

# Integrative Communication Model in Handling Stunting: A Case Study in Bantaeng Regency

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**Abstract.** *Stunting remains a critical health issue in Indonesia, with long-term impacts on human capital and economic development. It is caused by chronic malnutrition, resulting in impaired physical and cognitive growth. This study examines the implementation of an integrative communication model for addressing stunting in Bantaeng, South Sulawesi, using a qualitative case study approach. The research aims to explore how communication strategies are applied across sectors to reduce stunting and improve public health outcomes. Data was collected through field observations and interviews with key stakeholders, including government agencies, health workers, and community leaders. Findings indicate that the success of the program relies on structured inter-sectoral coordination, accurate and integrated data, and the active participation of local communities. The study highlights the importance of using local values, such as language and food traditions, to strengthen communication and increase community engagement. The integrative communication model in Bantaeng combines vertical and horizontal communication, ensuring coordinated actions among stakeholders. The ideal model emphasizes cross-sector communication, community participation, accurate data usage, and deliberative communication practices. This research provides insights into the effectiveness of communication in stunting prevention and offers recommendations for enhancing inter-sectoral collaboration and local participation. The model developed in Bantaeng could serve as a reference for similar health communication programs in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Stunting, Integrative Communication, Health Management, Cross-Sector Coordination, Community Participation*

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## INTRODUCTION

Stunting remains one of Indonesia's most pressing health issues, with profound implications for the nation's future human capital and economic development. Defined as impaired growth due to chronic malnutrition, stunting leads to children having a height that is significantly shorter than the standard for their age (Kemenkes RI, 2018). This condition does not only affect the physical growth of children but has far-reaching consequences on cognitive, language, and motor skill development (Black et al., 2013). The impacts of stunting extend beyond childhood, contributing to long-term health issues such as increased susceptibility to chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes and hypertension as the child grows into adulthood (Victora et al., 2008; Trihono et al., 2015).

The risks associated with stunting are not isolated to the individual child; they affect society as a whole. Children who are stunted tend to perform poorly in school, which limits their future economic prospects and ability to contribute to the nation's workforce. As stunted individuals enter adulthood, the cycle of poor nutrition, low educational achievement, and high healthcare costs often continues, creating a persistent barrier to socioeconomic progress.

Moreover, stunting can lead to an intergenerational cycle, as children born to stunted mothers are more likely to experience the same fate, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and malnutrition across generations.

Indonesia, like many countries in Southeast Asia, faces alarmingly high rates of stunting. As of 2017, the prevalence of stunting among children under five years old in Indonesia was reported to be 36.4%, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017). This rate places Indonesia among the highest in the region and underscores the urgent need for effective interventions. In response to this crisis, the Indonesian government has set a national target to reduce stunting to 14% by 2024, as part of the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for 2020–2024. Achieving this goal will require a multifaceted and comprehensive approach, involving not only the health sector but also education, social services, sanitation, and environmental factors, as the causes of stunting are deeply rooted in various aspects of society and development.

One of the key strategies identified for tackling stunting is integrated, cross-sectoral communication. Effective communication is critical to ensuring that stakeholders at all levels from government agencies to local communities are aligned in their goals and actions. A unified communication strategy that brings together health professionals, community leaders, and local governments can help improve awareness, increase public participation, and drive behavior change necessary to reduce stunting rates (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). Numerous studies indicate that successful stunting reduction programs are heavily dependent on the strength of communication strategies that can shift social norms and encourage lasting changes in nutrition and child-rearing practices (Snyder et al., 2004).

The success of any regional development initiative is often tied to the effectiveness of local governance and strategic planning. In Kabupaten Bantaeng, South Sulawesi, reducing stunting has become a central focus of human resource development, with a particular emphasis on communication strategies that are not only informative but also collaborative across sectors. This has led to the implementation of an integrative communication model, a strategic approach that combines both vertical and horizontal communication to ensure that messages and actions are coordinated among all relevant stakeholders. This model incorporates inter-organizational communication, cross-sector coordination, and community-level interpersonal interactions, addressing the multifaceted nature of stunting through a comprehensive and coordinated approach.

