

Factors Influencing the Role of Religious Leaders in the Process Accelerate Stunting Response in East Nusa Tenggara Province

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ABSTRACT

Background: Stunting was the impact of chronic malnutrition in the long term and has an impact on children's growth and development disorders. Stunting has become a priority for the Indonesian government, including in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara with a stunting reduction target of 14% in 2024. The Indonesian governments have made many efforts to overcome stunting. Religious leaders are parties suspected of being able to play a role in the process. This study was aimed to determine the factors that influence the role of religious leaders in supporting the process of accelerating stunting reduction in the dry land area in East Nusa Tenggara.

Subjects and Method: This was a mixed-method study. This study was conducted in May 2022 using the focus group discussion (FGD) method and involved 13 religious leaders who were taken purposively. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively (making interview transcripts) and quantitatively. The independent variables were level of understanding about stunting, support for policies/programs related to stunting, stunting program budget support, national program support: CATIN facilitation, and cross-sectoral cooperation support. The statistical analysis used is multiple logistic regression analysis.

Results: Factors that significantly influence the role of religious leaders are the level of understanding of religious leaders about stunting (aOR= 3.50; 95% CI= 0.12 to 12.3; p= 0.010) and support factors for cross-sectoral cooperation (aOR= 2.00; 95% CI= 1.22 to 21.10; p= 0.007). Budget support for stunting related policies/ program (aOR= 2.40; 95% CI= 1.76 to 12.32; p= 0.621), support policy/ program related to stunting (aOR= 1.70; 95% CI= 1.27 to 7.32; p= 0.387), and national program, support "CATIN Mentoring" (aOR= 1.10; 95% CI= 0.37 to 21.02; p= 0.621) were statistically non-significant.

Conclusion: Factors that influence the role of religious leaders were the level of understanding of religious leaders about stunting, support factors for cross-sectoral cooperation, budget support for stunting related policies, support policy related to stunting national program, and support "CATIN Mentoring".

Keywords: the role of religious leaders, acceleration of stunting prevention, chronic malnutrition.

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BACKGROUND

The Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is an archipelagic province with 1,192 Islands, 432 islands with names and 44 inhabited islands. BPS (2021) explains that large inhabited islands are commonly referred to as Flobamorata (Flores, Sumba, Timor, Alor, and Lembata). Regions in NTT have varying temperatures. In general, the NTT area is classified as hot with an average temperature between 27-28°C. Meanwhile, the rainy season is very limited, where the average NTT area has recorded rainfall between 600-4800 mm³. This condition is very burdensome for farmers with horticulture and secondary crops. This certainly affects the level of household food security which ultimately has an impact on the problem of malnutrition.

BPS data for 2021 explains that the majority of the population of NTT Province (53.32%) work in the agricultural sector. If it is associated with weather conditions with a very limited rainy season, it will certainly have the opportunity to experience crop failure due to lack of water sources. Furthermore, it was also explained that the results of the analysis from the economic side, it was known that the agricultural sector contributed very lowly, namely 28.89 percent of the Gross Regional Average (GDP) at the Current Prices of the Province of NTT. Therefore, this area is also known as an archipelagic dry land area which has various limitations, including in the health aspect. This is characterized by several infectious infectious diseases that often become seasonal and are incidental or Extraordinary Events (KLB). The incidence of worms incident in school children

reached 90% in 2019 in the Sumba Islands, the incidence of malaria is still high in the Sumba area (there is a malaria elimination program). However, as time changes and the development of science and technology, the prevalence of this health problem can be suppressed. But on the other hand, a new problem arises, namely the problem of malnutrition, especially the problem of stunting.

NTT Province in the past 15 years (2007-2021) has contributed to the highest stunting toddler rate in Indonesia (Risksdas 2007 - 2018 and e_PPGBM 2019-2021). However, the data from the Basic Health Research (RISKESDAS) shows that the stunting problem in NTT from 2013-2018 has decreased in prevalence from 51.7% (2013) to 42.6% (2018).^{3,4} Then, based on data sources the e_PPGBM application in 2019-2021 also shows the same downward trend where 30.1% (2019) to 20.9% in 2021. However, the prevalence rate is still above the national and WHO prevalence threshold of 20%. The problem of malnutrition can be influenced by many things. Thus, the countermeasures must involve many sectors. The central and regional governments have made many efforts to overcome this problem. Religious leaders are parties suspected of being able to play a role in the process. However, until now there has not been much research related to the role of religious leaders and has not been widely published. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of knowing the factors that influence the role of religious leaders in the process of accelerating stunting prevention in East Nusa Tenggara Province.

