



Health Communication Strategy in Changing Community Nutrition Behavior and Reducing Stunting Cases in South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi

Ilham Gemiharto¹, Seira Matsumoto², Zanele Molefe³

¹Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

²Kansai University, Japan

³University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Correspondent: ilham@unpad.ac.id¹

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the communication capacity of public health cadres in designing and implementing effective health communication campaigns and their impact on changing the nutritional behavior of rural communities and helping to reduce the number of stunting cases in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative and case study approach focusing on health communication strategies implemented by community health cadres in South Konawe Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Data collection used an in-depth interview method with public health cadres, which included evaluating their understanding of health communication, the use of social media in delivering health messages, and their ability to adapt nutrition messages to the local cultural context. Research findings show that most health cadres do not understand effective health communication. The use of social media in delivering health messages is still not optimal, and there are challenges in understanding and integrating local cultural contexts in nutrition counseling. The implications of this study suggest that enhancing the capacity of community health cadres in South Konawe Regency is imperative, particularly in proficient health communication through social media platforms and understanding the nuances of local cultural contexts. It is anticipated that implementing strategies aimed at augmenting the training and skill development of health cadres would significantly contribute to endeavors to mitigate the prevalence of stunting cases in rural Indonesian regions.

Keywords: Public Health Cadres, Stunting Cases, Health Communication, Community Nutrition Behavior



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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia faces severe challenges as one of the countries with the highest prevalence of stunting cases in the world. Stunting is an essential indicator in measuring child nutrition and growth problems, and the high stunting rate in Indonesia reflects severe problems regarding children's well-being and the nation's future ([Rahayuwati et al., 2023](#); [Yani, Rahayuwati, Sari, Komariah, & Fauziah, 2023](#)). According to data from Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics and various

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national health surveys, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia has remained high in recent years ([Gani et al., 2021](#); [Hastuti, Hadju, Citrakesumasari, & Maddeppungeng, 2020](#)). In 2018, the prevalence of stunting in Indonesia reached around 30 percent, which means that around 30 percent of children under the age of five experienced stunted growth ([Patimah, 2021](#); [Rahman, Werenfridus, N.R, Ukhra, & M, 2021](#); [Wardoyo, Nurjazuli, & Darundiati, 2022](#)).

Stunting is a height problem and an indicator of chronic malnutrition that affects children's physical and cognitive development ([Sharma, Shastri, & Shastri, 2023](#); [Srivastava, Chandra, Singh, & Upadhyay, 2021](#)). Stunted children tend to have long-term health problems, including a high risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease in adulthood. One of the factors contributing to the high rate of stunting is inequality in economic growth and equitable access to food across the country. Although Indonesia has achieved significant economic progress, the differences between urban and rural areas and between provinces are still genuine regarding access to good nutrition ([Ayelign & Zerfu, 2021](#); [Mediani, Hendrawati, Pahria, Mediawati, & Suryani, 2022](#)). The following table compares stunting prevalence rates in rural and urban areas in 2020-2022.

Table 1. The comparison of stunting prevalence rates in rural and urban areas in 2020-2022

Year	Urban Areas	Rural Areas	All Areas
2020	24,6	30,8	27,7
2021	20,5	28,3	24,4
2022	15,4	27,8	21,6

Source: Nutritional Status Survey Results Indonesia (SSGI) 2020-2022

The availability of poor sanitation and limited access to clean water are also factors affecting high stunting. Repeated infections due to poor sanitation can stunt a child's growth. Lack of knowledge about good nutrition and healthy diet in the community is also essential in stunting cases. Low levels of knowledge about the importance of nutrition during pregnancy, breastfeeding, and early childhood life can affect nutritional practices in households ([Oumer et al., 2022](#); [Tadesse & Mekonnen, 2020](#))

Rural areas in Indonesia are the main focus because stunting rates are often higher than in urban areas. One of the main challenges in overcoming stunting is changing people's behavior related to nutrition and diet. This involves effective public outreach, education, and communication, which requires well-trained public health cadres ([Fahmida, Pramesthi, Kusuma, Wurjandaru, & Izwardy, 2022](#); [Hijrawati et al., 2021](#); [Liem, Panggabean, & Farady, 2019](#); [Ruaida, 2018](#)).