Since 2020, the Bantaeng Government has been implementing a cross-sectoral approach to reducing stunting, aligned with the National Action Plan for the Acceleration of Stunting Reduction (RAN PASTI) 2021–2024. This plan emphasizes the importance of synergy between local government bodies, private sectors, civil society organizations, and the media in delivering consistent, evidence-based messages to the public. Bantaeng's approach to stunting prevention includes a commitment to fostering collaboration across local government departments, such as the Health Office, the Education Office, and the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, as well as leveraging community-based interventions led by local health workers and community leaders.

The integrative communication model in Bantaeng has also been supported by regulatory frameworks, such as the Bantaeng Regent Regulation No. 71 of 2019, which mandates the convergence of stunting prevention programs across sectors. This regulatory support is critical in ensuring that interventions are not only coordinated but also sustained over time, with a clear focus on community engagement and capacity-building among health workers and cadres.

This study aims to explore the implementation of the integrative communication model in stunting management in Bantaeng, focusing on how it has been applied from 2020 to 2023. By analyzing this model, the research will formulate an ideal communication model tailored to the local context, identify the health communication strategies used by the local government, and provide recommendations for enhancing cross-sector collaboration and communication in

stunting prevention efforts. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on health communication and offer valuable insights into the role of integrative communication in addressing public health challenges like stunting.

## **METHODS**

This research is a qualitative study that aims to analyze a phenomenon, event, social activity, attitudes, perceptions, and thoughts of people both individually and in a group scope. Qualitative research is expected to be able to provide complete answers to the research question concerning how to Implement the Integrative Communication Model in Stunting and Malnutrition Management in Bantaeng Regency. This research design is based on the case study method used in the study of stunting management in Bantaeng Regency. As a blueprint in this research design, several main problems are proposed: what questions should be asked; how relevant data; what data should be collected; and how to analyze the results. The selection of this research design is intended as an action plan to depart from a series of initial research questions that must be answered towards a series of conclusions about these questions, where it is possible to find a number of basic steps for collecting and analyzing relevant data. The object of the study is the regional apparatus in the Bantaeng Regency Government, especially the Regional Apparatus (OPD) that is directly involved since the planning and implementation of the stunting management intervention policy. Field observations and interviews were also conducted in several villages in Bantaeng Regency that are included in the stunting locus according to Riskesdas. This research will be conducted in several villages/sub-districts in Bantaeng Regency. Location selection is based on geographic, economic, and livelihood categorization. The planned research locations are Bantaeng District, Ulu Ere District, and Pajjukukang District. The research, entitled "Implementation of an Integrative Communication Model in Stunting Prevention in Bantaeng Regency," utilizes Gronstedt's (2012) integrative communication model theory. From this integrative communication theory perspective, the aim is to understand, analyze, and implement an integrative communication model in stunting prevention in Bantaeng Regency. The focus of this research refers to Gronstedt's (2012) opinion, which outlines three dimensions of integrative communication for organizations: external, vertical, and horizontal communication flows.

### **Research Instrument**

In this research, the researcher serves as the instrument. The researcher's general function is to establish and direct the research to ensure it remains consistent with and aligns with the research focus. Furthermore, the researcher will collect data, determine information sources, assess data feasibility, analyze data, and draw conclusions. In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher must also interact in the field by observing the stunting reduction process. The researcher will document all findings, both interviews and observations, to obtain objective and valid data analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The next stage is data analysis. This stage is the processing of the collected data. Data analysis is a process involving several stages or steps, beginning with reviewing available data from various sources, including interviews, observations documented in field notes, documents, images, and so on. The first step is data reduction, which is carried out through abstraction. The next step is organizing the data into units. These units are categorized in the next step. Categories are created while coding is used, which ultimately leads to data validity checks and interpretation. Qualitative data analysis in this study was conducted using the interactive model of data collection, or data collection with data analysis, as described by Huberman and Miles in Bungin (2003). This data analysis cycle is shown in the following figure:

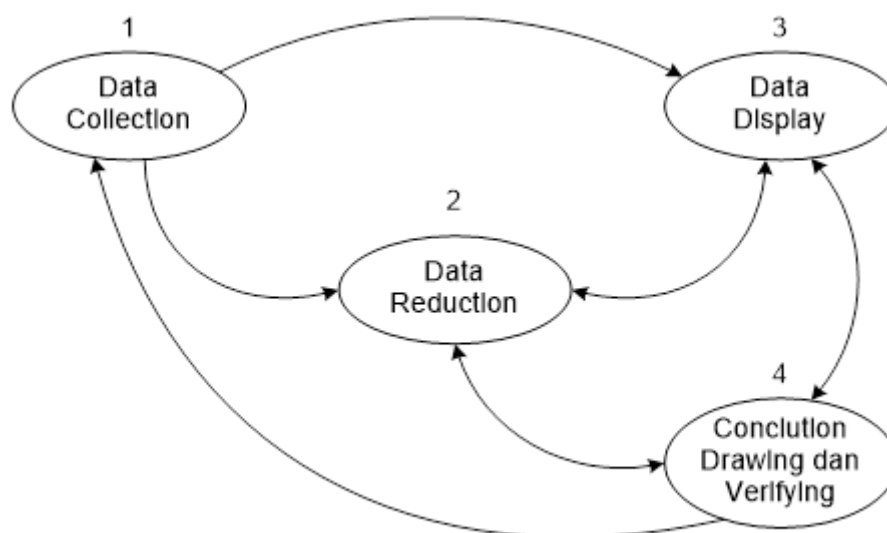


Figure 1. Components of an Interactive Data Analysis Model  
Source: Huberman & Miles (in Bungin, 2003)

This figure illustrates that data analysis begins with field data collection. The collected data is then reduced by sorting the data into specific conceptual units, categories, or themes. The data is then presented in various formats, such as sketches, synopses, matrices, or other forms. This is crucial to facilitate drawing conclusions. This process may be repeated, depending on the number of processes and the complexity of the problem, until valid and objective data are obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An integrative communication model encompasses human resource capacity, inter-agency coordination, and accurate data support. An integrative communication model is a communication approach that combines various elements, channels, actors, and resources into an integrated system to achieve common goals, particularly in the context of public policy or development programs. In in-depth interviews conducted by researchers, informants provided the following information regarding this:

*"Cadres must be trained, there must be a shared perception between institutions, and support for families at risk of stunting." (BKKBN Analyst, May 20, 2025)*

Meanwhile, the Head of the Housing, Settlement, and Land Agency stated that:

*"The main elements are cross-sector coordination, the availability of valid data at the village government, and communication on behavior change." (Head of the Housing, Settlement, and Land Agency, May 28, 2025)*

*"The main elements in the integrative communication model are the availability of valid data at the technical OPD for determining indicators, as well as the availability of PMT (prepared food supplements) or supplementary food for the target population." (Head of Human Development, Economy, and Infrastructure, April 1, 2025)*

*"We've implemented the convergence of programs for stunting prevention, nutrition, health, education, food security, and the Family Welfare Movement (PKK). We're conducting behavior change communication to make it easier for the public to understand. The message needs to be delivered by the right people, such as health workers, integrated health post (Posyandu) cadres, community leaders, and religious leaders." (Head of the Pa'bentengang Community Health Center, April 5, 2025)*

Several informants emphasized the importance of data accuracy, technical sector coordination, and direct intervention support for the community. Three indicators of success are examined:

**Human Resource (HR) Capacity.** HR capacity refers to the technical abilities, communication skills, and knowledge of program implementers, including government agencies, health workers, extension workers, and community cadres. Qualified HR can deliver messages that are precise, empathetic, and contextual. Continuous training and capacity building are crucial for implementers to understand policy content and communicate it to the community in a participatory manner. Human resource capacity also includes sensitivity to local culture and the ability to adapt to various social situations.

**Inter-agency Coordination.** Cross-sector coordination is the backbone of an integrative communication model, addressing numerous development issues, such as stunting. Effective communication between agencies (such as health offices, social services offices, the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), and villages) can prevent program overlap and ensure policy synergy.

This coordination includes regular meetings, a clear division of tasks, and real-time information sharing. A lack of coordination leads to fragmented information and poor policy implementation on the ground. **Accurate and Integrated Data Support.** The success of integrative communication depends heavily on the availability and reliability of data. Accurate data enables precise targeting and the development of evidence-based communication messages. The use of digital information systems, such as integrated data dashboards (e.g., the EPPGBM for stunting), facilitates program monitoring and evaluation. Meanwhile, inaccurate data can lead to miscommunication, mistargeting, and reduced intervention effectiveness.