SUBJECTS AND METHOD

1. Study Design

This research is quantitative descriptive research with a cross-sectional study design for four (4) months, namely May – August 2022 in 22 districts/cities of NTT Province.

2. Population and Samples

The population of this study were all religious leaders in the province of NTT. Meanwhile, the sample consisted of 13 samples of religious leaders who were selected by purposive sampling from districts and cities with the following conditions:

The inclusion criteria were responsible as coordinator of five (5) religious groups in the three (3) largest regencies/islands in NTT, city and province areas; In good condition; Have been exposed to information related to stunting, and Ready to be an informant.

The Exclusion criteria were religious leaders but not as coordinators of five (5) religious groups in the three (3) largest regencies/islands in NTT, cities and provinces; Not in good health; Never been exposed to information related to stunting, and Ready to be an informant.

3. Study Variable

The types of primary data which are also independent variables collected are the level of understanding of religious leaders about stunting, support for policies/programs related to stunting, budget support for stunting program financing, support for national programs related to CATIN assistance, and support for cross-sectoral collaboration as well as data on the role of religious leaders as well as variables dependent.

4. Operational Definition of Variables

Role of religious leaders was religious leaders play an active role in planning and monitoring (evaluating and monitoring) stunting-related program.

Level of understanding on stunting was religious leaders understand very well

about stunting, and give more than 80% correct answers.

Program support related to stunting was every religious figure in their service area has a stunting prevention program and has implemented it well.

Budget support for stunting program implementation was all planned programs are fully supported with the appropriate amount of budget.

National program support on "CAT-IN" mentoring was religious leaders plan and oversee the implementation of the CATIN (Bride and Groom Candidate) mentoring program

Support for cross-sectoral cooperation was religious leaders in the implementation of service programs. Together with related sectors (government and non-government).

5. Study Instrument

The data of this study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from the results of discussions through the FGD method using FGD guidelines and keynote talks with informants.

6. Data Analysis

Univariate analysis was carried out to see the frequency distribution and characteristics of the research subjects, while bivariate and multivariate analysis was carried out using chi square test and multiple logistic regression with odds ratio (OR) calculation with 95% confidence level (CI) to study the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

7. Research Ethics

This research has been through a due diligence process by the Health Research Ethics Commission, Faculty of Medicine, University of Nusa Cendana with the number SK: 15/UN15.16/KEPK/2022 and was declared eligible on April 8, 2022. And the Ethics Review Registration Number: UN02220313

RESULTS

Religious figures are figures who play a very important role in making decisions about the life of every people within the scope of their ministry. The results of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activity revealed that 72.7% of religious leaders already understand about stunting. Statistical analysis shows that most of the religious leaders in

areas with increasing prevalence already understand about stunting (77.8%) and there is support from across sectors (87.5%). On the other hand, there are still some religious leaders in the region who experienced a decline in stunting prevalence who do not understand stunting (50%) and receive support for cross-sectoral cooperation (66.7%).

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Stunting Prevalence	Poor	8	72.7
	Good	3	27.3
Level of Understanding of Stunting	Not	2	18.2
	Yes	9	81.8
Support Policy/ Program related to Stunting	Not	5	45.5
	Yes	6	54.5
Budget Support for Stunting Related Policies/ Programs	Not	6	54.5
	Yes	5	45.5
National Program Support "CATIN Mentoring"	Not	6	54.5
	Yes	5	45.5
Cross-sector cooperation support	Not	3	27.3
	Yes	8	72.7

Table 2. Factors related to the Role of Religious Leaders in Accelerating Stunting Reduction in NTT Province

