunting Prevalence in Jeneponto Regency (2021-2025)



Source: Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia through the Indonesian Nutrition Status Study (SSGI), 2026

The relevance of this perspective can be seen in the empirical conditions in Jeneponto Regency from data from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia through the Indonesian Nutrition Status Study (SSGI) showing that the prevalence of stunting decreased from 37.4% (2021) to 34.1% (2022) and 30.3% (2023) which despite this, the figure is relatively high and above the national average, thus showing that the implementation of this policy is considered not optimal. Especially in the aspect of public services which if associated with the theory of public service management, this condition reflects the gap between the concept of ideal service and practice in the field which shows uneven quality of service, limited responsiveness, and program effectiveness that has not been maximized are the main factors in the slow decline of stunting, which shows that the problem of stunting is not only policy, but also related to the management of public services.

The effectiveness of public services itself is the main indicator in assessing the success of policies, not only from the output but also the outcomes produced. The World Bank emphasizes that the failure of health programs in many developing countries is often caused by weak public service systems, (Arieffiani & Ekowanti, 2024; Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022; Prendergast & Humphrey, 2014). This is reinforced by (Arifin, 2023; Pananrangi et al., 2024; Polydoropoulos et al., 2024) which states that the integration of service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness is a key factor in improving public sector performance.

Jenepono Regency is an interesting location to research because it is consistently included in the area with a relatively high prevalence of stunting in South Sulawesi Province. The high rate of stunting in this area is not only related to health factors, but also influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the community. The high poverty rate, limited access to clean water and sanitation in some rural areas, and uneven health and nutrition services are factors that contribute to the high prevalence of stunting. In addition, the characteristics of the spread area and the development gap between regions have caused

the distribution of health services and nutrition interventions to reach all community groups optimally.

This condition shows that the stunting problem in Jeneponto Regency cannot be understood only as a nutritional problem, but also closely related to the capacity of the local government to manage public services effectively. Therefore, Jeneponto Regency is a relevant context to examine how service quality, institutional responsiveness, and program effectiveness interact with each other in supporting the success of stunting prevention efforts. The analysis of these conditions is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities for improving public service governance in the health sector at the regional level.

On the other hand, contemporary studies in public administration in Indonesia show that public service innovation, digitalization of governance, (Godjali et al., 2021; Kamil et al., 2025; Lumbanraja, 2020; Zulfa et al., 2023) and increasing institutional capacity plays an important role in improving service quality, in addition, an adaptive and technology-based approach to services has been proven to be able to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation (Kurniawan, 2017; Nasrullah & Siraj, 2023; Singgir et al., 2025; Ulya et al., 2025) Despite this, most of the research still focuses on policy aspects or outcomes, without examining in depth the managerial process of public services in stunting management. Therefore, there is a research gap in the form of not integrating the dimensions of service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness in a comprehensive analysis framework, especially at the local level. Based on this, this study aims to analyze public service management in stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency with a focus on service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness. This research is expected to contribute through the development of a more integrative analytical framework and provide relevant empirical evidence. Theoretically, this research enriches the study of public service management, especially in the stunting sector, which practically this research is expected to be the basis for future policy formulation for the Jeneponto district government that is more effective and responsive.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze public service management in stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency. This approach was chosen because it can explore the phenomenon in depth in a real context, especially related to the process and dynamics of policy implementation. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research focuses on understanding complex social meanings and experiences, (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Takona, 2024). Meanwhile, case studies allow for a comprehensive exploration of a phenomenon in a specific context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), where data is collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with 15 key informants, including local government officials, health workers, and service recipients. Observations were used to directly observe the service process, while documentation included analysis of reports and data related to stunting.

This study adheres to ethical principles of research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all informants were provided with information regarding their research objectives and voluntary participation. Informed consent is obtained from each participant prior to the interview. To ensure confidentiality, the identity of the informant is anonymized and reported using a code. In addition, Research permission was obtained from the Jeneponto Regency Government and all participants provided informed consent.

The use of various techniques aimed to ensure data validity through triangulation. Data analysis was performed interactively using the Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña model which included data reduction, data presentation, and drawback., (Miles et al., 2014). In addition, coding techniques are used to systematically identify themes and patterns, (Saldaña, 2021). The validity of the data is maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests, including triangulation and confirmation to informants, (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach allows the research to produce a comprehensive analysis related to service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness of public services in stunting control.

3. Results And Discussion

This study examines public service management in stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency by evaluating three main dimensions, namely service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness. These dimensions were chosen because they represent important indicators in assessing the performance of public services that aim to reduce the prevalence of stunting and improve public health outcomes. Findings were obtained from field observations, interviews with key stakeholders, and document analysis involving health care providers, local government agencies, public health workers, and beneficiaries. The discussion highlighted how the implementation of public service management practices affects the accessibility, responsiveness, and effectiveness of stunting prevention programs. By analyzing these dimensions, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and challenges of public service delivery in addressing stunting in Jeneponto Regency and offers insights to improve policy implementation and service performance.

