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## Self-Help Group-Based Stunting Management: Study on the Volunteer Group for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention in Batu, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

*In several official reports published in 2019, it is reported that there will be a high number of stunting cases in Batu, East Java, Indonesia. This study aims to describe the volunteer model for accelerated stunting prevention, the self help group by Alfred Hyman Katz. The qualitative approach chosen in this study which are very necessary to reveal all aspects of Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention. Semi-structured interviews and observations through direct involvement in the activities of the five key actors. Data analysis was carried out by grouping interview data with research participants and interpreting the results of observations based on their sub-dimensions and then simplifying sentence quotations. The result reveal that SHG has simple organization and all resources are obtained from members' self-help or network assistance. The communication model is more flexible and informal. SHG conducts social-health advocacy and community empowerment and has a very wide network. This study can be an alternative solution in preventing stunting in other areas with the self help group model.*

**Keywords:** *Selfhelp group, stunting, social movements*

### ABSTRAK

Dalam beberapa laporan resmi yang diterbitkan pada tahun 2019, dilaporkan bahwa akan terdapat tingginya angka kasus stunting di Batu, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan model relawan percepatan pencegahan stunting yaitu self help group oleh Alfred Hyman Katz. Pendekatan kualitatif yang dipilih dalam penelitian ini sangat diperlukan untuk mengungkap seluruh aspek Relawan Percepatan Pencegahan Stunting. Wawancara dan observasi semi terstruktur melalui keterlibatan langsung dalam aktivitas lima aktor kunci. Analisis data dilakukan dengan mengelompokkan data wawancara kepada partisipan penelitian dan menginterpretasikan hasil observasi berdasarkan subdimensinya kemudian menyederhanakan kutipan kalimat. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa SHG memiliki organisasi yang sederhana dan seluruh sumber daya diperoleh dari swadaya anggota atau bantuan jaringan. Model komunikasinya lebih fleksibel dan informal. SHG melakukan advokasi kesehatan sosial dan pemberdayaan masyarakat serta memiliki jaringan yang sangat luas. Penelitian ini dapat menjadi alternatif solusi pencegahan stunting di daerah lain dengan model self help group.

**Kata Kunci:** Self help group, stunting, gerakan sosial

## INTRODUCTION

Self-Help Group - SHG is a phenomenon of community self-help movements in many countries and ethnic groups and has been adapted repeatedly by populations of different races or ethnicities (Lavoie & Gidron, 2016). Community self-help groups are nothing new in Indonesia. In Indonesia, there are 344,039 organizations recorded and 1980 organizations officially registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs (Polpum, 2019). Unfortunately, Alfred Hyman Katz's (Katz, 1981) SHG concept is very different from the self-help groups or mass organizations known to Indonesian society. The SHG concept, as proposed by Alfred Hyman Katz (1981), is becoming increasingly important in various aspects of community development, including efforts to overcome stunting.

Self Help Group is a small, voluntary group structure to help each other and achieve specific goals. They are usually formed by a group of peers who come together to help each other meet common needs, overcome common obstacles or problems that interfere with life, and bring about desired social and/or personal changes. The initiators and members of these groups feel that their needs are not, or cannot be, met by or through existing social institutions. Self-help groups emphasize face-to-face social interaction and support. (Katz, 1981)

Scientific studies that specifically examine the SHG concept in Alfred Katz's view are still very limited. Some of the research that has been conducted in Indonesia regarding SHGs focuses more on the concept of SHGs as support counseling groups, with a focus on the psychosocial aspects and emotional support provided by the group to its individual members (Fagan, Quinn-Gates, Rebsso, & Cromie, 2021; Fauk, Gesesew, Mwanri, Hawke, & Ward, 2022; McGovern, Addison, & McGovern, 2021). On the other hand, there is research that places more emphasis on mass organizations (ormas) which have different conceptual characteristics from Katz's SHG concept. This conceptual difference lies in the role played by each type of group in society. Katz SHGs, with their conceptual roots in self-empowerment and personal growth, tend to provide support based on individual development and self-understanding (Katz, 1981). Mass organizations are often more focused on specific social or political goals, which may have a wider impact in society, but do not always focus on individual self-development (Chan et al., 2020; Jakob, Flachslan, Christoph Steckel, & Urpelainen, 2020; Toepler, Zimmer, Fröhlich, & Obuch, 2020).