Variable	Role of Religious Leaders in Accelerating Stunting Reduction				OR	p
	Stunting Prevalence Rising (Poor)		Stunting Prevalence Down (Good)			
	N	%	N	%		
TPS						
Do not understand	1	50.0	1	50.0	3.50	0.010
Understand	7	77.8	2	22.2		
DKP						
Not	1	50.0	1	50.0	1.70	0.387
Yes	7	77.8	2	22.2		
DAP						
Not	4	66.7	2	33.3	2.40	0.621
Yes	4	80.0	1	20.0		
CATIN						
Not	4	66.7	2	33.3	1.10	0.621
Yes	4	80.0	1	20.0		
DSS						
Not	1	33.3	2	66.7	2.00	0.007
Yes	7	87.5	1	14.3		

Table 1 shows that the prevalence of stunting in an area is strongly related to the level of knowledge or understanding of religious leaders about stunting (OR= 3.5; 95% CI: 0.12 to 12.3; p= 0.010) and the support factor for cross-sectoral cooperation (OR=

2.0; 95% CI: 1.2 to 21.1; p= 0.007). The Odd Ratio (OR) value means that the risk of stunting in each service area of religious leaders is closely related to the level of knowledge or understanding of religious leaders about stunting with a risk of 3.5

times greater than religious leaders who understand stunting and the factors of religious leaders who understand stunting. do not receive support for cross-sectoral

cooperation with a risk 2 times greater than that of religious leaders who receive support for cross-sectoral cooperation in each service area of religious leaders.

Table 3. The result of multiple logistic regression analysis

Independent Variables	OR	95% CI		P
		Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
TPS	3.50	0.12	12,3	0.010
DKP	1.70	1.27	7.32	0.387
DAP	2.40	1.76	12.32	0.621
CATIN	1.10	0.37	21.02	0.621
DSS	2.00	1.22	21.10	0.007

N observation= 11
 -2 log likelihood= 25.78
 Nagelkerke R² = 39%

Information:
 TPS: Level of Understanding of Stunting
 DKP: Support Policy/Program related to Stunting
 DAP: Budget Support for Stunting Related Policies/Programs
 CATIN: National Program Support "CATIN Mentoring"
 DSS: Cross-sector cooperation support

The support of religious leaders is an important part of the aspect of the role of local culture in the process of accelerating stunting reduction. The mathematical model obtained from this study shows that the level of knowledge or understanding of religious

leaders about stunting and the support factor of cross-sectoral cooperation in each service area of religious leaders both have an effect of 97.3% on the incidence of stunting (Figure 1).

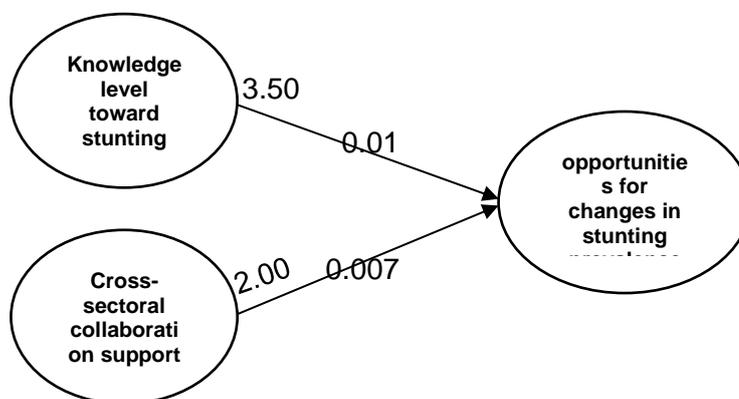


Figure 1. Support model of religious leaders in contributing to stunting decrease acceleration

DISCUSSION

The concept of role comes from the basic word "role". Roles have meanings, namely a number of behaviors that are owned by people who are domiciled (called figures) in society (Big Indonesian Dictionary, 2021). It is further explained that the role is defined

as an action taken by a person (leader) in an event. This means that the role of religious leaders is to create changes in community behavior or behavior that are interrelated in a certain situation and related to the progress of changes in people's behavior. Thus, religious leaders have an important role in

changing people's behavior related to the problem of stunting.

Religious leaders have credibility with their people. Status communication skills, power of persuasion, and the ability to be aware of individual health and nutrition through exposure to religious texts can make people aware of healthy lifestyle changes (Ansel and Smith, 2014). Therefore, religious leaders can be effective agents of behavior change. The broad scope and active activities of religious leaders mobilize their followers to take and spread religious narratives that carry messages, values, and social norms that can provide information about stunting and how to prevent it. Although religious leaders have influence on many people, their ability to convey nutritional information is a big challenge, therefore, training and media are needed to help them spread the health message (Bwekembe, 2019).

