



STRATEGIC RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL APPROACHES TO STUNTING REDUCTION USING SWOT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Stunting is a major public health problem affecting millions of children globally. One in three children under five years old is stunted in South Sulawesi. The government has implemented strategies to accelerate the reduction of stunting. Most strategies focus on food security programs, maternal and child health care practices, and improving environmental quality, but have not considered many other approaches such as local religious and cultural approaches. A religious approach can be one of the strategies that can prevent and deal with stunting in South Sulawesi. Research on the potential of religious values that can be utilized to reduce stunting has not been widely conducted. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach with 25 informants. In-depth interview data were processed using SWOT Analysis which is useful for assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of various approaches to stunting intervention programs. The strength of the strategic approach is the existence of religious principles to emphasize the importance of communal support and responsibility and the potential reach and influence of religious leaders on their communities. The weakness of the religious approach strategy is the lack of knowledge about healthy nutrition. As well as the existence of religious practices that are not in accordance with modern health practices. Opportunities for this strategy in the form of religious and cultural education can strengthen awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The threat of religious approach strategies is in the form of unhealthy lifestyle changes such as fast food and the widespread use of technology.

Keywords: Stunting; population; public health

1. INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to end hunger, achieve food security and good nutrition, improve nutrition, promote healthy living, and ensure access to clean water and proper sanitation. One of the population groups that are vulnerable to adequate nutritional intake, access to clean water, sanitation, and environmental health in children under five years old. Stunting is the condition of children under five years old (toddlers) having a length or height that is less than their age, it occurs due to chronic malnutrition. Nutritional deficiencies are caused by food availability in the family, and many factors affect it (Unicef et al., 2021).

Stunting is a major public health problem affecting millions of children globally, especially in low- and middle-income countries such as Indonesia. Although the incidence of stunting has decreased in Indonesia from 27.6 percent in 2019 to 21.6 percent in 2022, the figure is still above the WHO target of around 20 percent. Stunting cases in South Sulawesi have also decreased but are still above the national figure, from 30.6 percent in 2019 to 27.2 percent in 2022. One in three children under five in South Sulawesi is stunted (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2017; Kemenkes, 2023).

The incidence of stunting not only results in a child's failure to reach one's genetic potential for height but is also a risk factor for many other developmental obstacles, including cognitive deficits and loss of future economic opportunities (Shekar et al., 2016). Research conducted on school children in NTT found that children who are stunted have lower learning achievement than those who are not (Picauly & Toy, 2013).

The adequacy of balanced nutrition in children is one of the mandates of sustainable development that must be a common concern for both the family, the community, and the government. This is considered necessary because children are heirs to the future, and greatly determine the future development of a nation (Unicef et al., 2021).

The Indonesian government has an ambitious stunting target of reducing the stunting rate among children under the age of 5 to 14 percent by the end of 2024. To achieve this target, the government has implemented various programs and policies related to the fulfillment of nutrition for pregnant women and children under five. As well as focusing on policies and strategies related to cross-sectoral approaches, integrating nutritional aspects in development, and conducting periodic evaluations of the achievement of targets that have been set (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2019).

The government has implemented strategies to accelerate the reduction in stunting incidence with various policies. Most program strategies implemented only focus on food security programs, maternal and child health care practices, and improving water quality, sanitation, and hygiene, but have not considered many other approaches such as local

religious and cultural approaches. Religious and cultural values play an important role in shaping people's attitudes and behaviors toward health-related issues, including stunting. Therefore, incorporating awareness of religious and cultural values into stunting prevention and handling programs can increase the effectiveness and acceptance of interventions implemented so far.

A religious approach can be one of the strategies that can be used to prevent and handle stunting in South Sulawesi. South Sulawesi is famous for its religious values where around 89% of the population is Muslim. Research on religious values approaches that can be utilized to improve the effectiveness of the implementation of stunting reduction programs needs to be carried out.

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive approach to gather information about religious and cultural values to reduce the incidence of stunting. Data and information were collected using interview guidelines prepared by containing question points according to the research theme, namely the religious and cultural values approach to reduce stunting cases in children under 5 years old. The questions in the interview guidelines have been adjusted to the conditions of the people of South Sulawesi in general. The interview guidelines can measure four categories related to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the use of religious and cultural values to reduce stunting cases in children.