One area in Indonesia that faces serious challenges in terms of stunting is Batu, East Java. In East Java in 2019 the figure was 26.85% and Batu was the area with the highest number of stunting cases, reaching 24.5% (Zahro, 2019). The stunting rate in this city has reached an alarming level, with serious impacts on the younger generation and the quality of Human Resources (HR) in the future (Black et al., 2008; Galasso & Wagstaff, 2019). In

an effort to overcome this stunting problem, community groups in Batu formed a voluntary organization called “Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention in Batu”.

We can describe the incidence of stunting in Batu City in 2020 in Figure 1. The incidence of stunting is 1230 infants/toddlers with an average rate in the 24 villages of 51.25 H” 52 infants/toddlers. The highest stunting rate occurred in Tulungrejo Village in the Bumiaji District, namely 158 infants/toddlers. Meanwhile, the lowest stunting rate occurred in the Dadaprejo Village in the Junrejo District, namely 11 infants/toddlers. The rate of stunting incidence in Batu can be seen in the graph below:

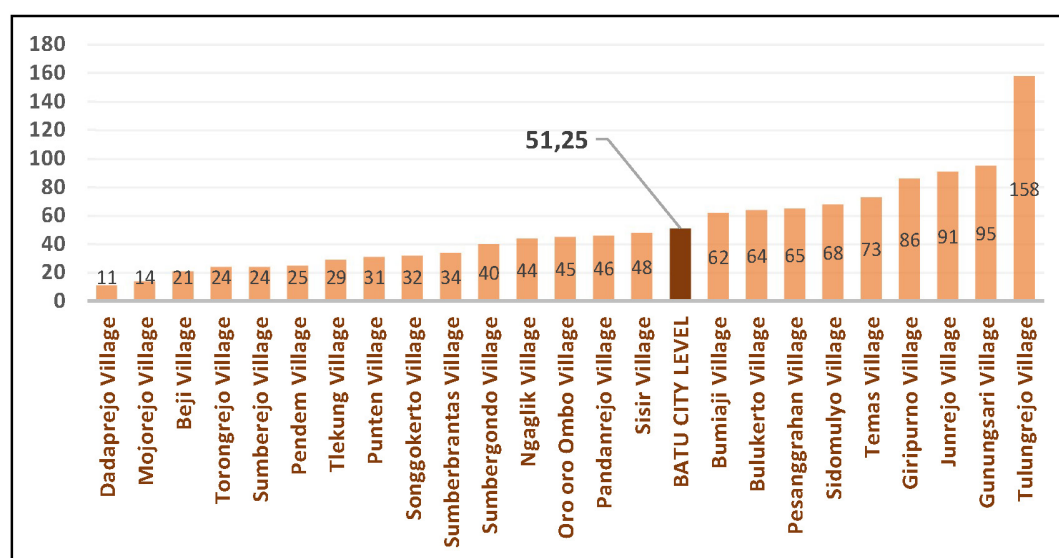


Figure 1. Graph of Stunting Incidence in Batu per Village in Early 2020 (Data on Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention of 2019-2020)

The graph in Figure 1 above describes that the average rate of stunting incidents in Batu is 52 incidents spreading across 15 villages. This reality is concerning because Batu is better known as a productive area for agricultural and plantation products. In the Village of Tulungrejo, 158 incidents were recorded, indicating a lack of parental attention to children’s growth and development, even though the village is known as a village producing abundant fruits and vegetables. Meanwhile, in the Village of Dadaprejo, which recorded 11 incidents, the environmental conditions were dominated by residential areas, schools, and Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, it seems that its people are relatively better from their level of education, their environment, and their activities.

The presence of SHGs as a response to high levels of stunting and their contribution to preventing stunting has attracted attention for further research. Therefore, this research aims to explore more deeply the volunteer model to accelerate stunting prevention,

especially in the context of SHGs operating in Batu as well as the suitability (differences or similarities) between Alfred Katz's SHG concept, which prioritizes aspects of self-empowerment and individual development, with actual situation on the ground in Batu, East Java, Indonesia.

This research has a major gap in presenting a significant contribution to the development of new insights related to research on SHG in Indonesia. In addition, this research broadens the horizon of knowledge about SHG, especially in the context of stunting prevention, which is an important issue in Indonesian public health. Through this research, we seek to understand the extent to which Katz's theoretical concepts of SHG are reflected in the actual practices carried out by volunteer groups in the field.

It is hoped that this research can open new views on how SHG Katz can be an effective tool in achieving stunting prevention goals in Indonesia, as well as fill the lack of literature related to the SHG concept in the specific context of Indonesia. In answering the objectives of this research, we used a qualitative approach in this research which has data in the form of statements or statements originating from the interpretive (subjective) tradition which is very necessary to reveal all aspects of "Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention in Batu" from Self Help Group perspective.. We use this type of phenomenological research as an effort to dig deeper into data experiences

The research uses a semi-open interview grid as a research instrument. The research instrument was designed from themes developed from the research conceptual framework based on the research objectives and SHG concept of Alfred Katz as we describe in Table 1.