This is in accordance with the results of the study which showed that the increase or decrease in the prevalence of stunting in each service area was largely determined ($p < 0.05$) by the level of understanding of a religious figure about stunting. These results are reinforced by the results of focused discussions (FGD) with 11 religious leaders, it is known that most (81.8%) religious leaders already understand about stunting. Following are the statements of the following informants:

"...I have heard of the term stunting and frankly, stunting prevention activities are either initiated by the province of NTT... from what NGOs,... besides that we also have an MoU with representatives of the BKKBN of the NTT province, the MoU was carried out in March or April this year (2022)...."(Buddhist religious figures)

I've heard of it. Even in a kind of GBHN GMIT for one period, stunting is a strategic program carried out by synods and

congregations which is broken down into an annual program....."(Christian religious figures)

"...I hear the word stunting quite often, starting about 1 year ago through the mass media. And 1 month ago (May 2022) there was also a stunting meeting with the health office.....(Hindu religious leaders)

"..I've heard the word stunting, I heard it 2 years ago.....(Islamic religious leaders)

" So information about stunting was first heard through the media (Pos Kupang and for the national from Kompas magazine). Information about stunting was also heard from public officials, such as the Governor, Mayor and also especially from the Sermon and several times information from His Excellency the Archbishop of Kupang....."(Catholic religious leader)

Setiawan and Sarbini (2020) also explained that religious leaders and community leaders were considered to be key in conveying information to the public, including the issue of stunting, which many Indonesians did not understand. Including, straightening the understanding or stigma (Culture/ Pemali) of the community in certain areas which still prohibit pregnant women from consuming animal protein foods such as fish and eggs and vegetable protein types such as nuts. Therefore, religious leaders in all forms of religious belief should be strengthened by increasing the level of understanding about stunting (Kemenkes RI. 2018).

In this study, all informants agreed that stunting is a health problem caused by various factors, including low maternal knowledge, low nutritional intake, repeated infections, poor PHBS and limited access to health services and lack of proper sanitation facilities. There are also those who argue that stunting is caused by cultural patterns that exist in society. Where, the community

is more concerned with the party than meeting the nutritional needs of the family and the family's difficult economic problems (poverty).

The results of this study are in line with the research of Neliwati et al (2022) which shows that the role of religious leaders is to convey knowledge according to the needs of the community, to invite and direct the community to do positive things, to improve the religious attitude of the community, to monitor the religious condition of the community, to hold religious activities, holding meetings of community leaders, guiding and directing the community, providing advice and direction and inviting the community to perform congregational prayers and other religious activities. This means that by increasing the knowledge or understanding of religious leaders about stunting, they can have an effect on the process of accelerating stunting reduction in accordance with their respective roles with the people or the community within the scope of their services. This is because the factors that hinder the role of religious leaders are when the community is less supportive in carrying out its role it is still very difficult because of the lack of economy of the community, the community does not appreciate the true meaning of religion, environmental habits are less religious, most of the people have low education, people farm in gardens. until a full day so that they pay less attention to matters related to religion and the lack of government assistance regarding funds to carry out religious activities (Neliwati et al., 2022; Kodish et al., 2015).

Poor health services in some areas and lack of access to health facilities as well as lack of knowledge and attention from parents to provide nutrition to children can be the cause of stunting. In general, religious leaders also argue that stunting is a health problem that needs to be addressed imme-

diately, because it cannot have an impact on health but also has a social/psychological and intellectual impact on the future of children. The impact of stunting according to the perspective of religious leaders, among others, can have a lifetime impact, children's intelligence is below average and children get sick easily so that they give birth to a weak generation and cannot compete. and a higher risk (Unicef, 2020). However, the informants' understanding that stunting can be prevented by fulfilling good nutritional intake, especially for toddlers and pregnant women, PHBS, training on nutritious pagan management for children. The results of the analysis show that the prevalence of stunting in an area is largely determined by the level of understanding of religious leaders (risk factor; OR: 3.5 (95% CI: 0.12 - 12.3). This is in accordance with the informant's statement as follows :