Based on data from the South Konawe Regency Health Office at the end of 2022, of the number of infants and toddlers in South Konawe Regency as many as 25,395 people, there are 7.187 stunting cases throughout 2022, with 2.895 of them being stunting cases due to malnutrition. Mowila district has the most stunting cases, with 187 stunting cases or 27.54 percent of the infant and toddler population of 679 people ([Dinas Kesehatan Konawe Selatan, 2022](#); [Nurtin, 2022](#)).

This indicates that some rural areas in South Konawe Regency still face various limitations in accessing adequate health facilities and nutritious food ([Nofitasari, Israeli, & Yusnayanti, 2021](#)). Less productive agriculture, uneven distribution, and lack of food variety can result in a shortage

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of nutritious food. Rural communities tend to eat a less balanced diet in terms of nutrition by consuming more carbohydrates or staple foods and getting less protein, vitamins, and minerals that are essential for the optimal growth and development of infants and toddlers ([Hartarto et al., 2023](#); [Nisa, Arisandi, Ibrahim, & Hardian, 2023](#)).

Health communication training for public health cadres is essential because they are key agents in disseminating appropriate nutrition messages to rural communities ([Howe & Cionea, 2021](#)). However, often, health cadres do not have a deep understanding of effective health communication, the use of social media in delivering health messages, or how to understand the local cultural context in nutrition outreach ([Yun Lee et al., 2022](#)). In addition, with the development of information technology and broader access to social media, there is an excellent opportunity to utilize this platform to disseminate nutritional information ([Clair et al., 2018](#)).

However, health cadres must understand social media use and modern communication techniques to do so effectively. Another aspect of the high number of stunting cases in Indonesia is the psychosocial aspect of people's nutritional behavior. Rural communities often face social, economic, and cultural pressures that can affect their diet. Therefore, health cadres need to understand how to overcome these barriers and provide psychosocial support to the community. In this context, increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of health cadres in designing and implementing effective health communication campaigns will have a positive impact on changing the nutritional behavior of rural communities and ultimately is expected to help reduce the number of stunting cases in Indonesia ([Hartarto et al., 2023](#)).

Improving the communication skills of public health cadres has the potential to have an impact in the long run. With health cadres who have good communication skills, rural communities can continuously receive appropriate nutritional information, and this is an essential step in addressing stunting sustainably and ensuring optimal growth for future generations in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze the communication capacity of public health cadres in designing and implementing effective health communication campaigns and their impact on changing the nutritional behavior of rural communities and helping to reduce the number of stunting cases in Indonesia.

METHOD

The qualitative research methodology employed in this study necessitates a thorough explanation of the data analysis techniques utilized ([Creswell, 2017](#); [Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). The data collected through in-depth interviews with public health cadres in Mowila District were subjected to systematic analysis ([Denzin & Lincoln, 2017](#); [Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020](#)). This involved a process of coding, categorization, and thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, emerging themes, and insightful perspectives regarding health communication strategies. Utilizing software tools such as NVivo or manually coding the transcripts facilitated the organization and interpretation of the qualitative data, ensuring a rigorous analytical process ([Dalkin, Forster, Hodgson, Lhussier, & Carr, 2021](#); [Edwards-Jones, 2014](#)).

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Data validity concerns the accuracy and credibility of the research findings, ensuring that the study accurately reflects the phenomena under investigation. In this study, several measures were implemented to enhance the validity of the data. Firstly, employing member checking, whereby participants were allowed to review and confirm the accuracy of their statements, contributed to the validation of the findings. Additionally, triangulation of data sources, including multiple perspectives from different public health cadres, further strengthened the validity by corroborating the consistency of the findings across various sources. Moreover, prolonged engagement in the field, establishing rapport with participants, and maintaining detailed field notes helped mitigate potential biases and enhance the credibility of the study findings ([Kolb, 2012; Yin, 2012](#)).

Data reliability refers to the consistency and replicability of the research outcomes, ensuring that other researchers can trust and replicate the study results. A detailed description of the research methodology, including the sampling procedure, data collection techniques, and analytical procedures, was provided to enhance reliability. Moreover, adhering to established protocols and standards in qualitative research, such as maintaining consistency in data collection procedures and employing a systematic approach to data analysis, contributed to the reliability of the study findings. Additionally, using direct quotations from participants and transparent reporting of the research process facilitated the evaluation of the study's reliability by external reviewers ([Arief & Muthmainnah, 2022; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017](#)).