These three points are interconnected in this research. Therefore, the researchers will develop their research matrix step by step:

Table 1. Human Resources Capacity

| No. | Component of the Integrative Communication Model | Interview Source                                            | Key Statement Points                                                                                                                                                |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Human Resources Capacity                         | Sry (BKKBN Analyst)                                         | Cadres must be trained, family mentoring                                                                                                                            |
| 2   | Human Resources Capacity                         | Adyan (Head of PMPI)                                        | Availability of PMT (requires HR in distribution and education)                                                                                                     |
| 3   | Human Resources Capacity                         | Salahuddin (Social Service Office)                          | Collaboration between village governments to facilitate facilities and infrastructure, health workers conduct training for cadres who are mentors for beneficiaries |
| 4   | Human Resources Capacity                         | Mansur (Head of Processing and Marketing)                   | Community trust, support from local government, resources                                                                                                           |
| 5   | Human Resources Capacity                         | drg. Suryafatma, M. Kes. (Head of Pa'benteng Health Center) | Message delivery should be done by the right people, such as health workers, Posyandu cadres, community leaders, and religious leaders                              |

Source: Researcher Data Processing 2025

The figure above shows that human resource capacity is the primary foundation for implementing an integrative communication model for stunting management in Bantaeng

Regency. Interviews indicate that cadre training, family support, and the availability of human resources capable of distributing and educating about interventions such as PMT are important aspects emphasized by policymakers. Furthermore, the success of integrative communication is also greatly influenced by collaboration between village governments and health workers in supporting infrastructure and mentoring cadres at the field level. Another equally important factor is growing community trust in the program, strengthened by local government support and the readiness of local resources. Therefore, human resource capacity building must include technical training, strengthening cross-level collaboration, and community empowerment as part of a comprehensive and sustainable communication strategy.

Table 2. Inter-Agency Coordination

| No. | Component of the Integrative Communication Model | Interview Source                                               | Key Statement Points                                                                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Inter-Agency Coordination                        | drg. Suryafatma, M. Kes. (Head of Pa'bentengang Health Center) | Cross-sector coordination, PKK, religious leaders, community leaders                                      |
| 2   | Inter-Agency Coordination                        | Armawansyah (Head of DPKPP)                                    | Cross-sector coordination                                                                                 |
| 3   | Inter-Agency Coordination                        | Sry (BKKB Analyst)                                             | Shared perceptions among institutions                                                                     |
| 4   | Inter-Agency Coordination                        | Syahriani (Head of Cipta Karya)                                | Coordinated message delivery between institutions coordinated by Bappeda, with regular activity reporting |

Source: Researcher Data Processing 2025

Coordination between agencies plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of integrative communication, particularly in addressing complex issues such as stunting. Interviews indicate that the involvement of various parties, including the Family Welfare Movement (PKK), religious leaders, and community leaders, is part of cross-sector coordination, which must be managed in an integrated manner. A shared understanding between agencies is also crucial to ensure that messages are not contradictory and build public trust.

Therefore, an effective coordination system can be achieved through a mechanism for regular activity reporting and cross-agency messaging facilitated by key actors such as the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda). Therefore, coordination is not merely a matter of role allocation but also involves harmonizing communication strategies, message consistency, and the ongoing integration of cross-sectoral work. Furthermore, regarding the third component of the integrative communication model, namely accurate data support, the researchers formulated the following matrix for clearer understanding.

Table 3. Accurate Data Support

| No. | Component of the Integrative Communication Model | Interview Source                                               | Key Statement Points                                                                                            |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Support for Accurate Data                        | Syahriani (Head of Cipta Karya)                                | Understanding community characteristics                                                                         |
| 2   | Support for Accurate Data                        | drg. Suryafatma, M. Kes. (Head of Pa'bentengang Health Center) | Data on families at risk of stunting is used to determine recipients of nutritional interventions and mentoring |
| 3   | Support for Accurate Data                        | Armawansyah (Head of DPKPP)                                    | Valid data in villages                                                                                          |

|   |                           |                      |                               |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 4 | Support for Accurate Data | Adyan (Head of PMPI) | Valid data from technical OPD |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|

Source: Researcher Data Processing, 2025

During Ilham Azikin's leadership, the Bantaeng Regency Government demonstrated a strong commitment to building an integrative, data-driven communication model. One of the key pillars of this approach is the availability of accurate and integrated data across sectors, at the local government, technical regional government agencies (OPD), and village levels. Valid data is not only used to map families at risk of stunting but also serves as the basis for developing communication strategies, determining intervention targets, and measuring program achievements on an ongoing basis. Through a more orderly reporting system and the use of digital applications such as E-PPGBM, inter-agency coordination can be improved and behavior change messages can be tailored to real-world conditions. Thus, accurate data management practices in Bantaeng Regency under Ilham Azikin's leadership serve as a key example of how an evidence-based approach can strengthen the effectiveness of development communication in integrated stunting management.