"It's definitely very important to overcome because NTT is one of the highest provinces and if we don't deal with this stunting problem quickly, the Indonesian people will not get the excess demographic bonus, because our children in the future will grow and develop stunted and less tall and may also be stunted. his brain to think is not the same as children in other regions or in other provinces that are better,...."(toga Budha)

"I see that stunting is important because it talks about normal children in preparing a generation with good resources in the future..." (Catholic religious leader)

"Stunting is very important, what will happen to the church in the future if we don't deal with it now... This is a humanitarian disaster, don't just talk about natural disasters. So this must be emphasized so that we fight together, whether it's in the church with the approach of priests, as previously said so that the church must collaborate with

various parties... because stunting is an important issue, it can't only be the government that works, it can't just be NGOs. working but the church is hierarchically from top to bottom, let's unite to solve the problem of stunting." (Catholic religious leader)

"Stunting really needs to be prevented because it will have an unfavorable impact on the region because it will give birth to a weak generation..." (Islamic religious leader)

"Very important....because it is closely related to the future of our generation..."(toga hindu)

"It's very important, because the impact or effect of stunting certainly creates an unqualified human resource, prone to illness, ... it will definitely have an effect on the next generation/continued effect, namely unhealthy parents will give birth to unhealthy children, unhealthy children will giving birth to unhealthy grandchildren and so on so that it becomes a chain cycle... if not prevented, this can lead to generation loss, a decrease in the quality of the nation's human resources...". (Hindu religious leader)

"This is important because this is a generational issue and the Bible says in Matthew 25:33 there is God's advice, a grand Christian program so that with stunting, handling must involve many parties and we the church can become the motor. This is very important because it concerns humanity...". (Christian religious leader)

"It is important that the value intervention becomes an intervention in the ministry's budget policy to help the congregation, it shows this issue is important even though this is not only the duty of the church, but the duty of the State, the duty of the government for a just and civilized humanity...". (Christian religious leader)

Local governments have made efforts to capture all opportunities for collaboration with various cross-sectors. One of them is collaboration with all religious leaders in the province of NTT. This is in accordance with the results of the study which showed that the support factors of other sectors can determine the prevalence of stunting in an area (OR= 2.00 (95% CI= 1.22 to 21.1; p< 0.05). This means that the support factor cross-sectoral collaboration is two (2) times greater risk in influencing stunting prevalence in an area.

The contribution of religious leaders in stunting prevention is very important. However, if supported by cross-sectoral collaboration, the service burden related to stunting will be easier. As for other programs or activities that have been carried out by each religious figure whose purpose is to assist the community in preventing and overcoming the stunting problem. Some of them are :

1. Buddhist figures

Implementing Buddhist community guidance, by providing socialization/ providing information by inviting resource persons who can provide information about the importance of stunting prevention and control. for socialization activities using a budget from the government in this case from the directorate general of Bimas Buddha. In addition, there are also social service activities from self-help Buddhists that aim to help the surrounding community. The following are some of the informants' statements:

"...providing socialization and information about the importance of preventing and handling stunting.... in Kupang Regency at a free medical event around 2018, while the new one was in Seroja last year, apart from helping the community...." funds from the government (directorate general bimas buddha) village government..."

2. Catholic Religious Leader

The program implemented by Catholic religious leaders in this case the Kupang Archdiocese is to create a family planning village

as a family model in collaboration with the BKKBN of East Nusa Tenggara Province. Another program is Agro Tourism as a lesson to improve the welfare of the community through agriculture and animal husbandry. In East Flores Regency, there is the Love Cart Program which emphasizes local food, so how to encourage people to consume local food. In 2021 the Love Cart Program succeeded in reducing the stunting rate. In this program they are. Here are some excerpts from informants' statements:

"...The Provincial BKKBN encourages that at least in Kupang Archdiocese there are one or two villages that will be used as family planning villages as pilots for the family to be given assistance, given reinforcement, animation to become a superior family that has family resilience both in terms of nutrition, economy and resources."