Table 1. Distribution of Informatics by Affiliation

Number	Affiliation	Data Sources (person)
1	Provincial Government	4
2	Regency/City Government	4
3	Public Health Expert Academic	3
4	Public Policy Expert Academic	3
5	Academic Sociologist of Child Development	3
6	Religious leaders	4
7	Cultural Figures	4
	Total	25

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach. Data and information were collected using interview guidelines prepared by containing question points according to the research theme, namely the religious and cultural values approach to reduce stunting cases in children under 5 years old. The questions in the interview guidelines have been adjusted to the conditions of the people of South Sulawesi in general. The interview

guidelines can measure four categories related to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the use of religious and cultural values to reduce stunting cases in children.

In-depth interview data is processed using SWOT analysis through the internal factor identification stage including strengths and weaknesses resulting in the Internal Strategy Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) matrix. It also identifies external factors derived from opportunities and threats and generates the Summery External Factor Analysis (EFAS) matrix. This method is done by comparing 2 different factors in the same category based on the magnitude of influence on the category of concern. The next stage is the calculation of the table with its details consisting of weights, ratings, and scores.

IFAS and EFAS analysis creates a matrix consisting of weighting columns, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Weighting is given a score based on the results of interviews with informants between 0 (not important) to 1 (very important) while ratings are given based on the level of influence of these factors on the indicator of concern. Furthermore, determine the strategies used to develop the participation of religious and cultural values for stunting reduction, based on internal and external factors.

SWOT analysis helps in comprehensively describing the situation by identifying key factors influencing religious and cultural values in preventing stunting in children under five. With a good understanding of existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, strategic measures can be formulated to exploit strengths, overcome weaknesses, seize opportunities, and address threats that affect religious and cultural values in handling stunting. The analysis results can assess the feasibility and effectiveness of various approaches to stunting intervention and prevention programs by utilizing existing religious and cultural values. Strategy determination is carried out using the quadrant method presented in Figure 1.

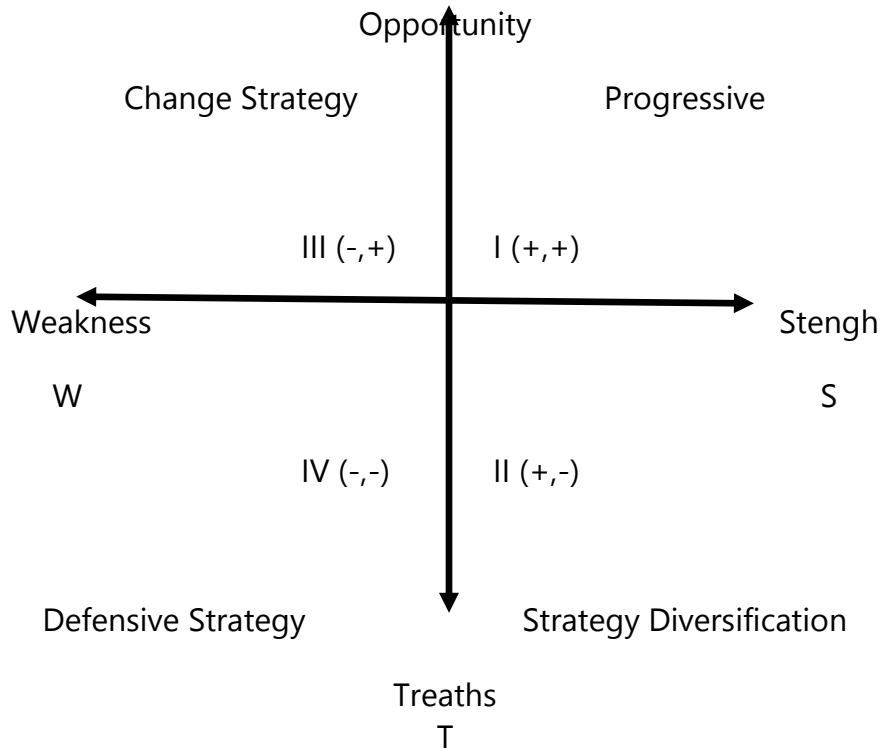


Figure 1. SWOT analysis quadrant based on internal and external factors on religious and cultural values for stunting treatment