### Patterns of Relationships and Coordination Between Stakeholders

The pattern of relationships and coordination between stakeholders refers to the forms of interaction, communication, and cooperation mechanisms between the various parties involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of development programs. In the context of public policy or addressing social issues such as stunting, these stakeholders include local governments, regional government agencies (OPDs), health workers, community leaders, community organizations, the private sector, the media, and the community as beneficiaries. The pattern of coordination between stakeholders is acknowledged to be working well. The following information was provided by an informant:

*"A reciprocal and mutually supportive relationship. Cadres assist health workers in providing services to the community, and the government provides facilities and infrastructure." (BKKB Analyst, May 20, 2025)*

This statement reflects the existence of a reciprocal and mutually supportive relationship between stakeholders in the implementation of development programs, particularly in addressing stunting. Cadres, as the spearhead at the community level, play an active role in assisting health workers, particularly in disseminating information, monitoring, and providing direct assistance to target families. Similar sentiments were echoed by other informants. The following information was provided:

*"The relationship between relevant agencies and the sub-district and village governments has been running well." (Head of the Housing, Residential Areas, and Land Agency, May 28, 2025)*

The relationship established between technical OPDs and sub-district and village governments demonstrates that communication mechanisms are functioning effectively and supporting each other. This synergy is crucial to ensuring that every policy designed at the district level can be implemented effectively at the grassroots level, while also enabling bottom-up feedback that enriches the program planning and evaluation process. Therefore, this relationship pattern is one of the foundations for the success of the integrative communication approach in Bantaeng Regency. Another informant provided the following information:

*"The relationship pattern between stakeholders, from the government, health workers, and the community, has been running well." (Head of Human Development, Economy, and Infrastructure, April 1, 2025)*

The relationship and coordination between stakeholders in Bantaeng Regency during Ilham Azikin's leadership demonstrates a collaborative, structured, and complementary work system. The relationship between technical agencies, sub-district and village governments, health

workers, and the community operates in a spirit of equal and productive partnership. This is reflected in maintained communication, a clear division of roles, and a shared understanding of priority programs such as stunting management. Cadres play an active role in supporting health workers in the field, while the local government provides facilities and infrastructure support.

Cross-sector coordination is facilitated through forums and regular reporting, strengthening program integration between agencies. Therefore, this strong relationship pattern serves as a crucial foundation for implementing an effective, participatory, and sustainable integrative communication model to promote better human development in Bantaeng Regency.

### **Media and Communication Channels Used**

In the context of Bantaeng Regency, communication is conducted through various channels, both conventional and digital. Informants stated that:

*"Media includes banners, leaflets, and channels through the Forkom TPK WhatsApp Group." (BKKBN analyst, May 20, 2025)*

*"Social media such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and print media are also effective in the local context." (Head of the Housing, Residential Areas, and Land Agency, May 28, 2025)*

*"The most appropriate social media to use is the WhatsApp Group, which is divided into three main groups: the Regency's WhatsApp Group for the District Personnel Officers (PPS), consisting of 11 Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD), the Military District Commander (Dandim), and the Police Chief; the WhatsApp Group for the District Personnel Officers (TPPS) from each sub-district; and the WhatsApp Group for the Data Operators (TPPS). This demonstrates that the digital communication structure has been structured according to institutional levels and technical functions." (Head of Human Development, Economy, and Infrastructure. April 1, 2025)*

Communication in the stunting management program in Bantaeng Regency is implemented through a structured combination of conventional media and digital channels. Media selection is tailored to the needs of the target audience and the geographic and social context of the local community. Conventional communication channels include print media such as banners, signs, and leaflets. These media serve to disseminate messages visually in public spaces, especially to communities not yet fully accessible by digital technology. Print media distribution is carried out through a network of cadres and health service facilities in villages and sub-districts.