**Table 1. Dimensions and Sub-Dimensions Used in Research**

Research Purposes	Conceptual Framework	Theme, Sub Theme	Description
Suitability of the SHG Concept by Alfred Katz	Group Structure	Group Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Segmented organizing (Melucci, 1980, 1985)</li> <li>▪ Informal organizational forms (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993),</li> <li>▪ Progressively evolving into a formal organization (Suharko, 2006)</li> <li>▪ Self-help resources (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993), dan</li> <li>▪ Informal communication (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993)</li> </ul>

The Formation Background	The Formation Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The perspectives, awareness, and goals of the movement (Pichardo, 1997) concerning the health issue (<i>stunting</i>) (Katz, 1993) are related to the quality of life (Habermas, 1981) and a dignified life (Melucci, 1980, 1985)</li> <li>▪ The identity of the movement's actors(Sukmana, 2016) includes the new middle class, the younger generation, and those with high formal education and adequate economic conditions (Habermas, 1981; Melucci, 1980, 1985)</li> </ul>
Group Goals	Group Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocating for empowerment, educating the community and community leaders, influencing experts, and community organizations (Katz, 1993)</li> </ul>
The Type of Interaction	The Type of Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In collaboration with other self-help groups (Katz, 1981, 1993),</li> <li>▪ In collaboration with healthcare professionals (Katz, 1981, 1993),</li> <li>▪ Within public health institutions (Katz, 1981, 1993)</li> </ul>

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## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researcher intends to thoroughly disclose the Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Response as a self-help group. Self-help groups in this concept emphasize the understanding of the organization of self-help groups based on the ideology of voluntary association, member control, and personal choice (Borkman, 1991; Katz, 1993; Riessman, 1990; Salem, 1996). The qualitative approach chosen in this study has data in the form of statements or statements derived from interpretive (subjective) traditions (Kriyantono, 2009) which are very necessary to reveal all aspects of Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention in Batu City from the perspective of the Self-Help Group.

This research was conducted in Batu City which is part of East Java, Indonesia. Batu City is located at 122°17'E to 122°57'E and 7°44'S to 8°26'S. Overall Batu City has an



area of around 199.09 Km<sup>2</sup> divided into 3 districts. The average elevation of Batu City is 897 m above sea level. So that most of the area is in hilly areas (BPS, 2021). Batu City is known as a center for tourism as well as for agriculture.

In order to achieve the research objectives, the researcher used semi-structured open interview grids to collect data from five research participants. The interview grid was designed based on Katz's Self-Help Groups concept in his 1993 book *Self-Help in America: A Social Movement Perspective*.

There were 5 participants in this study who were key actors in the emergence of this grassroots movement and had been involved in the initial meetings for the establishment of Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention. They consist of movement leaders as well as movement initiators, and four of them are movement coordinators at the village level. These actors have various professions, one actor is a doctor, one actor is a woman activist, one actor is a health cadre, one actor is the wife of an official in the local government, and the last actor is a female church leader. The age range of the participants was 35-55 years, all of them are married. One actor with a high school education, three actors with a Bachelor's degree, and one actor with a Master's degree. In belief or religion, three actors are Muslims and two actors are Christians. What's more interesting, one actor is ethnic Chinese, one actor is of Maluku descent and three actors is native Javanese.

To complement the primary data is secondary data, this data is obtained through documentation such as photographs and document archives for Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Prevention or official documents. As a qualitative study, the emphasis is on process rather than results, and tends to involve a relationship of trust between the researcher and the research subject. At first the researchers carried out direct conservation. This observation was made to identify the actors of the stunting prevention movement.

Data analysis was carried out by grouping interview data with research participants and interpreting the results of observations based on their sub-dimensions and then simplifying sentence quotations. Furthermore, it is entered into the analysis table for deeper interpretation. The SYMLOG method procedure was chosen with the intention of combining behavior, content, and values in the form of messages that function to record interaction time, interaction actors, language comments about interaction behavior, and values expressed by research participants to the questions asked.

## **RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND ANALYSIS**

### **Chronology of the Formation of the Stunting Prevention Self-Help Group**

As told by the research participants, the Stunting Prevention Self-Help Group is based on the actor's disapproval of the fact that the high rate of stunting occurs in Batu, which in fact is a food barn. The participants describe the group's origins, which are rooted in their concern over the alarming rate of stunting among children in Batu, a city known for its agricultural productivity. Despite being a significant food-producing region, the participants express their dissatisfaction with the fact that many children in the area suffer from malnutrition and stunting.