This study implemented a robust methodological approach incorporating systematic data analysis techniques, stringent measures to ensure data validity, and efforts to enhance data reliability. These methodological considerations are essential for establishing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, thereby contributing to advancing knowledge in health communication strategies and community nutrition behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The increasing prevalence of stunting cases in infants and toddlers in countries with tropical climates, such as Indonesia, requires deep attention. Various complex and often interrelated factors play a significant role in this problem. A typical tropical climate, characterized by high humidity and stable temperatures throughout the year, affects various aspects of life, including food availability, sanitation, and overall health. The tropical climate favors the growth and spread of specific pathogens and diseases, contributing to stunting. High humidity and stable temperatures make a suitable environment for the growth of disease-causing microorganisms, such as bacteria and fungi. Frequent infections in children in this environment can interfere with nutrient absorption and cause losses in child growth.

Aspects of tropical climates, such as heavy rainfall, can affect agriculture directly or indirectly. Although Indonesia has abundant natural resources, uneven rainfall patterns can result in problems in agriculture, especially in rural areas. The uncertainty of the seasons and the possibility of droughts or floods can disrupt agricultural production, affecting the availability of nutritious food necessary for growing children. In addition, challenges in providing access to clean water and proper sanitation are essential factors related to the tropical climate. Although Indonesia has

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abundant water resources, equitable distribution of clean water is still a problem in some regions. Poor sanitary conditions in some areas, especially in rural environments, can spread infectious diseases, contributing to stunting.

Unbalanced food distribution and lack of awareness of the importance of balanced nutrition can be related to a less varied diet, and lack of knowledge about the nutritional value of certain foods can be a significant factor in cases of stunting. The lack of diversity of nutritious foods that infants and toddlers consume, especially in rural areas, can be a severe health concern. Although the tropical climate provides a fertile environment for many crops and other agricultural produce, inadequate nutrition education can be a severe problem. Lack of understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition in society, especially in rural areas, can result in inadequate nutrition practices for infants and toddlers.

The understanding and perception of rural communities towards healthy nutrition behavior and the increase in the prevalence of stunting cases play a crucial role in efforts to change community nutrition behavior and reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in the South Konawe Regency. The views of rural communities in South Konawe Regency towards healthy nutrition behavior tend to be influenced by cultural factors and environmental conditions. Some people's perceptions regarding nutrition are related to traditional beliefs, which may influence their diet and choice of the type of food they consume. For example, inherent customs can hinder receiving new information related to healthier dietary changes.

In addition, economic conditions also have a significant influence on public perception related to healthy nutrition. Rural communities with economic limitations may face constraints in obtaining adequate nutritious food, affecting their understanding of nutrition and healthy diets. In addition, the level of education also plays a vital role in their understanding of the importance of nutrition and a good diet.

The increasing prevalence of stunting cases in South Konawe Regency affects people's views regarding healthy nutritional behavior. People feel confused or unsure about appropriate measures to prevent stunting, especially if the information received is limited or poorly targeted. This view can also be influenced by social stigma related to health problems and lack of access to adequate health services, causing complexity in public perceptions related to healthy nutrition behavior and stunting in the South Konawe Regency.

This requires a communication approach based on understanding the local contextual and cultural culture. Communication strategies must be able to reach people with languages and methods that suit their needs and preferences. A participatory approach involving local community health cadres and community leaders is needed to build mutual understanding and gain support in changing healthy nutrition behavior to reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in Mowila District.

Public health cadres play a crucial role in changing healthy nutrition behavior and reducing the prevalence of stunting cases in the South Konawe Regency. The role of health cadres in responding to this challenge is as information conveyors and agents of change who can influence people's mindsets and behaviors. Health cadres have broad access and closeness to the local community. They act as important intermediaries between health information and the public so that they can

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provide relevant and trusted information. In this case, health cadres can convey information about the importance of healthy nutrition and how to apply the proper diet more easily understood by the local community.