On the other hand, the use of digital channels has shown significant improvement in supporting the effectiveness of cross-sector communication. One of the most widely used platforms is WhatsApp Groups. According to informants, WhatsApp is used as the primary medium for rapid coordination, information sharing, and real-time activity reports. The WhatsApp group structure is hierarchically structured according to institutional level. At the regency level, there is a WhatsApp group for the Public Order Agency (PPS), with members representing 11 strategic regional government agencies (OPDs) and security personnel such as the Military District Commander (Dandim) and the Police Chief. At the sub-district level, there is a WhatsApp group for the Community Empowerment and Development (WA PPS). TPPS (Special Service Posts) are available for each administrative region, and are technically facilitated by a group of data operators who help synchronize information between sectors.

In addition to WhatsApp, social media platforms such as Facebook are also used to reach the general public with educational content and health program promotions. This allows for more open interaction and encourages active participation from local communities. Further information was provided by the Head of the Public Works Division. The following information was provided:

*"The media used in Public Works include posters for septic tank desludging, banners for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (IPAL) and videos of outreach activities. Communication*

*channels include the Bantaeng Regency KPSPAM WhatsApp group for the Water Treatment Plant (Pokmair) group and the Bantaeng Regency KPP group for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (IPAL) group." (Head of Cipta Karya, April 3, 2025)*

The use of diverse media and communication channels demonstrates that the Bantaeng Regency Government has established a flexible, responsive, and decentralized communication system, where strategic messages can be delivered quickly and effectively through the synergy of various communication platforms.

### **The Role of Culture and Local Wisdom**

Local culture and wisdom play a crucial role in strengthening the effectiveness of communication in the stunting management program in Bantaeng Regency. Local values embedded within the community not only serve as a social backdrop but are also utilized as a strategic medium to build shared understanding and encourage active community participation. One concrete example of culture's role is the use of regional languages in communication, particularly in health education and nutrition counseling. The use of local languages facilitates public understanding, particularly in rural areas where formal Indonesian is not yet fully familiar. This allows health messages to be conveyed more effectively and contextually.

Furthermore, traditional, religious, and community leaders are involved in various outreach and advocacy activities. Their role as respected figures can influence community attitudes and behaviors regarding health issues, including stunting prevention. The involvement of these figures helps build trust and legitimacy in government programs, thereby strengthening communication reach down to the grassroots level.

The information provided by the informant is as follows:

*"Local culture plays a role, such as religious and community leaders, the use of regional languages, and local foods in the DASHAT Kitchen and Nutrition House." (BKKBAN Analyst, May 20, 2025)*

The data above shows that local foods are also utilized in nutrition recovery activities, such as the Healthy Kitchen to Overcome Stunting (DASHAT) and Nutrition House programs. Using locally sourced food not only educates target families about the use of local resources but also strengthens family food security. This approach demonstrates that local wisdom in food consumption patterns is a crucial element in behavior-based communication strategies.

Social practices such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and community cooperation provide additional strengths in building participatory communication. Joint activities involving the community, such as cooking supplementary food, cleaning the environment, and supporting integrated health post (Posyandu) activities, create a sense of ownership of the program and strengthen social solidarity as a foundation for sustainable interventions.

By integrating local cultural elements into the stunting program communication system, the Bantaeng Regency Government has successfully developed a communication model that not only conveys information but also creates meaningful engagement that aligns with the community's social characteristics. Another informant also provided the following information:

*"The role of local culture and wisdom can facilitate understanding of messages and increase community participation in maintaining a clean environment." (Head of the Housing, Residential Areas, and Land Agency, May 28, 2025)*

Local culture encompasses language, symbols, customs, and values that have long been present and practiced in the community's daily lives. When communication about development or health programs, including stunting programs, is delivered through a local cultural approach, the community's level of understanding increases due to: familiar language, recognizable cultural symbols, and an emotional and social approach.