3.1. Quality of Service in Stunting Control

The results of the study show that the quality of services in stunting control in Jeneponto Regency is still not optimal and is characterized by inequality of access, inconsistency of services, and limited resources. Empirically, the distribution of health and nutrition service facilities is uneven, especially in remote areas that still have limited access to basic services such as active posyandu and nutrition interventions. Data shows that the prevalence of stunting in Jeneponto Regency is still at 30.3% in 2023, although it has decreased from 37.4% in 2021 and 34.1% in 2022. This figure is still above the national average, which indicates that the quality of service has not been able to reach all target groups evenly.

In addition, the findings of the study also reveal that the consistency of services has not been running stably. The implementation of posyandu activities and the distribution of nutrition intervention programs still fluctuates, both in terms of frequency and timeliness. This condition reflects a weakness in the reliability aspect of services. In terms of service speed, there is a significant difference between the service center area and the suburban area. Services in the center tend to be faster and more organized, while in peripheral areas they still face geographical access

constraints and limited health workers. Furthermore, although the competence of health workers is considered adequate in carrying out stunting control programs, the number of available personnel is not proportional to the needs of the community, which can certainly have an impact on the high workload and potentially reduce the quality-of-service interactions. Meanwhile, an empathetic approach to the community has begun to be implemented through counseling and assistance activities for families at risk of stunting, but it has not been carried out systematically and sustainably. Overall, these findings show that the quality of services in stunting control in Jeneponto Regency still needs strengthening, especially in the aspects of service equity, program consistency, and resource optimization, to increase the effectiveness of interventions as a whole.

These findings show that the quality of service has not been optimal overall. In the framework of SERVQUAL developed by A. Parasuraman, the quality of service is determined by the dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The imbalance in the dimensions of tangibles and reliability indicates a gap between service standards and their implementation in the field. Empirically, these results are in line with the study (Saldaña, 2021; Sevilla et al., 2024) which shows that limited infrastructure and service distribution are the main factors in the low quality of health services in the region. In addition, research by (Headey et al., 2018) emphasized that the quality of basic services has a direct correlation with the success of stunting reduction. In addition, the user-based service approach put forward by (S. Osborne, 2020) has not been fully implemented, as can be seen from the lack of optimal service adjustments to the specific needs of the community. This shows that the quality of service in Jeneponto Regency is still administrative, not fully oriented to the needs of the community.

3.2. Public Service Responsiveness

The results of the study show that the responsiveness of public services in stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency is still at a suboptimal level, especially in terms of response speed, program suitability, and community involvement. Empirically, the mechanism for handling public complaints has not run quickly and does not have standard operational standards, so the response provided tends to be

slow and inconsistent. This condition has an impact on delays in handling cases and has the potential to reduce public trust in the public services provided.

In addition, the findings of the study indicate that the design and implementation of stunting programs are not fully based on local needs. The programs implemented are still dominated by a top-down approach, with a limited level of adjustment to the social, cultural, and geographical conditions of the local community and this can be seen from the lack of optimal policy adaptation at the field level, where program implementers tend to follow general guidelines without significant contextual innovation. As a result, the effectiveness of the program in reaching the target group is less than optimal.

In terms of accessibility, this study also found inequality in service coverage, especially for vulnerable groups in remote areas. Some people still face geographical constraints, limited information, and access to health service facilities, so they are not fully accommodated in the stunting control program. On the other hand, the level of community participation in the program is still relatively low. Community involvement tends to be passive and limited to the use of services, without significant contribution to the process of planning, implementing, or evaluating the program.

These findings show that the responsiveness of public services in Jeneponto Regency still needs more systematic strengthening. Delay in response, limited adaptation of programs to local needs, inequality of access to services, and low community participation are the main factors that hinder the optimization of the implementation of stunting control policies. Therefore, increasing responsiveness is a crucial aspect in strengthening the effectiveness of public services in a sustainable manner. The responsiveness of public services in Jeneponto Regency is still relatively low, especially in the aspect of speed and suitability of services to the needs of the community, which shows that public services are not fully adaptive to existing social dynamics.

According to (Boyne, 2006), Responsiveness is a key factor in increasing policy effectiveness and public trust. The findings of this study show that low responsiveness has an impact on the lack of

optimal use of services by the community. This condition is also in line with the findings (Ansell et al., 2021; Ashar et al., 2025; Boyne, 2006) which shows that weak coordination and policy adaptation are the main obstacles in the implementation of stunting programs, on the other hand, in the perspective of New Public Service put forward by Janet V. Denhardt, public services should be oriented to the interests of the community (citizen-centered). However, the findings show that services in Jeneponto still tend to be top-down, so they are not able to accommodate the needs of the community optimally. In addition, the low participation of the community shows that the collaborative approach has not been effective. Study by (Ansell et al., 2021) emphasized that the success of public policies, particularly in the health sector, is highly dependent on the involvement of non-governmental actors. Thus, increasing responsiveness is key in improving the quality of stunting policy implementation.