Health cadres are also able to build strong relationships with the community. They convey information and can act as supporters, good listeners, and guides in understanding the importance of healthy nutrition. By understanding the social and cultural context of the community, health cadres can tailor health messages in a way appropriate to local values and customs, increasing the receptivity of information. In addition, public health cadres have an essential role in counseling and education. They can organize focused outreach activities, such as small group meetings, demonstrations of good nutrition practices, or other community activities. By involving the community in these activities, health cadres can help the community practice healthy nutritional behaviors directly in their daily lives.

Health cadres also support local governments and relevant health institutions in formulating more effective policies and intervention programs. With their field experience, health cadres can provide valuable input in planning and implementing targeted and sustainable public health programs. Through a communication approach, health cadres can become good role models for the community. Practicing healthy nutritional behaviors personally can set a strong example for the surrounding community. Health cadres can help motivate people to adopt a healthier diet through an inspiring and educational approach.

Public health cadres have an essential role in monitoring and evaluating the impact of these efforts. Through regular monitoring and evaluation of health programs, health cadres can help assess the effectiveness of interventions undertaken and make necessary changes to improve expected outcomes. By carrying out their roles well, public health cadres in South Konawe Regency have great potential to support efforts to change healthy nutritional behavior and reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in the community. Within the framework of this effort, health communication strategies based on local knowledge, sustainability, and active community participation are essential.

To support changes in community behavior and reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in South Konawe Regency, public health cadres use eight steps of health communication strategies, consisting of: (1) Health Counseling and Education; (2) demonstration of healthy nutrition practices; (3) Community Activities and Discussion Groups; (4) Dissemination of health education materials; (5) Utilization of Social Media and Messaging Applications; (6) Routine Health Training; (7) Partnerships with Related Parties; and (8) Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation. Furthermore, each step of the health communication strategy implemented by public health cadres in South Konawe Regency will be discussed.

1. Health Counseling and Education

They were conducting regular counseling programs in various locations in the South Konawe Regency, such as villages, schools, posyandu, and local communities. Focus on healthy nutrition information, the nutritional value of local foods, and the importance of a balanced diet for children's growth. Counseling locations include Village Halls, Primary and Secondary Schools,

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Posyandu, and Local Communities, such as Majelis Taklim, Recitation Groups, Youth Mosque Activists, Karang Taruna, and Arisan Groups. The material presented included Healthy Nutrition Information, the Nutritional Value of Local Food, and the Importance of a Balanced Diet for Infants and Toddlers.

2. Demonstration of Healthy Nutrition Practices

Host live demonstrations on how to cook nutritious meals, process local food into nutritious dishes and select and prepare healthy and affordable meals.

3. Community Activities and Discussion Groups:

Encourage forming discussion groups or small communities that discuss nutrition and health topics. Facilitate discussions on nutritional behavior change, exchange experiences, and support mutual motivation in adopting a healthy diet.

4. Creative Educational Materials:

Create engaging and easy-to-understand educational materials, such as leaflets, brochures, short videos, posters, and infographic materials that emphasize the nutritional value of local food and the positive impact of a healthy diet.

5. Social Media and Technology:

Utilizing social media to disseminate healthy nutrition information to the public. Share educational content about healthy food recipes, cooking tips, and nutritional information through online platforms popular in the region.

6. Training for Health Cadres:

Conduct regular training for health cadres on effective communication techniques, nutritional approaches relevant to local culture, and conveying information in an exciting and easy-to-understand way.

7. Partnership with Related Parties:

Develop partnerships with local governments, educational institutions, community health centers, and non-governmental organizations to support healthy nutrition programs. This collaboration can expand its reach and gain more comprehensive support.

8. Periodic Monitoring and Evaluation:

Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the communication strategy carried out. Measure impact, improve weaknesses, and identify areas that need improvement to improve program effectiveness.

By implementing this strategy in a planned and sustainable manner, community health cadres in South Konawe Regency can play an active role in changing community nutrition behavior and reducing the prevalence of stunting cases in South Konawe Regency. This approach considers local needs and contexts and combines various effective health communication methods to change people's nutritional behavior and reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in Mowila District. The

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following table provides a structured overview of the main findings from in-depth interviews regarding the role of health cadres' health communication in reducing stunting cases in the South Konawe Regency, highlighting categories, themes, and conclusions.