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the reduction in in-depth interviews about the strength of religious and cultural values can be seen in the following IFAS and EFAS calculation results table. An analysis of internal factors consisting of the strengths and weaknesses of religious and cultural values to control stunting can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. IFAS matrix on the strengths and weaknesses of religious and cultural values to reduce stunting in children under five years

Number	Internal Strategy Factor	Weight	Rating	Score
Strength				
1.	Religious and cultural values can provide moral support to encourage social change and positive attitudes toward the provision of nutrition in the family	0,13	3	0,39

2.	Religion and culture can play an important role in strengthening the behavior change community in reducing stunting	0,15	4	0,60
3.	Religious and cultural institutions can be used as media to convey messages About the importance of nutrition and healthy eating patterns	0,09	2	0,18
4.	Local culture has a wealth of healthy and nutritious food that can be integrated into stunting management programs	0,11	3	0,33
Sub Total		0,48		1,50

Weaknesses

1.	Religious and cultural approaches cannot accommodate all the diversity of society.	0,11	1	0,11
2.	Lack of parental knowledge about healthy parenting	0,08	2	0,16
3.	There are bad habits in the form of abstinence from certain foods	0,13	1	0,13
4.	Lack of knowledge about how to manage food properly and cleanly	0,09	3	0,27
5.	Lack of awareness of parents participating in activities at Posyandu to see the process of growth and development of children under five on a regular basis	0,11	2	0,22
Sub Total		0,52		0,89
Total		1,00		0,61

Table 3. EFAS matrix of opportunities and threats of religious and cultural values to reduce stunting in children under five years

Number	External Strategy Factors Opportunity	Weight	Rating	Score r
1.	Compliance with religious and cultural values in society is still high	0,15	3	0,45
2.	Religious and cultural approaches can help reach a wider target population and gain greater support	0,16	4	0,64

3.	Collaboration with religious and cultural institutions can increase the accessibility of stunting management programs more broadly	0,09	3	0,27
4.	Involving local culture in stunting management programs can increase the attractiveness of the community	0,13	3	0,39
Sub Total		0,53		1,75
Threats				
1.	Cultural values and trends can adapt to these changes to remain relevant and effective. Over time, so you must be able to			
2.	Monitoring and evaluation of stunting management programs have not been carried out properly.	0,08	2	0,16
3.	Messages of balanced nutrition socialized through religious and cultural approaches can be misinterpreted by individuals or groups of people.	0,11	1	0,11
4.	Certain religious and cultural practices conflict with scientific knowledge of child nutrition and health.	0,15	3	0,45
Sub Total		0,47		0,85
Total		1,00		0,90

From the analysis of the IFAS calculation table, the results are obtained, namely the strength factor gets a score of 1.50 and a weakness of 0.89 with a different score of 0.61. Whereas in the EFAS calculation table, it is shown that the opportunity factor gets a score of 1.75 and a threat with a score of 0.85 with a score difference of 0.90. The scores obtained from these internal and external factors can be described in the following SWOT diagram.