3.3. Effectiveness of Stunting Prevention Program

The results of the study show that the effectiveness of the stunting control program in Jeneponto Regency is still partial. Empirically, there has been a downward trend in stunting prevalence from 37.4% in 2021 to 34.1% in 2022, and 30.3% in 2023. Although this trend reflects progress, it is still above the national target, indicating that the program has not been fully effective in achieving the expected outcomes, which indicates a gap between policy targets and realization on the ground. In the perspective of policy evaluation, William N. Dunn asserts that effectiveness is measured by the level of achievement of pre-set goals. Based on this framework, the findings of this study show that the stunting program in Jeneponto is not fully effective because there is still a discrepancy between planning and actual achievements. This ineffectiveness is also reflected in the lack of optimal accuracy of program targets, where some interventions have not fully reached priority groups, especially high-risk families in areas with limited access to services.

In addition, the distribution of program benefits has not been evenly distributed both geographically and socially. Although some people have felt the positive impact of the interventions carried out, there are still groups that have not received optimal services. This

shows weaknesses in program implementation, especially in the aspect of equity distribution and service accessibility. These findings are in line with the report World Bank (2020) which states that the failure of health programs in many developing countries is often caused by weak public service systems. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the program is also influenced by limitations in integration between public service dimensions. (Alzaydi et al., 2018; Rhee & Rha, 2009) emphasizing that the effectiveness of policies is largely determined by the synergy between service quality and responsiveness. In the context of Jeneponto, these two aspects have not run optimally, so that they have an impact on program achievements that have not been maximized. On the other hand, the sustainability aspect of the program is still highly dependent on government budget support, both from the central and regional governments, which has the potential to affect the continuity of program implementation in the long term.

In line with that, research (Nasrullah & Siraj, 2023) shows that public service innovation and the use of technology have an important role in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of policy implementation. However, in the context of Jeneponto Regency, these innovations have not been implemented systematically and integrated, so their contribution to increasing the effectiveness of the program is still limited. These findings confirm that the effectiveness of the stunting control program in Jeneponto Regency still requires comprehensive strengthening, especially in the aspects of achieving targets, target accuracy, equitable distribution of benefits, and program sustainability. The integration between service quality, responsiveness, and service innovation is a key factor in increasing program effectiveness in a sustainable manner.

3.4. Synthesis of Findings

The results of the research synthesis show that the three main dimensions of service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness are closely related and interdependent in determining the success of the stunting control program in Jeneponto Regency. Empirical findings indicate that weaknesses in one dimension will have a direct impact

on the other. The uneven and inconsistent quality of services, for example, has implications for the low ability of the service system to respond to the needs of the community quickly and appropriately, which ultimately affects the achievement of the overall effectiveness of the program. Thus, the three dimensions cannot be understood separately, but as a unit that is integrated into the practice of public service management.

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the study (Alzaydi et al., 2018; Ashar et al., 2025; Rhee & Rha, 2009) which emphasizes that the performance of the public sector is highly determined by the integration between service dimensions, especially between service quality and responsiveness in producing optimal outputs and outcomes. In addition, (S. Osborne, 2020b) emphasizing that effective public services must be user-oriented and supported by a coordinated and adaptive service system. In the context of this study, the suboptimal integration between these dimensions shows that the service approach applied is still partial and not fully oriented to the needs of the community. Furthermore, the synthesis of these findings indicates that the stunting problem in Jeneponto Regency cannot be solved only through normative policy interventions but requires comprehensive strengthening of the aspect of public service management. The disintegration between service quality, responsiveness, and effectiveness is a major factor that hinders program optimization in the field. Therefore, a more integrated, adaptive, and community-based approach is needed to improve the performance of public services in a sustainable manner. By strengthening the synergy between these dimensions, the effectiveness of stunting prevention programs is expected to increase significantly and contribute to the achievement of health development targets more optimally.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that stunting prevention in Jeneponto Regency has not yet been fully optimized due to the interrelated influence of service quality, responsiveness, and program effectiveness. Uneven service quality, reflected in disparities in facilities, human resources, and service consistency, affects the

responsiveness of public institutions in addressing community needs. Consequently, program effectiveness remains limited, as evidenced by the failure to achieve national stunting reduction targets despite a declining prevalence trend. These findings indicate that the three dimensions are interconnected and collectively determine the success of policy implementation. Theoretically, this study contributes to public service management literature by proposing an integrated analytical framework in which service quality serves as the foundation for responsiveness, while responsiveness acts as a mechanism influencing program effectiveness. This framework highlights the importance of understanding these dimensions as an interconnected system rather than as separate factors. Practically, improving stunting prevention requires strengthening service quality, enhancing institutional responsiveness, and improving program effectiveness through continuous evaluation, service innovation, digital technology utilization, and stronger cross-sectoral coordination.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. The study was conducted independently without any financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the research process, findings, interpretation of data, or conclusions presented in this paper.

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