Table 2. Structured Overview of The Key Findings Regarding Health Cadres' Health Communication in Reducing Stunting Cases in South Konawe Regency

Categories	Themes	Conclusion
Factors Contributing to Stunting Prevalence	Tropical Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tropical climates, characterized by high humidity and stable temperatures, facilitate the growth and spread of disease-causing microorganisms, contributing to stunting. - Uncertain rainfall patterns in tropical climates pose challenges to agriculture, disrupting food production and availability. - Poor sanitation and limited access to clean water exacerbate infectious diseases, further contributing to stunting.
	Unbalanced Food Distribution and Lack of Nutrition Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited access to diverse and nutritious foods and a lack of awareness regarding balanced nutrition results in inadequate dietary practices, contributing to stunting prevalence. - Insufficient nutrition education in rural areas hampers efforts to promote healthier dietary habits among infants and toddlers.
Rural Community Perceptions and Challenges	Cultural and Environmental Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural community perceptions of healthy nutrition are influenced by cultural beliefs and environmental conditions, impacting dietary choices and nutritional practices. - Economic constraints hinder access to nutritious food and influence perceptions of healthy nutrition among rural communities. - Education levels influence understanding and adopting healthy

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		<p>dietary habits, shaping nutritional behaviors in rural settings.</p>
	<p>Confusion and Uncertainty Surrounding Nutrition Behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The increasing prevalence of stunting cases fosters confusion and uncertainty regarding effective measures to prevent stunting, exacerbated by limited and poorly targeted information. - Social stigma and inadequate access to healthcare services compound complexities in addressing stunting and promoting healthy nutrition behavior in South Konawe Regency.
<p>Health Cadres' Role and Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication Strategies and Approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public health cadres serve as pivotal agents of change in promoting healthy nutrition and reducing stunting prevalence, employing communication strategies tailored to local contexts and cultural sensitivities. - Health cadres employ various communication methods, including counseling, demonstrations, and community activities, to disseminate nutritional information effectively and foster behavior change.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building Relationships and Community Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health cadres cultivate strong relationships within communities, fostering trust and rapport while serving as supportive resources and guides in promoting healthy nutrition. - By understanding local contexts and values, health cadres tailor health messages to resonate with community members, enhancing receptivity and fostering behavior change.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboration and Policy Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health cadres collaborate with local governments and health institutions to develop and implement targeted public health interventions, leveraging their field experience to

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		<p>inform policy formulation and program implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Through partnerships and advocacy efforts, health cadres amplify the reach and impact of health communication initiatives, advocating for sustainable solutions to address stunting prevalence in South Konawe Regency.
Health Communication Strategies Implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Implementation Steps and Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public health cadres employ a comprehensive health communication strategy consisting of various steps and techniques, including counseling, demonstrations, community activities, and social media utilization, to disseminate nutritional information effectively and promote behavior change.- Routine monitoring and evaluation ensure the effectiveness and adaptability of communication efforts, facilitating continuous improvement and sustainable impact.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Innovation Diffusion and Social Learning Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Health cadres employ innovation diffusion strategies and principles of social learning theory to facilitate behavior change and health literacy among community members, utilizing demonstrations and discussion groups to promote healthy nutrition practices and foster community engagement.- Through innovative approaches and community involvement, health cadres enhance public understanding of healthy nutrition, reducing stunting prevalence in Mowila District.

Source: Research data processing results (2024)

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Through routine counseling programs, health cadres adopt an innovation dissemination model by conveying information on healthy nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet to the community in Mowila District. Health cadres integrate new information about healthy nutrition into the community using an innovation diffusion approach. Using location variations for an extension can help reach the stages of innovation diffusion, from *early adopters* to *the majority*.

In the context of routine counseling programs in Mowila District, health cadres have implemented innovative diffusion strategies in conveying information about healthy nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet to the community. The concept of innovation diffusion is an approach that describes how an idea or innovation spreads in a population or society.

In this approach, health cadres serve as agents of change who disseminate up-to-date information on healthy nutrition, introduce better dietary habits, and provide a better understanding of the importance of nutrition for children's growth and development. Through regular outreach programs, they seek to integrate this new information into people's mindsets and practices.

