ABSTRACT

Cash Alone Is Not Enough: Social Assistance, Maternal Factors, and Child Stunting in East Kalimantan

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Background : Social assistance is expected to improve household food security and nutritional status, yet evidence among beneficiary households in East Kalimantan remains limited.

This study examined the association between the amount of social assistance and child stunting and described maternal nutrition-related characteristics.

Research Methods/ Implementation Methods : Objective : A cross-sectional study was conducted from January to August 2025 in Samarinda City (urban, n=80) and Kutai Kartanegara Regency (rural, n=60), involving 140 social assistance–recipient households with children aged 12–59 months. Annual social assistance was categorized (≤3,550,000 vs >3,550,000 IDR). Stunting was defined by height-for-age z-score. Maternal nutritional status was assessed using body mass index (BMI) and height, and nutrition knowledge using a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using Mann-Whitney, Chi-square, and logistic regression tests.

Results : Stunting prevalence was 35.0% in urban and 30.0% in rural areas (overall 32.9%). Overall, 69.3% of mothers had a BMI outside the normal range, 88.6% were ≤160 cm tall, and 48.6% had poor nutrition knowledge, which was lower in urban areas (p=0.013). The amount of social assistance was not associated with stunting in urban (OR=1.29; 95% CI 0.47–3.51; p=0.625) or rural areas (OR=2.09; 95% CI 0.55–8.00; p=0.281). Maternal height was associated with child stunting (p=0.003), whereas maternal BMI (p=0.960) and nutrition knowledge (p=0.339) were not.

Conclusion/Lesson Learned : The amount of social assistance alone was not associated with child stunting. Social assistance should be complemented by nutrition education and integrated maternal and child health and nutrition interventions.

Keyword : social assistance; stunting; maternal nutritional status; East Kalimantan; cross-sectional study