The statement highlights the community's realization of the severity of the stunting issue, which led to Batu City being recognized for its high stunting rates. This recognition prompted discussions with the city's mayor to address the problem. However, bureaucratic challenges and the limitations of local governance made it difficult for the mayor to enact substantial change.

As a result, the community members found themselves feeling powerless and decided to take matters into their own hands. The idea of initiating a social movement to prevent stunting gained traction. This movement aimed to collaborate with the government and other stakeholders to combat the issue effectively. The statement mentions key individuals involved in the movement's inception, such as Mrs. Dewanti and Dr. Mega, who played pivotal roles in forming a team to accelerate stunting prevention.

Ultimately, in late 2019, the Volunteers for the Acceleration of Stunting Response was officially established in Batu, marking the beginning of a community-led effort to address the high stunting rates in the city.

### **Goals and Views of the Stunting Prevention Self-Help Group**

SHG is driven by a simple goal, namely the hope of reducing the incidence of stunting at each posyandu in the coming month of weighing. Weighing month is held twice a year in February and August. The short-term goal of the SHG is to monitor and address stunting in children aged two years and below. SHG provide specific interventions, such as milk supplementation or injections, to prevent stunting and promote healthy growth by the next weighing session. They reflect a clear focus on immediate and tangible results to combat the issue.

However, the SHG also has a broader, long-term perspective. They recognize that stunting affects not only the physical health of toddlers but also their intellectual development and overall quality of life. They express concerns about the potential impact of a high stunting rate on the city's future, with an emphasis on intellectual development and quality of life. The participants see stunting as more than just a physical issue; it has

far-reaching implications for a child's intellectual abilities and, ultimately, their performance in school.

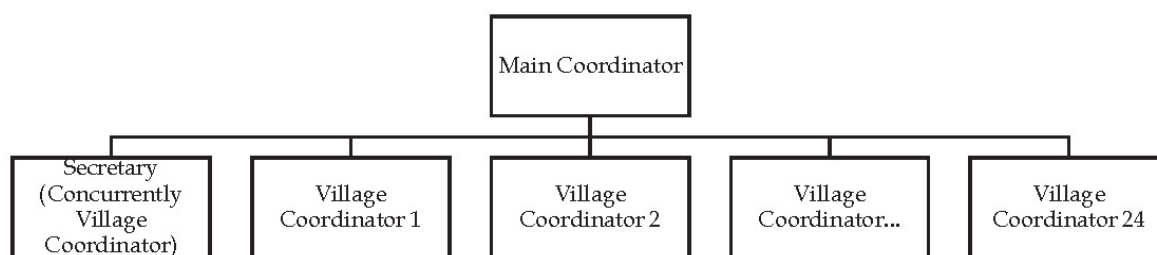
SHG moves from an ideological view that health problems (stunting) will not only affect toddlers physically, but will also affect intellectual development and human quality of life. Instead of focusing on economic problems and pursuing wealth-oriented materialistic goals in industrial society, SHG has a goal of reducing the incidence of stunting, this is in line with the New Social Movements concept (Archibald, 2008; Pichardo, 1997). SHG is driven by the ideological view that stunting is a health problem that will not only affect the physical condition of toddlers (now or in the future), but its influence on intellectual development, which will ultimately impact the quality of human life in the future, this will ultimately affect the balance between social justice and a decent life (Katz, 1993).

This is in line New Social Movements, SHG made the theme of quality of life a movement view (Habermas, 1981). Also, the foundation of an SHG oriented to health problems. Health problems are one of the main problems in life life (Katz, 1993), according New Social Movements is closer to everyday problems or issues (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Pichardo, 1997; Porta & Diani, 2006) and that New Social Movements raised humanitarian issues for a decent life as part of his struggle (Melucci, 1980, 1985).

### **Stunting Prevention Self-Help Group Organizational Structure**

As the name suggests, SHG only has a segmentation or scope for overcoming stunting problems. As the name implies, the SHG's primary mission revolves around addressing and mitigating stunting problems in the community. The participants emphasize that the SHG's exclusive concentration is on stunting prevention, as they firmly believe it directly impacts the quality of life for toddlers in the future. This clear and narrow focus allows the group to direct all its efforts and resources toward tackling this critical issue that has far-reaching implications for the well-being of young children.