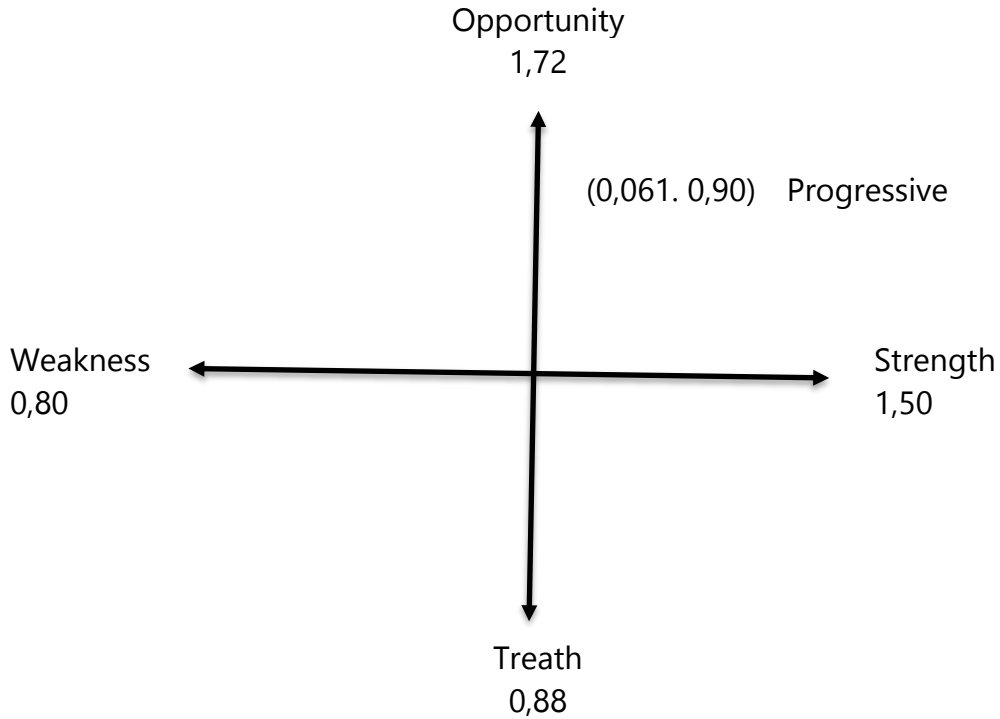


Figure 2. SWOT analysis quadrant IFAS and EFAS calculation results

The results of the SWOT analysis calculation are in quadrant I, meaning that the strategy progressive that must be considered is using internal factors in the form of maximizing existing strengths and minimizing weaknesses from religious and cultural values, as well as external factors in the form of exploiting opportunities and trying to avoid threats that will arise.

As efforts to reduce stunting continue in Indonesia, it is important to consider a holistic approach incorporating religious and cultural values. Incorporating religious and cultural values into stunting prevention and management strategies can help increase community involvement and increase a sense of solidarity among residents (Anwar & Cangara, 2016).

Religious and cultural values can play an important role in shaping attitudes toward stunting prevention, but they also have certain strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of religious and cultural values is their potential to facilitate community-based interventions. For example, religious organizations can help outreach to raise awareness about the causes and consequences of stunting and provide education about proper nutritional practices. Likewise, cultural practices can also be utilized as a tool to promote healthy behavior and serve as a barrier against harmful behavior (Moey et al., 2022).

Religious and cultural values play an important role in shaping people's attitudes and behavior toward health issues, including stunting (Wong et al., 2019). Indonesia is a plural country with various religious and cultural values (Azwar et al., 2021). Many studies have shown that people with positive cultural attitudes are more likely to engage in stunting prevention practices, which can lead to better outcomes. Therefore, it is important to develop a stunting prevention policy that considers the specific religious and cultural values in society (Assunção & Román, 2019; Elfira, 2018; Moey et al., 2022).

Indonesia has a Muslim-majority population. Religious leaders have a significant influence on society. Therefore, collaborating with religious leaders in disseminating stunting prevention information can help optimize the interventions' effectiveness (Bhusal et al., 2023; Moey et al., 2022; Sari & Sartika, 2021).

Understanding and respecting local culture can help inform stunting prevention strategies that are more culturally sensitive, inclusive, and effective (Baye et al., 2020; Saputri et al., 2020). Religious and cultural values can be important considerations when developing a strategy to combat stunting in Indonesia. Community involvement can be increased by understanding and incorporating these values into stunting prevention policies. Religious and cultural leaders or figures can be important partners in disseminating information about stunting prevention, while understanding local culture can provide more culturally sensitive and effective strategies (Paramashanti & Benita, 2020).

Developing partnerships with religious and community leaders is important to improve stunting prevention and treatment of children (Baltzell et al., 2019; Mukherjee et al., 2022). By working with stakeholders, health practitioners can utilize religious and cultural values to promote stunting prevention while avoiding potentially harmful practices (Sundararajan et al., 2019).

Increasing awareness of the importance of good nutrition and health among religious and community leaders can increase outcomes by mobilizing resources for stunting prevention and increasing community participation in health programs (Ratu et al., 2020).

Stunting management must be seen as a multifactorial and cross-disciplinary problem that requires collaboration from various stakeholders, including caregivers, educators, and policymakers. This approach will ensure solutions are implemented, such as improving nutrition education and access to healthcare (Akombi et al., 2017).