The use of various locations for counseling, such as in villages, schools, posyandu, and local communities, is essential in reaching the diffusion stage of innovation. The stages of innovation diffusion include various categories of individuals in society, ranging from *early adopters*, *early majority*, and *late majority* to *laggards*. By delivering information in different locations, health cadres can reach diverse groups of people, influencing their thinking and actions regarding healthy nutrition.

Early adopters usually receive information more quickly and are ready to adopt change, while most take longer to accept the idea or innovation. By covering various locations in the counseling program, health cadres can accelerate the diffusion of innovation, leading the community towards a more comprehensive understanding and acceptance of the importance of healthy nutrition and a balanced diet to reduce the prevalence of stunting cases in Mowila District.

Public health cadres have also indirectly implemented Social Learning Theory through demonstrations of healthy nutrition practices and community activities such as purposeful discussion groups to improve health literacy in the community. Social Learning Theory emphasizes the importance of observation, imitation, and motivation in behavioral learning. Through demonstrations of healthy nutrition practices, communities can learn from first-hand experience, and through community activities, they can give each other support and motivation to adopt behavior change.

In implementing healthy nutrition practice demonstration strategies and community activities such as discussion groups, public health cadres are directed to the principles of Social Learning Theory. This theory emphasizes the importance of observation, imitation, and motivation in behavioral learning.

Through demonstrations of healthy nutrition practices, health cadres provide direct examples to the community on implementing a healthy and nutritious diet. This approach allows people to learn through direct experience. By seeing and following the example given by health cadres, they can observe and understand the proper way to prepare, cook, and consume foods with good nutritional value.

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Community activities such as discussion groups are crucial to applying Social Learning Theory. Through this group, people can share information, experiences, and motivations. Discussions about the importance of healthy nutrition and a balanced diet can be a platform that builds shared knowledge and supports each other in efforts to improve eating behavior.

Social Learning Theory emphasizes that individuals learn from what they observe and pay attention to around them. Through demonstrations of healthy nutrition practices, people can observe and practice directly the desired behavior. When individuals see excellent and practical examples from health cadres, they tend to imitate or follow those behaviors. In addition, motivation becomes a critical factor in behavioral learning. Community activities, support, and motivation from other individuals in the group can increase the intention and desire to adopt healthier behavior changes. By applying the principles of Social Learning Theory, public health cadres can expand public understanding related to healthy nutrition and good diet. They assist in facilitating behavior change by providing direct examples, motivating, and building health literacy among the people of Mowila District.

CONCLUSION

Lack of public understanding of balanced nutrition and proper nutritional needs leads to inadequate nutrition practices, especially in rural areas. Traditional beliefs, economic conditions, and education levels influence people's views regarding healthy nutrition. Some aspects, such as customs and economic limitations, can hinder receiving new information about healthier dietary changes.

Health cadres act as agents of change who convey information and influence people's mindsets and behaviors related to healthy nutrition. They can change how society perceives and acts towards the health aspects of nutrition, thus leading to the adoption of healthier nutritional behaviors. Through an approach following local values and customs, health cadres can adapt health messages to the cultural context and customs in the community. This is very important because it allows those messages to be better received by society, making them more likely to be adopted in everyday life.

The purpose of the public health cadre health communication strategy is to help change people's behavior related to nutrition to be healthier. Public health cadres not only provide information but also seek to influence people's decisions and actions regarding better diet and nutrition. Health cadres actively guide, set an example, and support communities adopting healthier nutrition practices. They strive to make those changes into something that is easily understood, accepted, and implemented by the community.

To reduce the prevalence of stunting in Mowila District, the role of public health cadres is vital in implementing intervention strategies. They act as effective intermediaries between health and public information, conduct planned nutrition education, and provide a thorough understanding of the importance of balanced nutrition for children's growth. Through communication approaches appropriate to the local cultural context, health cadres encourage behavior change in a way that is easily understood and accepted by the community. They inform and build strong

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relationships with communities, set an example, and provide support and motivation to adopt healthier nutrition practices. Thus, health cadres become the leading agents in changing people's understanding and behavior related to healthy nutrition to reduce stunting prevalence in Mowila District, showing the significance of its role in the context of efforts to improve public health.

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