"...there is agro-tourism in which several divisions of organic agriculture are planted, there is fresh water fishery, animal husbandry, this is a learning tool. It also creates healthy human beings in the future and is welcomed by various agencies. Also in the villages planting corn is encouraged to improve the community's economy as well as the people's economy."

"...build good collaboration with the government, even friends who deal with stunting came and we discussed in my office. We build a discussion about how to overcome the problem of stunting. A very good program in East Flores is the Love Cart Program. In 2021 the Love Cart Program succeeded in reducing the stunting rate. In this program they emphasize local food so how to encourage people to consume local food."

3. Christian religious figures

Programs carried out by Christian Religious Leaders include the PPA Program in colla-

boration with PGI for children experiencing malnutrition, child-friendly church programs, non-violent churches, churches paying attention to their nutrition. There is the provision of green bean porridge by the Sunday school children's service and the adoption program for foster parents. In addition, religious leaders also build communication with the congregation to help people according to their respective fields. These programs are implemented with the support of partner churches, the government, NGOs, namely Save the Children and funds from the congregation's deacon service unit (internal congregation). Obstacles that are often found in program implementation are changing things that have been entrenched and the limited capacity of human resources and networks with the government are still limited. Here are some excerpts from informants' statements:

Financial support from partner churches, the government and NGOs, namely Save the Children...Funding support from the congregation's deacon service unit. It's still internal to the church."

"The obstacle is changing what has been entrenched. That's quite heavy. Second, the ability of human resources to capture good programs and is considered something that intervenes too deeply so that sometimes disobedience occurs because human resources have problems. There are some who don't want to be accompanied because they are considered to be interfering in their personal affairs...our network with the government is still limited."

4. Hindu religious figures

Programs run by Hindu religious leaders include social activities through providing assistance to Hindus, especially for those who are economically disadvantaged, providing education to the community through Dharmawacana every prayer activity and

religious events and establishing cooperation with the government in this case the BKKBN of the health department, especially in promotive activities, such as preparing videos on how to reduce stunting. Activities are carried out independently of Hindus. Social activities such as visits to orphanages cannot be carried out routinely because of the busyness of each individual so it is difficult to gather at all times, so waiting for certain moments such as holidays. Here are some excerpts from informants' statements:

"Our routine activities are to provide assistance to Hindus, especially those who lack in terms of economy, social assistance.... Yes... it has been implemented for a long time (Provision of social assistance packages)"

"Cooperation with the health office, especially in promotive activities, for example preparing videos on how to reduce stunting"

"The source of the funds comes from the self-help of the Hindus in Kupang City itself, so far there has been no assistance from other parties."

The results of the FGD discussion as a whole are in accordance with the results of the follow-up analysis, which shows that the level of understanding factors related to Stunting and Cross-Sectoral Cooperation Support have an effect of 97.33% on changes in stunting prevalence in NTT Province. This means that every religious figure who has a good level of knowledge about stunting can play a good role in integrating all government programs or the non-government sector appropriately with service programs or vice versa (Nismudin, 2017).

The research results of Imam Subqi et al. (2021) exemplify the role of Islamic religious leaders in combining government programs with service programs written in the Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 233, namely "God has ordered a mother to breastfeed her

child for up to two years." Social capital also requires the head of the family (father) to have the responsibility to be able to provide a living for the family such as giving proper clothes to their children. This means that religious leaders are really important partners in supporting government programs, namely: exclusive breastfeeding and breastfeeding only until the age of 23 months. The Al-Qur'an section ensures that a mother does not lack breast milk as a factor in the occurrence of stunting for children. In addition, local governments together with religious leaders through formal and non-formal forums can provide counseling about the importance of maintaining health starting from pregnancy so that children grow up healthily.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Intje Picauly as Chairperson in charge of compiling proposals, analyzing data, making reports and compiling article manuscripts, Anak Agung Ayu Mirah Adi as a representative preparing all research administrative documents (research permits), and supporting documents in data collection, Eflita Meiyetiani in charge of data analysis and writing manuscript, Majematang Mading, Pius Weraman, Siti Fadhilatun Nasriyah, Ahmad Thohir Hidayat, Daniela L. Adeline Boeky, Varry Lobo, Asmulyati S, and Jane A. Peni in charge of data collection. Bhisma Murti provides directions from proposal writing to data interpretation and publication.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest in this study.

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