Challenges of cultural practices that hinder efforts to prevent stunting must consider a culturally sensitive approach that considers local values and customs. For example, interventions could incorporate traditional foods and recipes into educational materials

while highlighting the importance of a balanced diet. Additionally, targeting cultural norms that limit women's access to resources essential for stunting prevention is critical (Anderson et al., 2016; Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020; Wiliyanarti et al., 2022).

However, religious and cultural values also have weaknesses that can hinder efforts to prevent stunting. One of the challenges is that cultural practices may not always be in line with scientifically proven best practices for stunting prevention (Madjdian et al., 2018).

Local cultural practices regarding child values and food are taboo or prohibited for infants and children and pregnant and lactating mothers, potentially limiting access to a diverse and nutritious diet, which is essential for optimal child growth and development (Mekonnen et al., 2017). Cultural practices can also prevent mothers from getting medical services in modern healthcare settings such as puskesmas or posyandu (Rofiqoh et al., 2022). In some cases, these values can promote harmful practices or limit access to evidence-based interventions. For example, certain cultural practices may consider certain types of food taboo for consumption by pregnant women or young children, which could compromise their nutrition and exacerbate stunting.

This reluctance can be traced back to the belief that health care is unnecessary or even harmful. In addition, religious values can sometimes encourage gender inequality, limiting women's access to important resources to prevent stunting (Marphatia et al., 2016). Although religious and cultural values have power in promoting stunting prevention practices, their limitations must also be acknowledged (Wiliyanarti et al., 2022). Efforts to overcome these limitations and promote culturally sensitive approaches that are in line with scientific evidence can lead to more effective interventions.

Collaboration with religious and community leaders to change detrimental social norms, promote gender equality, and empower women to take an active role in maintaining children's health and nutrition needs to be done. The strengths and weaknesses of religious and cultural values in overcoming stunting prevention are interrelated. On the one hand, cultural and religious values can serve as powerful tools to promote stunting prevention by incorporating local traditions into interventions and leveraging community resources. On the other hand, cultural practices can also challenge effective stunting prevention efforts by limiting access to critical resources and perpetuating harmful beliefs.

The use of religious and cultural values in treating stunting has both opportunities and threats. One of the significant opportunities is that religious and cultural values can function as a unifying force in society, thereby facilitating the implementation of stunting prevention programs. In addition, religious and cultural values often greatly impact

people's lifestyles and beliefs. By utilizing these values, health practitioners can encourage healthy behavior that is in line with stunting prevention (Hadi et al., 2022).

However, there are also threats associated with relying too much on religious and cultural values. For example, some cultures may have practices or beliefs inconsistent with scientific evidence-based interventions for stunting prevention (Anthonj et al., 2020). This can lead to reluctance to adopt new practices or abandon proven interventions, ultimately hindering stunting prevention progress. In addition, in some cases, religious and cultural values can reinforce gender roles or social hierarchies that limit women's access to education, health, and economic opportunities (Ameyaw et al., 2022). Mothers are the main caregivers of children and play an important role in preparing nutrition for the needs of children and families. So religious and cultural values can be used as valuable tools in the fight against stunting, it is important to balance respecting cultural traditions and implementing evidence-based interventions to prevent stunting effectively (Hossain et al., 2017).

Religious and cultural values can unify society and encourage healthy behavior that is in line with efforts to prevent stunting. But on the other hand, it can also be an obstacle and a challenge because cultural values have developed in society that are not in line with evidence-based health practices.

For example, religious teachings may promote the importance of breastfeeding, while cultural values may emphasize serving children nutrient-rich foods. In addition, the involvement of religious leaders and community leaders can also help raise awareness about stunting prevention strategies and encourage broad community participation in interventions. On the other hand, religious and cultural values can also be a challenge for stunting prevention efforts (Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022). In addition, gender roles and patriarchal norms embedded in religious and cultural practices can create additional barriers to stunting prevention by limiting women's access to education and decision-making power within the household (Prusty & Kumar, 2014).

Therefore, it is important to strike a balance between cultural traditions and evidence-based interventions by involving community leaders, promoting healthy behaviors that are in line with stunting prevention efforts, and dealing with dangerous cultural practices that can hinder the progress of implementing stunting management in children (Adeomi et al., 2022).