The organizational structure of the SHG is led by a main coordinator, who is joined by a team of village coordinators consists of one chairperson, and 24 people who assist in the field. They will work in 24 villages in Batu city. Participant 2 said that the SHG organizational structure is chaired by Doctor Mega and the secretaries are Mrs Vivi and Mrs Salma Safitri.. Additionally, there is a secretary who fulfills the role of a village coordinator as well. This relatively streamlined structure helps ensure efficient communication and coordination within the organization. Structure details can be seen in the Figure 2:



**Figure 2. Organizational Structure of Stunting Prevention Self-Help Groups (Based on the Stunting Prevention Self-Help Groups document)**

Boorkman and Katz explained that the organizational structure of the SHG is informal and sometimes changes according to needs (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993), this is similar to organizing a stunting prevention social movement which is quite simple with the main coordinator and members consisting of village or sub-district coordinators, there is one secretary who is also held by one of the village or kelurahan coordinators due to adjusting to needs.

SHG does not have large resources, the main resources it has are networks with various parties and access to the system as well as to the non-government sector. Similarly, the SHG organization's resources are obtained from voluntary assistance or member self-help (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993), the stunting prevention social movement does not have material resources, all resources are obtained from members' self-help and network assistance including the movement's ability to access the system and the non-government sector. In fact, in deciding the work program and its implementation it also involves the participation of the community or grassroots .

The communication model is more flexible and promotes the concept of equality in decision making. In terms of communication, SHG uses informal everyday language (Borkman, 2008; Katz, 1993). In line with this, the communication model for stunting countermeasures is more flexible and informal, including prioritizing the concept of equality and participation in decision making, in fact each coordinator has the freedom to make decisions in his working area.

### **Stunting Prevention Self-Help Groups Action Plan**

The participants are using a self-help group approach to manage stunting, which involves empowering the community to take action to prevent stunting. This approach is consistent with Katz's concept of social movements, which emphasizes the importance of collective action and empowerment in bringing about social change (Dugan & Reger, 2006; Katz, 1993). Self Help Group works more in advocating and community empowerment (Martin, 2001). Advocacy includes services, health promotion, and

facilitation of access to public services. Self help group action plan as a movements to preventing stunting can be identified through the following points:

1. **Collective action:** According to Katz, social movements involve collective action to bring about social change. The self-help group approach that used to preventing stunting involves a group of volunteers working together to address the problem of stunting in Batu, Indonesia.
2. **Empowerment:** Katz emphasizes the importance of empowerment in social movements. The self-help group approach used involves empowering the community to take action to prevent stunting.
3. **Social change:** Katz's concept of social movements is focused on bringing about social change. The self-help group approach used is aimed at preventing stunting in Batu, Indonesia.
4. **Grassroots approach:** Katz's concept of social movements emphasizes the importance of grassroots approaches to social change. The self-help group approach used in this involves working with the community to prevent stunting.

Overall, the self-help group approach used in to preventing stunting in Batu can be seen as an example of a social movement that is working to address a social problem through collective action, empowerment, and a grassroots approach. This approach is consistent with Katz's concept of social movements and highlights the importance of community involvement in addressing social problems.

As explained by Sukmana in the book "Concept and Theory of Social Movements", the GSB has an invisible and temporary network that often becomes the basis for collective action as a support for successful mobilization (Sukmana, 2016). This can be found in the stunting prevention social movement which has a very wide network and coincidentally most of its members are important figures in other organizations who have had a positive impact in supporting the success of movement mobilization.

The stunting prevention social movement has a real goal of making the community healthier (reducing the number of stunting incidents) as the goal of health professionals and public health institutions. A very close relationship with health professionals based on the initiator of this movement is a health professional so that he has direct access to health professional organizations and personal health professionals. And relations with public health institutions also act as partners in empowering the community and advocating for stunting families, including monitoring or monitoring the activities of the Health Service in efforts to tackle stunting. This is as explained by Katz, SHG has the same goal with health professionals and public health institutions will take the initiative to produce a greater level of coalition cooperation and relationships (Katz, 1981, 1993).

## CONCLUSIONS

Self Help Group Stunting prevention has the goal of reducing the incidence of stunting, which is driven by the ideological view that stunting is a health problem that affects intellectual development and the quality of human life in the future. SHG Prevention of stunting only has segmentation in the health sector or only focuses on efforts to prevent stunting. The organization is simple and all resources are obtained from members' self-help or network assistance. The communication model is more flexible and informal. SHG Activities Prevention of stunting conducts social-health advocacy and community empowerment. SHG Prevention of stunting has a very wide network, has a very close relationship with health professionals and relations with public health institutions.

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