In implementing stunting management programs at the regional level, local culture is not merely a social background but also an effective communication tool and strategy. Two key elements of local culture that play a strategic role are the use of local languages and the use of local supplementary foods (PMT). Both contribute to building closer communication with the target community and encouraging greater acceptance and participation. This aligns with the opinion of the informant below:

*"Relevant local culture is the use of local languages and the use of local PMT." (Head of Human Development, Economy, and Infrastructure. April 1, 2025)*

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the use of regional languages and the utilization of local supplementary feeding (PMT) in the stunting management program in Bantaeng Regency demonstrates the strategic role of local culture in supporting the effectiveness of development communication. Regional languages facilitate understanding of messages and foster an emotional connection between implementers and the community, while local PMT increases community acceptance because it aligns with dietary habits and available resources in the surrounding area. These two approaches not only strengthen communication reach but also build a sense of ownership of the program, empower the local economy, and encourage the sustainability of nutrition interventions. The integration of these cultural elements makes communication in the stunting program more contextual, participatory, and capable of creating sustainable behavior change.

### **Indicators of Success of the Integrative Communication Model**

In terms of measuring success, the indicators revealed by informants were quite diverse, reflecting a multidimensional approach. According to one informant:

*"The indicator is a change in the behavior of target families, from inappropriate to better, supporting healthy behaviors and improving nutrition." (BKKBAN Analyst, May 20, 2025)*

The success of the integrative communication model in addressing stunting in Bantaeng Regency can be measured through indicators that reflect real changes at various levels, including individual behavior, environmental conditions, and institutional coordination. As explained by Sri Harniaty Indraswari, one key indicator is a change in the behavior of target families toward healthier lifestyles and supporting improved child nutrition. Meanwhile, one informant highlighted the physical environment. The following information was provided:

*"The number of toddlers living in uninhabitable homes has decreased and public awareness of maintaining a clean environment has increased." (Head of the Housing, Residential Areas, and Land Agency, May 28, 2025)*

The informant above highlighted the physical environmental dimension, with the decrease in the number of toddlers living in uninhabitable homes and increased public awareness of maintaining cleanliness as a reflection of the success of cross-sectoral interventions. Other informants looked at the coordination aspect. The following data was obtained by the researcher:

*"The level of attendance of regional government agencies (OPD) during coordination meetings, AKSI meetings 1, 2, and 3, and during stunting discussions is a key indicator of the success of integrative communication." (Head of Human Development, Economy, and Infrastructure, April 1, 2025)*

Regarding coordination, Adyan Aaryanto emphasized the importance of active participation by OPDs in forums such as coordination meetings, AKSI meetings, and stunting discussions as a strong indicator of strong inter-agency collaboration. Thus, the success of integrative communication cannot be measured solely on a single scale, but rather through a multidimensional approach encompassing behavior, the environment, and ongoing institutional commitment.

The explanations above demonstrate that success is not only measured by its direct impact on the community, but also by the consistency of inter-agency engagement. However, there are challenges, as expressed by informants. The following are the interview results:

*"Lack of public awareness, hoaxes and disinformation, hate speech, language and cultural differences, technological incompetence, and unstable network connectivity." (Head of the Family Welfare Movement (TP-PKK) in Kampala Village, Eremerasa District, April 5, 2025)*

From all of the explanations above, it can be concluded that the success of implementing the integrative communication model in Bantaeng Regency is not solely measured by the extent to which its impact is directly felt by the community, but also by the extent to which inter-agency engagement can be maintained consistently and coordinated.

The well-established relationship pattern between regional government agencies (OPD), sub-district governments, and villages demonstrates a strong collaborative foundation. However, effective communication in the field still faces real challenges. As stated by the Head of the Kampala Village Family Welfare Movement (TP-PKK), obstacles such as low public awareness, the proliferation of hoaxes and disinformation, hate speech, linguistic and cultural differences, limited digital literacy, and uneven network infrastructure are factors that disrupt the smooth flow of information. This situation emphasizes that the sustainability of development communication depends not only on coordinating structures but also on the ability to adapt to local social and technological conditions.

## Discussion

In developing an ideal integrative communication model for stunting management at the regional level, it is important to reference various recent studies that emphasize the importance of communication synergy and collaboration between stakeholders. One important finding comes from research (Muniroh et al., 2025), which underscores that the effectiveness of communication in stunting prevention is significantly influenced by community social and cultural involvement. This study demonstrates that integrating government programs with local values can increase message acceptance and community participation in stunting prevention programs. The involvement of community leaders and the utilization of informal communication channels are key to the success of this approach.

Similarly, (Firdausi and Agustina, 2024) highlighted weaknesses in community engagement mechanisms during the recovery phase of stunted children. Their research showed that the lack of two-way communication channels between service providers and toddlers' families impacted program effectiveness. Therefore, strengthening communication systems that enable the community to provide feedback and actively participate in the improvement process is necessary.