Overall, religious and cultural values play an important role in handling stunting. While it can serve as a source of strength by promoting healthy behavior and community cooperation, it can also pose a challenge to stunting prevention efforts if the dangerous practice is not tackled. Policymakers and healthcare professionals need to take a stunting

prevention-oriented approach, which considers people's cultural and religious beliefs while promoting evidence-based interventions that prioritize the health and well-being of children.

The importance of involving religious leaders, community leaders as well as other members of the community in actively preventing stunting. Partnerships with religious and community leaders can help address some of these challenges by promoting positive cultural practices while addressing barriers that arise and increasing public awareness of stunting prevention strategies. In addition, education and awareness campaigns that focus on the importance of nutrition and its role in preventing stunting can also help promote healthy behaviors and try to eliminate cultural practices that harm health (Yee et al., 2017).

To overcome these challenges, health practitioners must be aware of cultural and religious values in certain communities and work with stakeholders to design culturally sensitive interventions promoting stunting prevention. Research shows a significant relationship between cultural factors and the incidence of stunting, so it is important to consider religious values and local traditions when designing interventions (Beal et al., 2018; Budiastutik & Nugraheni, 2018).

Several studies have identified stunting-related factors, including socio-economic inequality, geographic disparities, eating habits, education, child morbidity and infection, and environment. Understanding the social and cultural factors contributing to stunting is critical to developing effective and culturally appropriate interventions. Investing in education to raise awareness about stunting and appropriate child-feeding practices is also important. By addressing these factors and adopting a comprehensive approach to stunting prevention, Indonesia can achieve its goals of reducing stunting rates and improving its population's overall health and well-being.

Future efforts to combat stunting in Indonesia must consider all these factors and develop interventions tailored to the population's specific needs. Thus, a holistic approach that involves medical intervention and cultural and social considerations is needed to effectively address the problem of stunting in Indonesia (Wiliyanarti et al., 2022).

Although Indonesia has made progress in reducing stunting through the National Strategy to Accelerate Stunting Prevention, much work remains to be done to eradicate stunting completely, including comprehensive research and partnerships with local communities (Herawati & Sunjaya, 2022).

Recognizing that stunting is a complex problem that can impact not only physical health. But it can also profoundly affect cognitive, social, and economic development. Therefore, prevention and treatment efforts must adopt a multidimensional approach that

addresses the immediate health problems and the long-term consequences of stunting. This requires a multisectoral approach involving the health sector, education, social welfare, and economic development.

Overall, reducing stunting in Indonesia requires a comprehensive approach that considers the various factors associated with stunting, recognizes the multidimensional nature of the problem, and focuses on long-term solutions. By comprehensively addressing these factors, Indonesia can achieve its goals of reducing stunting rates and improving its population's health and welfare outcomes.

Investment in education and adopting a comprehensive approach to stunting prevention that addresses physical health outcomes and cognitive, social, and economic development are likely to deliver positive results and enable Indonesia to meet its stunting reduction target. The National Strategy for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention is the main program in combating stunting in Indonesia. Among the five pillars of the national strategy, the commitment of the central and regional governments plays an important role in addressing child malnutrition. The National Strategy for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention is the main program in combating stunting in Indonesia.

Implementing religious and cultural values in society provides a higher strength than the weaknesses that arise. Despite the challenges in the form of obstacles and threats posed by religious and cultural practices that must be minimized, the government has shown its commitment to reducing stunting through the collaboration of various parties (Torlesse et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

Strengths in the form of utilizing religious and cultural values to increase awareness of the importance of nutrition for children's health and encourage practices that support children's healthy growth and development. Promote food traditions and healthy childcare practices linked to local cultures, such as using local, nutrient-rich foodstuffs and traditional food preparation methods. Weaknesses include religious and cultural practices that do not follow modern health practices, and different interpretations in the implementation of care and health practices in children. Opportunity to use an educational approach and dialogue between religious leaders, culturalists, and the community to increase understanding of the importance of child nutrition and health, and to review practices that might affect children's growth. Develop intervention programs that combine modern health practices with existing religious and cultural values, so the community can receive and adopt them well.

Threats are urbanization and cultural changes that have a negative impact on diet and health practices. There are still members of the community who do not understand

the importance of child nutrition and health or may reject practices that are contrary to their religious beliefs or cultural traditions.

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