Meanwhile, (Agustinah et al., 2025) proposed a more interpersonal and psychological approach through the development of a therapeutic communication model. This model prioritizes four main aspects: the communication actors (people), the message's purpose (purpose), the context of delivery (place), and the ongoing dialogue (process). Communication built on empathy and trust is crucial for building productive relationships between health workers and the community, particularly in the village context.

On the other hand, (Sentika et al., 2024) examined the importance of interprofessional collaboration in stunting management. Through a systematic review, they emphasized that the integrated roles of medical personnel, nutrition counselors, cadres, and village officials must be supported by structured communication guidelines. Without strong coordination and an integrated information system, stunting interventions are difficult to achieve optimal results.

Based on these studies, the ideal integrative communication model for stunting management should combine a local wisdom-based approach, empathetic interpersonal communication, active community participation, and coordinated cross-sectoral

collaboration. This approach aligns with the spirit of inclusive development communication that is responsive to local social conditions, as required in community-based public health programs such as those in Bantaeng Regency. The ideal integrative communication model for implementing the stunting management program by the Bantaeng Regency Government is as follows:

### **Main Elements of the Integrative Communication Model**

Integrative communication involves multiple actors from various sectors, such as government, health workers, community leaders, the media, and non-governmental organizations. Each actor has a strategic role in conveying information, facilitating discussions, and mobilizing action at the community level. Several elements related to this are as follows:

#### ***Human Resource (HR) Capacity***

Cangara (2007) emphasizes the importance of communication actors in determining the success of development programs. In this context, HR capacity is key. Interview results indicate that cadre training, the ability to convey messages empathetically, and family support are part of improving HR quality. Similarly, Agustinah et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of therapeutic communication based on empathy and trust. This means that not only technical competence is needed, but also interpersonal skills to build constructive relationships.

#### ***Inter-Agency Coordination***

Inter-sectoral coordination is part of the bureaucratic communication structure. In the policy implementation model, communication between implementers and alignment of policy direction are crucial for effective program implementation. Informant findings reinforce that good coordination, such as that carried out by the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) through cross-department meetings and message alignment, is an implementation of an adaptive communication structure.

#### ***Accurate and Integrated Data Support***

The availability of valid and integrated data is a crucial foundation for evidence-based communication. According to Saputra & Husain (2024), accurate data is crucial for successfully delivering targeted messages. Findings from Bantaeng Regency indicate that data integration between villages, technical government agencies, and community health centers has helped map at-risk families and develop more efficient communication strategies. This also aligns with the communication convergence model (Hajli et al., 2022), which emphasizes the importance of repeated information exchange within social networks to build shared meaning. By utilizing digital data and integrated reporting, the communication process becomes more dynamic and responsive.

### **The Ideal Integrative Communication Model**

Referring to various theories and research findings, the ideal integrative communication model for addressing stunting in Bantaeng Regency includes: (1) Structured cross-sector communication (Wang & Guan, 2020); (2) Community participation as active subjects (Servaes, 2022; Melkote & Steeves, 2015); Integration of digital and community communication channels (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Schiavo, 2013); (1) Use of accurate data for message development (Kincaid & Figueroa, 2002); (2) Trust-based deliberative communication practices (Habermas, 1985). With this combination of elements, Bantaeng Regency has the potential to become a national reference model for implementing development communication for community-based health programs, particularly those addressing stunting.

### **CONCLUSION**

The ideal integrative communication model in Bantaeng Regency is one that combines a cross-sectoral approach, community participation, and respect for local values. This model utilizes communication as a tool for social change, evidence-based and culturally relevant,

supported by human resource training, the use of digital information systems, and regular inter-agency coordination forums. The involvement of local communities as active actors, not simply targets, strengthens the sustainability of the program and the relevance of messages at the grassroots level.

## SUGGESTION

Regulations are needed to encourage cross-sector integration in health program communications, including the involvement of the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Policies supporting the use of data as a basis for communication also need to be strengthened to ensure targeted and measurable strategies. Continued innovation in the use of communication media, both digital and conventional, is recommended, tailoring messages based on target groups. A dialogic and participatory approach should be prioritized to create equitable and sustainable communication relationships.

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